

Gotamaka Cetiya Sutta

The Discourse at the Gotama Shrine

[Conclusion to the Mūla,pariyāya Sutta, M 1]

(Aṅguttara Nikāya 3.123/1:276)

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1 Introduction

The Aṅguttara Commentary says that this discourse is given to the same monks to whom the Buddha has earlier on taught **the Mūla,pariyāya Sutta** (M 1) to point out their pride and conceit. When the Buddha notices that these monks have overcome their pride and conceit, he makes this statement at the Gotamaka Shrine. [2]

This time the monks give their approval and, while seated, attain to Arhathood together with the four Analytical Knowledges (*pañisambhidā*).¹

2 The Gotamaka Cetiya

The Gotamaka Shrine (*gotamaka cetiya*), said to be the abode of the yaksha (tutelary spirit) Gotamaka (AA 2:272), was located to the south of Vesālī, the capital of the Licchavī tribe (D 3:9). It was one of the beautiful sights of that town (D 2:102, 118) and the Buddha stayed there several times, esp during the first 20 years of the Ministry (AA 2:373). During one such occasion, the Buddha laid down the rule that allows monks the use of the three robes (upper robe, outer robe, under-robe). He himself felt the cold there and had to wear extra clothing (V 1:288, 3:195). A vihara (monastic residence) was later built there for the Buddha and his monks.² The **Divy’āvadāna** (a Sanskrit life of the Buddha), in a list of well-known places, mentions a *Gautama,nyagrodha* (Gotamaka Banyan)—implying that the shrine had a large banyan tree or banyan trees. (Divy 201)

3 The causes of earth-quakes

Due to the importance of **the Mūla,pariyāya Sutta** (M 1), it is placed first in the Majjhima Nikāya. That the monks overcome their pride and arrogances and became arhats here is understandably an “earth-shaking” event. In **the Mahā,parinibbāna Sutta** (D 16), the Buddha explains the eight causes of earth-quakes to Ānanda as follows:

- (1) Tectonic movement: “The great earth rests on water; the water on wind; the wind on space. And when the mighty wind moves, it disturbs the water, and through the disturbance of the water, the earth quakes.”
- (2) A supernatural event. An ascetic or brahmin who has developed psychic powers, or a powerful deva “whose earth-consciousness is weakly developed but his water-consciousness is immeasurable, and he makes the earth shudder and shake violently.”
- (3) The conception of the Bodhisattva, when he descends from Tusita heaven and enters his mother’s womb.
- (4) The nativity, that is, when the Bodhisattva is born.
- (5) The Great Awakening.
- (6) When the Dharma Wheel is first set in motion, that is, the First Discourse.
- (7) When the Buddha renounces his will-to-live.

¹ **The 4 Analytical Knowledges** (*pañisambhidā*) are 4 types of discriminative insight, namely: (1) Discrimination of true meanings or analytic insight of consequences (*attha,pañisambhidā*); (2) Discrimination of ideas (incl the Teaching) or analytic insight of universal principles (*dhamma,pañisambhidā*); (3) Discrimination of language or skill in communication (in connection with the previous two things); (4) Discrimination of sagacity or skill in ready wit (in connection with the previous three things). (A 2:160; Pm 1:119; Vbh 294). See BDict: Pañisambhidā.

² UA 322; DhA 3:246; SnA 1:344.

- (8) When the Buddha finally passes away without any remainder of the Aggregates (of form, feeling, perception, dispositions, consciousness). (D 2:107-109)

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The Discourse at the Gotama Shrine (A 3.123/1:276)

1 At one time the Blessed One was dwelling at the Gotamaka Shrine near Vesālī. There the Blessed One addressed the monks:

“Bhikshus!”

“Venerable sir!” replied the monks.

The Blessed One said this:

2 HOW THE BUDDHA TEACHES THE DHARMA.³

(1) “Bhikshus, I teach the Dharma based on direct knowledge,⁴ not without direct knowledge.

(2) Bhikshus, I teach the Dharma with proper cause and reasoning,⁵ not without proper cause and reasoning.

(3) Bhikshus, I teach the Dharma with wonders,⁶ not without wonders.

3 BENEFITS OF THE BUDDHA’S TEACHING. As such, bhikshus, because I teach the Dharma based on direct knowledge, not without direct knowledge; because I teach the Dharma with proper cause and reasoning, not without proper cause and reasoning; because I teach the Dharma with wonders, not without wonders, my advice should be followed, my teaching should be practised.

4 And this, bhikshus, is enough for you to be content, enough for you to be gratified, enough for you to be joyful—

Fully self-awakened is the Blessed One.

Well-taught is the Dharma [the true teaching].

Well-conducted is the Sangha [the holy community of saints].

The Blessed One said this.

5 The monks rejoiced and approved of the Blessed One’s word. While this explanation was being given, the thousandfold world system trembled.⁷

— evaṃ — 050219; 061214; 091007

³ The 3 teachings also listed in **Mahā Sakul’udāyi S** (M 77.12/2:9 f) = SD 49.5.

⁴ **“Direct knowledge”** (*abhiññā*), also called “higher knowledge”, of which there are six (*cha-lābhiññā*) are given in detail in **Sāmañña,phala S** (D 2.87-98/2:77-86) = SD 8.10. The Canon has a list of fivefold direct knowledge or supernatural knowledge (*pañcābhiññā*), or what we might today call psychic powers or extrasensory perception (ESP) which are given in the **Sāmañña,phala S** (D 1:77 f) as: (1) **various psychic powers** (*iddhi,vidhā*). (2) **The divine ear** (*dibba,sota*), ie clairaudience, the ability to hear speech and sounds from a great distance by paranormal mean. (3) **Mind-reading or thought-reading** (*para,citta,vijānanā*), ie telepathy, the perception of thought and mental states of another person by paranormal means. (4) **Recollection of one’s past lives** (*pubbe,nivāsānussati*), ie retrocognition. (5) **The divine eye** (*dibba,cakkhu*), ie clairvoyance, the perception of objects and events by paranormal means. (6) **Knowledge of the destruction of the cankers** (*āsava-k,khaya,nāṇa*), ie of the sense-desires (*kām’āsava*), of existence (*bhav’āsava*), of views (*diṭṭh’āsava*), and ignorance (*avijj’āsava*) (Vbh 334, cf S 2:121) which accompanies the attainment of awakening. See **Miracles** = SD 27.5a (5).

⁵ **“With proper reasoning”** (*sa,nidāna*), ie showing cause and effect, or causality (*paccaya*) (AA 1:374).

⁶ **“With wonders”** (*sa-p,pāṭihāriya*), alt tr “convincingly”. Comys give 2 meanings: (1) defeating the adversaries [such as winning debates with non-Buddhists]; (2) bringing out qualities that counter such defilements as lust etc. (AA 1:374; UA 10; ItA 1:21; cf BA 20). In other context, *pāṭihāriya* usually means “extraordinary, wonderful, marvellous, miraculous” (D 1:212, 3:3 f; S 4:290; A 1:170, 5:327; Pm 2:227).

⁷ For the causes of earth-quakes, se Intro (3).