

The Great Commission

The world's first missionary religion

[The story of Yasa; the sending of the first missionaries]

(Mahāvagga 1.7-11 = Vinaya 1:15-21)

by Piya Tan ©2003

Introduction

1 The “problem” of Yasa

Although Yasa was converted immediately after the awakening of the group of five monks, and was one of the first sixty missionaries, he did not figure prominently in the Canon. He is not even mentioned in the list of foremost disciples (*agga, sāvaka*) in **the Eka Nipāta** of the *Āṅguttara Nikāya*.

In fact, he is hardly mentioned in the Pali Tipiṭaka except in the **Vinaya** story (V 1:15 ff) and the **Thera, gāthā**. In the latter, he is listed as elder (*thera*) no 117 (Tha 117) with a very brief standard native gloss (Tha 1:243 f) where it is also hinted that he is identical with **Sabba, dāyaka** of the *Apadāna* (Ap 1:333 f).

In the Commentaries, Yasa is usually mentioned as a “boy” (*dāraka*, eg AA 1:100, 147), that is, not older than a teenager, or as a “son of family” (*kula, putta*, eg DhA 1:88; BA 19; as at V 1:15 ff). The rule that a candidate for ordination (*upasampadā*) should be at least 20 “full years” (V 4:130) has not been introduced at this early point.

There is a possibility that the Yasa here is the **Yasa Kākaṇḍaka, putta** who was instrumental in the convening of the Second Buddhist Council (at Vesālī).¹ If this were the case, then he would be some 165 years old then. His father's name would then be Kāk'añḍaka or Kākaṇḍa (“Crow's egg”).

2 The conversion of Yasa's family

After Yasa's father, the first three-refuge layman [7.10c], had become a stream-winner, he invited the Buddha and Yasa to his house for alms. After hearing the Buddha's teaching, Yasa's mother and his former wife took the threefold refuge and became the first laywomen.²

The *Āṅguttara Commentary* (by Buddhaghosa) says that Yasa's mother was the lady **Sujātā**, the name by which she is known after her refuge-taking (DA 1:239; AA 1:403). This raises a problem—for Yasa was converted on the day of the Buddha's first discourse, that is, the full-moon day of *Āsālha* (DhA 1:88). If we follow the *Āṅguttara Commentary*, Yasa would then be only 3 months old!

3 A curious story

While the present author was still doing his monastic training in Thailand, he was told a curious story behind the birth of Yasa. Yasa's father who was distressed because he had no child, at the instigation of his wife, **Sujātā**,³ turned to the spirit of a large Indian fig tree⁴ who was known to grant all requests made to him. The man promised to build the spirit a shrine in exchange for the fulfillment of his wish; but the desperate barren wife threatened to cut down the tree if she failed to get a child!

The poor tree spirit found himself in a quandary, for the request was beyond his powers. But fearing

¹ VA 1:33 ff; Dīpv 4:45 ff; Mahv 4:9 ff. See **Monastics and Money** = SD 4.19-23.

² V 1:19; cf A 1:26; J 1:68 ff; SnA 154; D 2:135; AA 1:401 ff.

³ Sujātā. She is the daughter of Senāni, a land-owner of a village of the same name near Uruvelā. The meal she gives the Bodhisattva is his last before the Awakening (D 2:183; VA 5:1119; DA 2:572; UA 405). There are at least five women named Sujātā during the Buddha's time: a laywoman of *Ñātikā* (D 2:92; S 5:356 ff); the youngest sister of *Visākhā* (A 4:91 f; J 2:347 ff); a maiden of Benares identified as *Rāhula's* mother in **Mañicora J** (J 2:125); *Sujātā Therī*, daughter of a merchant of *Sāketa* (Thī 145-150; ThīA 136 f), and Yasa's mother.

⁴ This is the same species as the Bodhi tree. Comys however says that Sujātā went to a banyan tree (*nigrodha*) (MA 2:182; BA 7).

the desperate Sujātā's vindictiveness, he sought the help of Shakra, leader of the devas, who reassured him of his help. There happened to be among the Thirty-three Gods, one who was reaching the time for rebirth. As long as he had to fall from the deva state, he might as well be reborn in the womb of the merchant householder's wife.

After some hesitation, this came about and the birth took place in the merchant householder's family, amidst great joy, and the child was brought up in the lap of luxury. His mind, which remained pure, did not allow him to be stained by sensual existence, the vanity of which he soon saw. Many experiences similar to those of the Bodhisattva were attributed to him, and he, too, left home under the cover of darkness.⁵

Shakra, remembering his promise made to Yasa before the latter's rebirth, then led him to the Buddha's retreat on the far side of the river Vānara. The young man left his golden slippers on the near bank, forded the river and fell at the feet of the Buddha. The rest of the story is as found in the Vinaya account here.

There is however no mention here of the name of Yasa's mother nor that of his wife. There is no mention that Yasa's mother made any food offering to the Bodhisattva. Unfortunately, the present author cannot recall the source of this story.

4 Yasa's life as a model

The seventh chapter of the **Mahā Khandhaka** of the Pali Vinaya called the "Account of the Going-forth" (*pabbajjā kathā*) contains the details of Yasa's luxurious life and his subsequent renunciation (V 1:15 ff). **TW Rhys Davids and H Oldenberg** are of the opinion that "a well-known scene of the Bodhisattva has evidently been represented after the model of this story.... Nowhere in the Pali Pitakas is the story told about the Bodhisattva himself." (V:RDO 1:102 n2)

The account is indeed a stereotype passage, but it is found in the Pali Piṭakas in reference to the Bodhisattva⁶ and also in the Commentaries (eg J 1:58). Therefore it is not true to say that Yasa's luxurious life was a model superimposed onto the life of the Bodhisattva (pace Thomas 1949:90 n 1). This stock passage is also found in the account of the past Buddha Vipassī (D 2:21).

5 Did Yasa exist?

One might now to ask whether the Vinaya account of Yasa's life was modelled along that of the Buddha? (For, none such account of the Buddha is found in the Canon.) This seems more probable for we find the stock passage again in relation to Anuruddha's early life (V 2:180). It is likely after the Buddha, as part of an attempt to compile a more complete life of the Teacher, this the redactors decided to this this stock account for him, too.

Although Yasa is only mentioned a couple of times in the Canon, it would be wrong to conclude that he never existed. On the contrary, one might ask why is he mentioned at all in the Canon especially with such scanty details about him. It is very likely that some Canonical accounts of him have been lost. For complete as the Pali Canon may be, it does not contain all the accounts of the Buddha's 45 years of Public Ministry.

6 Sending of the first missionaries

The closing section here [11.1] is the most important passage, the locus classicus, of Buddhist missionary, that is, the passage on the Great Commission (*mahā, cārika*). This declaration testifies to Buddhism as *the first world missionary religion*. It has a wealth of details that gives the key points of mission and the missionary. In short, it is a declaration of the Buddha's wisdom and compassion.

⁵ However, in a well known passage in **Ariya,pariyesanā S** (M 26), the young Bodhisattva leaves home in broad day-light before his weeping parents (M 26.14/1:164).

⁶ M 1:504; A 1:146; Mvst 2:115 f.

7. Yasa Pabbajjā⁷ Yasa's Going-forth (Mahā,vagga 1.7.1-14 = V 1:15-18)

Yasa's renunciation

[15] 1 At that time in Benares, there was a merchant's son,⁸ a son of family named Yasa, delicately raised. He had three mansions:⁹ one for the hot season, one for the cold season and one for the rains. In the rains mansion, during the four months of the rains, he was waited upon by only female musicians,¹⁰ and did not come down to the ground floor of the mansion¹¹ during those months.¹²

And then while Yasa, the son of family, was given over to the pleasures of the five senses, engrossed in them,¹³ being attended to with such care,¹⁴ he fell asleep, and his attendants, too, fell asleep, and an oil-lamp burned all night.¹⁵

2 Then Yasa, the son of family, having woken first,¹⁶ saw his own attendants sleeping, one with a lute (*vīṇā*) under her armpit, one with a tabour¹⁷ at her neck, one with a drum¹⁸ under her armpit, one with dishevelled hair, one drooling, one muttering—one would think it was a charnel ground within the hand's reach [within armslength]!¹⁹ The danger²⁰ of what he saw arose to him; his mind was set in revulsion.²¹

⁷ This title actually ends the section (in the oral tradition), but is inserted here in keeping with the scribal tradition.

⁸ "A merchant's son," *seṭṭhi,putta*. Horner says that he is so called while his father, the *seṭṭhi*, is alive, but after whose death, he would inherit that professional title (V:H 4:xlvii, 42 n4). On *seṭṭhi*, see Chakravarti 1987:10.

⁹ A *pāsāda* is probably a long storied mansion (S 51.14/5:270; VA 654; see V:H 2:16 n5, n6). **Jonathan S Walters**, in his journal article, "Suttas as History: Four approaches to the *Sermon on the Noble Quest* (Ariyapariyesana-sutta)" (*History of Religions*, 1993) notes that the sutta "is full of startling silences: here we have no Suddhodana, no Mahāmāyā, no Mahāpajāpatī Gotamī, no Yasodharā and Rāhula, no pleasure palace, no women of the harem, no four signs..." (1993:276). The story of Suddhodana as a powerful and wealthy king is very likely a later legend: it is clear from the suttas that the Sakyas were vassals (*amuyuttā*) of king Pasenadi of Kosala (D 27.8/ 3:83). In **Pabbajjā S**, the young ascetic Siddhattha tells Bimbisāra that he (Siddhattha) is a "Kosala-dweller" (*Kosala nīketino*), connoting that the Sakyas are a part of Kosala (Sn 422). Furthermore, in **Dhamma,dāyāda S** (M 89), Pasenadi tells the Buddha, "The Blessed One is a kshatriya and I am a kshatriya; the Blessed One is a Kosalan (*Kosalaka*) and I am a Kosalan" (M 89.19/2:124). The **Ambaṭṭha S** (D 3) gives a clear hint of the republican system of the Sakyas followed by a delightful analogy of the quail (D 3.1.13 f/1:91). See AK Warder, *Indian Buddhism*, 1970:45. As such, it is better to translate *pāsāda* as "mansion" rather than "palace."

¹⁰ "By only female musicians," *nippurisehi turīyehi*, lit "unmanned music," possibly "divine music." The Thai trs give it as ไม่มีมนุษย์เจือปน, "with no humans involved" (BUDSIR, Dhammādāna). However, from the context of the following para [2], it is clear that women are meant. See D:R 2:18 n1.

¹¹ "Did not come down to the ground floor of the mansion," *na heṭṭhā...pāsādam orohati*: see DPL: heṭṭhā. Alt tr "did not come down from the mansion."

¹² This passage on the 3 mansions is also found in **Mahāpādāna S** (D 14.38/2:21).

¹³ "Given over to...engrossed in," *samappitassa samaṅgībhūta*. These are very powerfully suggestive words in this context: *samappita* is pp of *sam* + *appeti* (to hand over; to pour, flow into); *samaṅgī* is *sam* + *aṅgī* ("endowed with limbs," endowed with, possessing, enjoying); *bhūta* here simply shows a state of being.

¹⁴ "With such care," *paṭikacc'eva*. See foll n.

¹⁵ This small detail that a single "oil-lamp burned all night," suggesting a dimly lit atmosphere, is vital in creating a surrealistic vision that appears before Yasa when he suddenly awakens in the middle of the night.

¹⁶ "First," *paṭikacc'eva*, also "previously." This word has two senses; for the first sense, see prev n.

¹⁷ "Tabour," *mudīṅga* (Skt *mṛdaṅga*), ie the mirutangkam, a kind of barrel drum. For discussion on this instrument, see **Aṇi S** (S 20.7.2) n = SD 11.13.

¹⁸ "Drum," *āḷambara*, a drum with a deep resounding sound, like thunder; see CPD.

¹⁹ "Within the hand's reach," *hattha,paṭṭam*. The whole sentence, *hattha,paṭṭam susānam maññe* lit means "one would think that one's hand has touched a charnel ground." A related expression is *hattha,pāsa*, lit "the side of the hand," ie within armslength: close enough to entail an offence (V 3:200, 4:47, 82, 95, 221, 230). When monks are performing a Sangha act, they must sit close together *hattha,pāsa*-wise. It is defined by Vinaya,vinicchaya Ṭikā as

Then Yasa, the son of family, uttered an inspired saying:²² “Oh what trouble indeed! Oh what affliction indeed!”

3 Then Yasa, the son of family, having put on his golden sandals, approached the door of his house. Non-humans opened the doors,²³ thinking, “Let there be no hindrance for his going forth from the household life into homelessness!”

Then Yasa, the son of family approached the city gate. Non-humans opened the gate, thinking, “Let there be no hindrance for his going forth from the household life into homelessness!”

Then Yasa, the son of family, went to the Deer Park at Isipatana.

Yasa’s realization

4 Now at the time, the Blessed One, having risen from the night, early at dawn, was walking up and down in the open.²⁴ The Blessed One saw the son of family, Yasa, coming in the distance. Having seen him, the Blessed One stepped out of the walk-way²⁵ and sat down on a prepared seat.

Then Yasa, the son of family, when he was near the Blessed One, uttered the inspired saying: “Oh, what trouble indeed! Oh, what affliction indeed!”

Then the Blessed One said this to Yasa, the son of family:

“Here, Yasa, there is no trouble; here there is no affliction. Come, Yasa, sit down: I will show you the Dharma.”

5 Then Yasa, the son of family, thought:

“I hear that this is not trouble, I hear that this is not affliction,” joyful, uplifted, he took off his golden sandals, approached the Blessed One, saluted him and sat down at one side.

While Yasa, the son of family, was seated at one side, the Blessed One gave him **a progressive talk** [on the Dharma], that is to say: talk on giving, talk on moral virtue, talk on (the joys of) heaven, and explained to him the dangers, the degrading nature, the defiling nature of sense-pleasures and of the advantages of renunciation.

6 When the Blessed One [16] knew that Yasa, the son of family, was ready, his mind malleable, free of hindrances, uplifted, and clear, then he explained the Dharma-teaching common to all the Buddhas: suffering, the arising, the ending, the path.²⁶

Just as a clean cloth free of any black spot easily takes a dye, even so, just as he sat right there, the stainless, spotless Dharma-eye²⁷ arose in him, thus: “Whatever is of the nature to arise, all that is of the nature to end.”

The first three-refuge layman

7 Then the mother of Yasa, the son of family, having gone up the mansion and not seeing Yasa, the son of family, approached the merchant householder:

“Householder, your son, Yasa, is not to be seen.”

aḍḍhateyya, ratana-p, pamāṇa, desañ, 2½ ratanas (ie 2½ cubits), probably meaning from the shoulder-joint to the middle finger-tip: see Ñāṇamoli 1994: 141.

²⁰ “Danger,” *ādīnava*.

²¹ *Nibbidā*: see *Nibbidā* = SD 20.1.

²² “Made an inspired utterance,” *udānaṃ udānesi*. Usually denotes a positive statement, but here refers to an expression of revulsion. See **the Udāna**.

²³ This fascinating detail concurs with the tradition that Yasa was a deva of the Thirty-three Gods in his previous life. See Intro 3.

²⁴ This walking is both a meditation as well as a mild exercise.

²⁵ “Walk-way,” *caṅkamā*, or ambulatory, which could also be a cloister or arcade (V 1:15, 182, 2:220; D 1:105; S 1:212; A 1:114, 183, 3:29, 4:87), also *tr* as gerund “walking” (S 4:104).

²⁶ Four noble truths. For details, see **Dhamma, cakka-p, pavattana S** (S 56.11) = SD 1.

²⁷ “Dharma-eye,” *Dhamma, cakkhuṃ*, ie one of the first three Paths, usually Stream-winning (*sotāpatti*) (DA 1:237, 278).

Then the merchant householder,²⁸ having sent messengers on horseback in the four quarters, went himself to the Deer Park at Isipatana.

The merchant householder saw the tracks of the golden sandals and followed them.

8 The Blessed One saw the merchant householder coming in the distance, and it occurred to the Blessed One:

“What if I were to create a psychic wonder so that the merchant householder, seated here, would not see Yasa, the son of family?”

Then the Blessed One created a psychic wonder to that effect.

9 Then the merchant householder approached the Blessed One and said this to the Blessed One:

“Bhante, has the Blessed One seen Yasa, the son of family?”

“Well then, householder, sit down. Perhaps sitting here, you might see Yasa, the son of family, sitting here.”

Then the merchant householder, thinking:

“I hear that if I were to sit here I might see Yasa, the son of family, sitting here,” joyful, uplifted, he saluted the Blessed One and sat down at one side.

10a As the merchant householder was seated at one side, the Blessed One gave him a progressive talk [on the Dharma], that is to say: talk on giving, talk on moral virtue, talk on heaven, and explained to him the dangers, the degrading nature, the defiling nature of sense-pleasures and of the advantages of renunciation.

10b When the Blessed One knew that the merchant householder was ready, his mind malleable, free of hindrances, uplifted, and clear, then he explained the Dharma-teaching common to all the Buddhas, that is, suffering, the arising, the ending, the path.

Just as a clean cloth free of any black spot easily takes a dye, even so, just as he sat right there, the stainless, spotless Dharma-eye arose in him, thus: “Whatever is of the nature to arise, all that is of the nature to end.”

10c Then the merchant householder, having seen the Dharma, having mastered the Dharma, having known the Dharma, having immersed himself in the Dharma, having crossed over doubt, having cleared away uncertainty, having won full confidence, independent of others in the Teacher’s Teaching,²⁹ said this to the Blessed One:

“Excellent, bhante! Excellent, bhante! Just as if one were to place upright what had been overturned, or were to reveal what was hidden, or were to show the way to one who was lost, or were to hold up a lamp in the dark so that those with eyes could see forms, in the same way the Blessed One has, in numerous ways, made the Dharma clear.

I go to the Blessed One for refuge, to the Dharma, and to the community of monks. May the Blessed One remember me as a layman who has gone to him for refuge from this day forth for life.”

So he became the first three-refuge layman³⁰ [17] in the world.

11 Then, while the father of Yasa, the son of family, was being taught the Dharma, he [Yasa] was reviewing his level as it was seen, as it was known, his mind was freed from the mental cankers,³¹ freed from clinging.

²⁸ “Merchant householder,” *seṭṭhi, gahapati*, a leading and wealthy businessman with a large number of people in his employ. See Chakravarti 1987:77-79.

²⁹ “Having seen the Dharma... in the Teacher’s Teaching,” *diṭṭha, dhammo patta, dhammo vidita, dhammo pari-yogaḥ, dhammo tinṇa, vicikiccho vigata, katham, katho vesāraja-p, patto apara-p, paccayo satthu, sāsane*. As at **Ambaṭṭha S** (D 3.2.22/1:110). This shows that Yasa’s father has become a learner (one of the first 3 paths). This is confirmed in §12: “What do you think, householder, that Dharma seen by Yasa, the son of family, with a learner’s knowledge, with a learner’s vision, even so it is by you.”

³⁰ “Three-refuge lay follower,” *upāsako...te, vāciko*, lit “a lay follower by the three-word formula.” With the Group of Five Monks becoming arhats, the Sangha is established in the world.

³¹ “Mental influxes,” *āsava*. The term *āsava* (lit “inflow, outflow”) comes from *ā-savati* “flows towards” (ie either “into” or “out” towards the observer). It has been variously translated as taints (“deadly taints”, RD), corrupt-ions, intoxicants, biases, depravity, misery, evil (influence), or simply left untr. The Abhidhamma lists four *āsava*:

Then this thought occurred to the Blessed One:

“While the father of Yasa, the son of family, was being taught the Dharma, he [Yasa] was reviewing his level as it was seen, as it was known, his mind was freed from the mental cankers, freed from clinging. Now, Yasa, the son of family, having turned away from the low life, is one incapable of enjoying sensual pleasures as he formerly did as one living in a house. What if I were to put an end to the psychic wonder?”

12 Then the merchant householder saw Yasa, the son of family, sitting down, and said this to him: “Dear Yasa, your mother, filled with grief, has been crying. Give life to your mother.”

Then Yasa, the son of family, looked towards the Blessed One.³² Then the Blessed One said this to the merchant householder:

“What do you think, householder, that Dharma seen by Yasa, the son of family, with a learner’s knowledge, with a learner’s vision, even so it is by you. As he [Yasa] was reviewing his level as it was seen, as it was known, his mind was freed from the mental cankers, freed from clinging.³³ What do you think, householder, is one who has turned away from the low life capable of enjoying sensual pleasures as he formerly did as one living in a house?”

“No indeed, Blessed One.”

“The Dharma, householder, was seen by Yasa, the son of family, with a learner’s knowledge, with a learner’s vision, even so it is by you. He was reviewing his level as it was seen, as it was known, his mind was freed from the mental cankers, freed from clinging. Now, Yasa, the son of family, having turned away from the low life, is one incapable of enjoying sensual pleasures as he formerly did as one living in a house.”

13 “Blessed One, it is a gain for Yasa, the son of family, a good gain, bhante, for Yasa, the son of family, in that his mind is freed from the mental cankers, freed from clinging!

Bhante, may the Blessed One consent to a meal from me tomorrow, with Yasa, the son of family, as attendant?”

The Blessed One consented by his silence.

Then the merchant householder, having received the Blessed One’s consent,³⁴ rose from his seat, saluted the Blessed One and left.

Yasa’s renunciation

14 Then not long after the merchant householder had left, Yasa, the son of family said this to the Blessed One:

“Bhante, may I receive the going forth before the Blessed One. May I receive the ordination?”³⁵

“**Come, O bhikkhu!**” said the Blessed One, “**Well-taught is the Dharma. Live the holy life!**”³⁶

the influx of (1) sense-desire (*kāma’sava*), (2) (desire for eternal) existence (*bhava’sava*), (3) wrong views (*diṭṭh’āsava*), (4) ignorance (*avijjāsava*) (D 16.2.4, Pm 1.442, 561, Dhs §§1096-1100, Vbh §937). These 4 are also known as “floods” (*ogha*) and “yokes” (*yoga*). The list of 3 influxes (omitting the influx of views) [43] is probably older and is found more frequently in the Suttas (D 3:216, 33.1.10(20); M 1:55, 3:41; A 3.59, 67, 6.63). The destruction of these āsavas is equivalent to arhathood. See BDict under *āsava*.

³² Out of respect for the Buddha, his new found teacher, Yasa awaits the Buddha’s instruction and reply.

³³ Sāriputta similarly attained arhathood as the result of listening to the Buddha teach another, ie the Vedanā,-pariggaha S (ie **Dīgha,nakha S**, M 74) to Dīgha,nakha; Nanda the cowherd, while listening to (**Nanda**) **Dāru-k,khandha S** (S35.241/4:181) being addressed to the monks, requests right there to join the Order: he probably had attained Stream-winning.

³⁴ “Received the...consent,” *adhivāsanaṃ viditvā*, lit “having known the consent.” Alt tr: “having known that... has consented.”

³⁵ *Labheyyāhaṃ bhante bhagavato santike pabbajjāṃ, labheyyāhaṃ upasampadam.*

³⁶ The ordination formula reads: Se **Ehi bhikkhu. Svākkhāto dhammo, cara brahma,cariyaṃ**, but Be, Ce, Ee add: *sammā dukkhassa anta,kiriyāya* (“for the utter ending of suffering”). The Se notes: “Some places (editions) have added ‘*sammā dukkhassa anta,kiriyāya*’ here, but the venerable has done away with suffering. As such, this (phrase) is out of place, since there is no further task (of working towards liberation) for him. (*imasmim thāne katthaci sammā dukkhassa anta,kiriyāya ti pakkhittam | tam pana yasmā ten’āyasmatā dukkhassanto kato aho*)

This [18] was the venerable's ordination. So there were then seven arhats in the world.³⁷

8. Paṭhama Te,vacikā Upāsikā³⁸ The First Three-refuge Laywomen (Mahā,vagga 1.8.1-4 = V 1:18)

1 Then the Blessed One, having dressed himself in the morning and taking robe and bowl, with venerable Yasa, the son of family, as attendant, went to the merchant householder's house for alms, and sat down on the prepared seat.

Then the venerable Yasa's mother and his former wife approached the Blessed One, saluted him and sat down at one side.

2a The Blessed One gave them a progressive talk [on the Dharma], that is to say: talk on giving, talk on moral virtue, talk on heaven, and explained to them the dangers, the degrading nature, the defiling nature of sense-pleasures and of the advantages of renunciation.

2b When the Blessed One knew that they were ready, their minds malleable, free of hindrances, uplifted, and clear, then he explained the Dharma-teaching common to all the Buddhas: suffering, the arising, the ending, the path.

Just as a clean cloth free of any black spot easily takes a dye, even so, just as they sat right there, the stainless, spotless Dharma-eye arose in them, thus: "Whatever is of the nature to arise, all that is of the nature to end.

3 Then they, having seen the Dharma, having mastered the Dharma, having known the Dharma, having immersed themselves in the Dharma, having crossed over doubt, having cleared away uncertainty, having won full confidence, independent of others in the Teacher's Teaching, said this to the Blessed One:

"Excellent, bhante! Excellent, bhante! Just as if one were to place upright what had been overturned, or were to reveal what was hidden, or were to show the way to one who was lost, or were to hold up a lamp in the dark so that those with eyes could see forms, in the same way the Blessed One has, in numerous ways, made the Dharma clear.

We go to the Blessed One for refuge, to the Dharma, and to the community of monks. May the Blessed One remember us as laywomen who have gone to him for refuge from this day forth for life."

So they became the first three-refuge laywomen³⁹ in the world.

4 Then the venerable Yasa's mother and father and his former wife, having served the Blessed One and the venerable Yasa with their own hands, having offered them excellent food, hard and soft, until they [the Blessed One and the venerable Yasa] stopped them,⁴⁰ and when the Blessed One had finished his meal and removed his hand from the bowl, sat down at one side.

n'atthi tassa uttarim karaṇīyam tasmā atirekanti daṭṭhabbari). On the *ehi,bhikkhu* ordinations, see **Aṅgulimāla S** (M 86.6/2:100 = Tha 870; MA 3:334; ThaA 3:69); **Sela S** (M 92 = Sn 3.7), Comy (MA 3:405 f; SnA 2:455 f); **Sunīta** (Tha 625). See also VA 1:240-243; AA 1:190; AAT:Be 2:69-74; SnA 1:294; 2:569; DhA 1:87, 2:32; ThaA 3:203; ApA 87, 270; BA 19 f; J 1:82. Cf §§9.4 & 10.4 below on the ordination formulas there. On *ehi,bhikkhu* ordination, see ThīA 297 f. See **Aṅgulimāla S** (M 86.6 = Tha 870) n = SD 5.11.

³⁷ That is, the group of five monks, Yasa, and the Buddha himself.

³⁸ This title actually ends the section (in the oral tradition), but is inserted here in keeping with the scribal tradition.

³⁹ "Laywomen," (*upāsikā*). See V 1:19; cf A 1:26; J 1:68 ff; SnA 154; D 2:135; AA 1:401 ff.

⁴⁰ The "stopping" (*sampavāretvā*) refers to the initial servings of food in the monastic bowl. Traditionally, monks and nuns would only accept what they need, halt the serving and then start eating their meals, the food all mixed up.

Then the Blessed One, having instructed, the venerable Yasa's mother and father and former wife with a Dharma talk, inspiring them, firing them with enthusiasm and gladdening them, rose from his seat and left.⁴¹

9. Catu Gihī, saḥāyaka Pabbajjā⁴²

Going-forth of the Four Householder Friends

(Mahā, vagga 1.9.1-4 = V 1:18 f)

1 Now four lay friends of the venerable Yasa, the sons of various merchants [great and small]⁴³ of Benares—Vimala, [19] Subāhu, Puṇṇaji, Gavampati—heard:

“It is said that Yasa, the son of family, having shaven off hair and beard and donning the saffron robe, has gone forth from the household life into homelessness.”

Hearing this, they said:

“Now this is no mean Dharma and Discipline, no mean going-forth, such that Yasa, the son of family, having shaven off hair and beard and donning the saffron robe, has gone forth from the household life into homelessness!”

2 They approached the venerable Yasa, and having saluted him, stood at one side. Then the venerable Yasa brought these four lay friends to the Blessed One. Having saluted the Blessed One, they sat down at one side.

Seated thus at one side, the venerable Yasa said this to the Blessed One:

“These, bhante, are four lay friends of mine, the sons of various merchants [great and small] of Benares—Vimala, Subāhu, Puṇṇaji, Gavampati. May the Blessed One advise and teach them.”

The Blessed One gave them a progressive talk [on the Dharma], that is to say: talk on giving, talk on moral virtue, talk on heaven, and explained to him the dangers, the degrading nature, the defiling nature of sense-pleasures and of the advantages of renunciation.

3 When the Blessed One knew that they were ready, their minds malleable, free of hindrances, uplifted, and clear, then he explained the Dharma-teaching common to all the Buddhas: suffering, the arising, the ending, the path.

Just as a clean cloth free of any black spot easily takes a dye, even so, just as they sat right there, the stainless, spotless Dharma-eye arose in them, thus: “Whatever is of the nature to arise, all that is of the nature to end.”

4 Then they, having seen the Dharma, having mastered the Dharma, having known the Dharma, having immersed themselves in the Dharma, having crossed over doubt, having cleared away uncertainty, having won full confidence, independent of others in the Teacher's Teaching, said this to the Blessed One:

“Bhante, may we receive the going forth before the Blessed One. May we receive the ordination?”

“Come, O bhikshus!” said the Blessed One, “Well-taught is the Dharma. Live the holy life for the utter ending of suffering!”⁴⁴

⁴¹ “Having instructed, . . . with a Dharma talk, inspiring them, firing them with enthusiasm and gladdening them,” *dhammiyā kathāya sandassetvā samādapetvā samuttejetvā sampahaṁsetvā*. This action sequence reflects the basic structure of the **Buddha's teaching method**: (1) the Dharma is shown (*samdassetvā*); (2) the listener/s are filled with enthusiasm (*samādapetvā*); (3) they are fired with commitment (*samuttejetvā*); and (4) filled with joy (*sampahaṁsetvā*). Comys explain that by instructing, the Buddha dispels the listener's **delusion**; by inspiring him, **heedlessness** is dispelled; by rousing him, **indolence** is dispelled; and by gladdening, brings the practice to a **conclusion**. In short, when we teach Dharma to benefit others, we should do our best to **bring instruction, inspiration, motivation and joy** to the listener. These four qualities are, in fact, the sixth or last of the ideal skills of a Dharma speaker (*Udāyi S*, A 3:184).

⁴² This title actually ends the section (in the oral tradition), but is inserted here in keeping with the scribal tradition.

⁴³ “Various merchants [small and great],” *seṭṭhānuseṭṭhi*. See V 1:18; J 5:384 (*mahā, seṭṭhi* and *seṭṭhi*, vl *anuseṭṭhi*); see also *Vinaya Texts* 1:102 n3.

This was the venerables' ordination.

Then the Blessed One advised and taught these monks with a Dharma talk. Being advised and taught with a Dharma talk, the minds of these monks were freed of cankers, freed of clinging.

So there were then eleven arhats in the world.

10. Paññāsa Gihi,sahāyaka Pabbajjā⁴⁵ Going-forth of the Fifty Householder Friends (Mahā,vagga 1.10.1-4 = V 1:20)

[20]

1 Now fifty lay friends of the venerable Yasa, those of leading families and of families coming after them,⁴⁶ in the country, heard:

“It is said that Yasa, the son of family, having shaven off hair and beard and donning the saffron robe, has gone forth from the household life into homelessness.”

Hearing this, they said:

“Now this is no mean Dharma and Discipline, no mean going-forth, such that Yasa, the son of family, having shaven off hair and beard and donning the saffron robe, has gone forth from the household life into homelessness!”

2 They approached the venerable Yasa, and having saluted him, stood at one side. Then the venerable Yasa brought these fifty lay friends to the Blessed One. Having saluted the Blessed One, they sat down at one side.

Seated thus at one side, the venerable Yasa said this to the Blessed One:

“These, bhante, are fifty lay friends of mine, those of leading families and of families coming after them, in the countryside. May the Blessed One advise and teach them.”

The Blessed One gave them a progressive talk [on the Dharma], that is to say: talk on giving, talk on moral virtue, talk on heaven, and explained to them the dangers, the degrading nature, the defiling nature of sense-pleasures and of the advantages of renunciation.

3 When the Blessed One knew that they were ready, their minds malleable, free of hindrances, uplifted, and clear, then he explained the Dharma-teaching common to all the Buddhas: suffering, the arising, the ending, the path.

Just as a clean cloth free of any black spot easily takes a dye, even so, just as they sat right there, the stainless, spotless Dharma-eye arose in them, thus: “Whatever is of the nature to arise, all that is of the nature to end.”

4 Then, they, having seen the Dharma, having mastered the Dharma, having known the Dharma, having immersed themselves in the Dharma, having crossed over doubt, having cleared away uncertainty, having won full confidence, independent of others in the Teacher's Teaching, said this to the Blessed One:

“Bhante, may we receive the going forth before the Blessed One. May we receive the ordination?”

“**Come, O bhikkhus!**” said the Blessed One, “**Well-taught is the Dharma. Live the holy life for the utter ending of suffering!**”⁴⁷

This was the venerables' ordination.

⁴⁴ Their ordination formula reads: *Ehi bhikkhu. Svākkhāto dhammo, cara brahma,cariyam, sammā dukkhassa anta,kiriyāya*, which is the fuller formula since they have not yet attain arhathood. See also below §10.4; cf §7.14.

⁴⁵ This title actually ends the section (in the oral tradition), but is inserted here in keeping with the scribal tradition.

⁴⁶ “Of leading families and those coming after them,” *pubbānupubbakānam kulānam*, ie of the oldest and next to the oldest family lines (VA 966).

⁴⁷ Their ordination formula reads: *Ehi bhikkhu. Svākkhāto dhammo, cara brahma,cariyam, sammā dukkhassa anta,kiriyāya*, which is the fuller formula since they have not yet attain arhathood. See also above, §9.4; cf §7.14.

Then the Blessed One advised and taught these monks with a Dharma talk. Being advised and taught with a Dharma talk, the minds of these monks were freed of cankers, freed of clinging. So there were then sixty-one arhats in the world.

11. *Mahā Cārika⁴⁸ The Great Commission (Mahā,vagga 1.11.1 = V 1:19 f)⁴⁹

1 Then the Blessed One addressed the monks.⁵⁰

“Freed am I, bhikshus, from all snares, divine and human! You too, bhikshus, [21] are freed from all snares, divine and human.

Go forth, O bhikshus, on a mission⁵¹ for the good of the many, for the happiness of the many, out of compassion for the world, for the good and happiness of the gods and humans.

Let not two of you go the same way.

Teach the Dharma, bhikshus, good in the beginning, good in the middle, good in the end, both in the spirit and in the letter.

Declare the holy life in its whole⁵² and complete purity.

There are beings with little dust in their eyes who, not listening, would be ruined.

They will grow if they understand the Dharma.⁵³

I will myself, bhikshus, go to Senānigama⁵⁴ near Uruvelā to teach the Dharma.”

(Mv 11.1 = V 1:21 = S 4.5/1:105 f; Mvst 3:415 f)

— evaṃ —

At Uruvelā, the Buddha converts the Group of 30 Young Men (V 1: 23 f) and the three matted-hair fire-worshipping Kassapa brothers (V 1:24-35) together with their 1000 disciples, then teaching them **the Āditta,pariyāya Sutta**.⁵⁵ All these events happen in the first year of the Ministry. In the second year, the Buddha meets with rajah Bimbisāra (V 1:35-39), and in due course ordains the two chief disciples, Sāriputta and Moggallāna (V 1:39-43).

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⁴⁸ This section is orig part of the preceding story, but is titled separately due to its significance. The title is a constructed one.

⁴⁹ The Pali texts call this section *Māra Kathā*, “the Māra episode.” Here only the section on the Great Commission, the first half, is given.

⁵⁰ This whole passage appears verbatim in **Pāsa S 2** (S 4.5/1:105 f). For the Skt parallel, see Mvst 3:415 f = Mvst:J 3:416 f. See S:B 413 n273.

⁵¹ “Mission,” *cārikam*, usu tr as “moving or walking about, wandering, roaming; pilgrimage; journey” (DPL).

⁵² “Whole,” *kevala*, ie unadulterated, entire, not mixed with anything else.

⁵³ “If they understand the Dharma,” *dharmassa aññātāro*, lit “if they are knowers of the Dharma.”

⁵⁴ Senānigama. This is the original name as found in the Canon (eg V 1:21; M 1:166. 240; A 1:106). The Comys give it as Senānī,nigama, the market town of Senānī, on the Nerañjarā bank near Uruvelā, and where Sujātā gives milk-rice to the Bodhisattva, which is his last meal before the awakening J 1:68; MA 2:173; SA 1:172; AA 1:401; BA 7; ApA 72; DhsA 34). The **Lalita,vistāra** calls it Senāpati,grāma (Lalv 311.248).

⁵⁵ V 1:35 f; S 35.28.

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