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Āma,gandha Sutta

The “Raw Stench” Discourse | Sn 2.2 (Sn 239-252)

Theme: We are not always what we eat

Translated by Piya Tan ©2004

1 Background stories**1.1 THE BRAHMIN ASCETIC ĀMAGANDHA**

1.1.1 The background story is given in the **Param’at̥ṭha,jotikā 2**, the Commentary to the Sutta Nipāta (SnA 1:278-283). Before the appearance of Gotama Buddha, the brahmin Āmagandha¹ became an ascetic (*tāpasa*) and lived in the Himalayas with 500 brahmin youths as disciples. They ate neither meat nor fish. As a result of a deficiency of salt, vinegar and other minerals, they succumbed to jaundice (*paṇḍu,roga*).

To heal themselves, they came down once a year from their hermitage in search of salt and vinegar. The villagers nearby received them with great honour and served them well for the 4 months they were there. On their leaving for mountain hermitage, the people would give them oil, rice grains and other provisions. (SnA 1:278 f)

1.1.2 One day, the Buddha and his monks visited the same village, and the villagers, after listening to his discourse, became his followers. That year when Āmagandha and his disciples came to the village, the villagers did not show their enthusiasm as before.

Āmagandha was excited on hearing the name “Buddha,” and asked thrice, expressing his joy and anticipation of meeting the Buddha who had arisen in the world. He wished to know whether the Buddha partook of *āmagandha* (by which he meant meat and fish). Hearing that the Buddha did not forbid the taking of meat and fish, Āmagandha was greatly disappointed. (SnA 1:280)

1.1.3 Nevertheless, Āmagandha’s desire to hear the Buddha was overwhelming. Asking people about the way, he hastened like a cow longing for her calf,² resting only a night at each stop along the way until he reached Sāvattihī, and at once entered Jeta’s grove with his retinue.

The Buddha was then teaching the Dharma. They approached the Buddha without paying respects and silently sat down at one side. The Buddha welcomed them politely, asking after them. After replying, Āmagandha asked the Buddha, “Do you eat *āmagandha* or not?” When the Buddha asked the brahmin what he meant by *āmagandha*, he replied: “Meat and fish, master Gotama.”

The Buddha then said, “Meat and fish, brahmin, are not *āmagandha*. It properly refers to all defilement or bad unwholesome states.” The Buddha then added that he, the brahmin, was not the only one who had asked about *āmagandha*—and he related a past-birth story about the brahmin ascetic Tissa and the Buddha Kassapa [1.2] (SnA 1:281)

1.2 THE ASCETIC TISSA AND KASSAPA BUDDHA

1.2.1 Childhood friends. During the time of **Kassapa Buddha**,³ an ascetic named Tissa put the same question to Kassapa, beginning with the verse, “Millet, tear grass seed, panicum, ...” (Sn 239a). The Buddha Gotama then relates to the brahmin ascetic Āmagandha the story of the two brahmin youths, Kassapa and Tissa. Kassapa was the son of the brahminee Dhana,vatī and the brahmin Brahma,datta. Tissa,

¹ Considering its deprecating sense, Āma,gandha is clearly not his real name, but a nickname given by the sutta redactors.

² *Vaccha,giddhinī gāvī viya*. For a story about how a cow longingly followed a monk who is wearing the hide of her slaughtered calf, see Mv 5.10.8-10 (V 1:193,14 f).

³ **Kassapa** is the buddha just before Gotama in this world-cycle: see SD 49.3 (2).

Kassapa's future chief disciple, was the son of the assistant chaplain (*anupurohita*) to the king of Benares. The brahmin youths Kassapa and Tissa were born on the same day. (SnA 1:280 f)

1.2.2 Tissa's going forth. The brahmin youths Kassapa and Tissa grew up together. Tissa's father, knowing that the youth Kassapa would become the Buddha, instructed his son Tissa to keep track of Kassapa and be his disciple in due course. Tissa agreed and then told Kassapa about it and that they would renounce the world together, to which Kassapa agreed.

When the two of them reached maturity, Tissa tells Kassapa that it was time for them to renounce the world. However, Kassapa was not ready, so Tissa renounced alone. He went forth on his own by way of the seer's going-forth (*isi,pabbajjā*). He lived as an ascetic (*tāpasa*) in a hermitage at the foot of a mountain. (SnA 1:281)

1.2.3 Kassapa's awakening. As time passed, the Bodhisattva Kassapa, while still living at home, cultivated the mindfulness of the breath, attained the 4 dhyanas and the direct knowledges (short of awakening itself). Kassapa then left his mansion for the seat of awakening. He sat down under his Bodhi tree, a pipal tree (*assattha*).⁴ After meditating for 7 days, Kassapa attained full self-awakening.

At that time, there were 20,000 renunciants (*pabbajita*) at Isipatana, near Benares. Kassapa Buddha addressed them and set the Dharma-wheel in motion. At the end of the discourse, these renunciants all became arhats. The Buddha Kassapa and the 20,000 arhats lived right there in Isipatana. Kiki, the king of Kāsī, provided them with the 4 supports. (SnA 1:281)

1.2.4 Tissa's meets the Buddha. One day, an inhabitant of Benares, searching for sandalwood in the mountains, arrived at Tissa's hermitage. From him, Tissa learned that the Buddha had arisen in the world. Tissa was rapturous, and asked, "Does he eat *āmagandha* or not?" "What is *āmagandha*, bhante?" "Fish and meat, avuso." "The Blessed One eats fish and meat, bhante."

The ascetic Tissa was troubled and thought, "Then, he could not be the Buddha." But reconsidering, he thought he would ask the Buddha himself. He at once left, spending only a night at every rest-stop along the way. He reached Benares one evening, and entered Isipatana. The Buddha was seated teaching the Dharma.

Approaching the Buddha, without saluting him, Tissa stood silently at one side. The Buddha welcomed him with polite talk, and he replied. Then, having sat down at one side, he asked the Buddha:

"Do you eat *āmagandha* or not, master Kassapa?"

"I do not eat *āmagandha*, brahmin."

"Sadhu, sadhu, master Kassapa! It is good that you do not consume the carcasses of other beings. That is proper for one of your birth, family and clan." (SnA 1:282)

1.2.5 The Buddha instructs Tissa. Then, the Buddha thought: "I said that I do not eat *āmagandha* in reference to the defilements, but the brahmin thinks of it as fish and meat. Tomorrow, I will not go on alms-round, but will eat the alms-food brought from king Kiki's home. Then, a conversation will arise about *āmagandha*. I will then settle this matter by teaching him Dharma."

The next day, when the Buddha was having his meal, Tissa sat nearby. He saw the Buddha partaking of porridge with pieces of meat in it. Tissa was angry. When he had finished the porridge, he was given him some more food with various dishes (with meat in them). Seeing this, Tissa was furious.

After his meal, the Buddha washed his hands and feet, and then sat down. Tissa approached the Buddha, and said: "Master Kassapa, you have uttered falsehood! This is not proper for the wise. False speech is decried by the buddhas. The seers, living at the foothills, depending on forest roots and fruits, too, do not speak falsely." (SnA 1:282 f)

The Buddha then said, "Millet, tear grass seed, panicum, ... good people who eat them, justly obtained | do not speak falsehood ... " (Sn 239) and so on.

"Thus the Blessed One repeatedly this matter. | The brahmin ... understood it." (Sn 251)

⁴ B 25.24/93. This is the same kind of bodhi tree as that of our Buddha Gotama.

Having heard the Buddha’s well-spoken word, | free from raw stench,⁵ pushing away all suffering, with a humble heart, he saluted the Tathagata. | There and then he declared to go forth. (Sn 252)

1.3 THE CONVERSION OF THE BRAHMINS

1.3.1 The Buddha pronounced, “Come, bhikshu!” (*ehi, bhikkhu*). According to the Commentaries, whenever the Buddha admits renunciants into the order in this way, on account of the Buddha’s powers and the renunciants’ own merits, they assume the appearance of an elder replete with robes, bowl and the rest of the 8 requisites. (This is a commentarial tradition, not mentioned in the suttas.)

Tissa then became the Buddha Kassapa’s chief disciple, and his second disciple was Bhāradvāja. Hence, they became the two chief disciples of Kassapa Buddha. (SnA 1:293)

1.3.2 Our Buddha Gotama explains the true meaning of *āmagandha* to the 500 ascetics led by their teacher by way of the Āmagandha Sutta—the discourse on raw stench—which comprises 14 verses. The first 3 verses are spoken by the brahmin Tissa, the 9 middle verses by the Blessed One Kassapa, the last two by the council elders.

Having heard this, the brahmin Āmagandha, humbled at heart, saluted the Blessed One’s feet. He and his retinue then requested for the going-forth. The Blessed pronounced, “Come, bhikshus!” Having become monks, they meditated, and after a few days, they all attained arhathood. (SnA 1:293 f)

2 Meaning of *āma, gandha*

2.1 THE SUTTA BACKGROUND

2.1.1 The purpose of this Sutta is to show that spiritual significance of the term *āma, gandha* (ts; literally, “foul smell, odour of raw flesh, cadaverous stench”⁶—a word traditionally used among non-Buddhist ascetics and teachers to designate food prepared with meat or fish. Firstly, it should be noted that it is *gandha*, a smell, not a substance:⁷ the emphasis is on “carrion smell,” not the “carrion” itself.⁸ This fine point is significant when we see that the Buddha is using it in a metaphorically moral sense.⁹

2.1.2 Usages of *āmagandha*

2.1.2.1 *Āmagandha*—both as a personal name and a moral metaphor—is the subject of **the Āmagandha Sutta** (Sn 239-252).¹⁰ The Buddha—here it is Kassapa, the buddha before Gotama, the buddha of our epoch—rejects and refutes a literal or material use of the word [*so bhuñjati āmagandham*, Sn 240]. He then explains its true moral meaning [Sn 242 f], by way of different sets of *āmagandha* [Sn 242-248].

⁵ Here, “raw and rank” is *nirāmagandha* [2.1.3].

⁶ VA 96; DA 2:665; SnA 286; Mvst 1:75.

⁷ On an Abhidhamma analysis of *gandha* as “smell,” see Dhs §§625-628/141-142; *āmagandha* is listed in §625 in its literal sense.

⁸ But cf CPD, “foul smell or foul-smelling substance, smell of raw flesh, cadaverous scent, stench, foulness (sv *āma-gandha*), where “substance” seems over-stated. Also DP: “the smell of raw flesh, or carrion; stench, foulness.”

⁹ CPD: “... applied by the Buddha(s) to moral defilement, vice, corruption (syn *kilesa*). D 2:242,13-249,12 (DA 655,10 f, 665,35, *āmagandhā sakuṇa, gandhā pūti, gandhā* (in connection with explanation of 241,14* *nirāmagandha*, the different vices (*kodha*, etc) being mentioned the yoking with which makes *anirāmagandha*; cf Mvst 3:214,3 f (BHSD, sv *āmagandha*). DP: (fig) “moral foulness, corruption”: see further for details.

¹⁰ Comy SnA 2:278-294.

2.1.2.2 The Commentary mentions these sets of *āmagandha* as follows:

- (1) the (tenfold) habits of unwholesome conduct of taking life, etc (*pāṇātipāt'ādi samudācāra*); [Sn 242]
 - (2) the sixfold *āmagandha*: being unrestrained in sense-pleasures (*kāmesu asaṅṅatā*), etc; [Sn 243]
 - (3) the eightfold *āmagandha*: being harsh (*lukhatā*) and so on; [Sn 244]
 - (4) the ninefold *āmagandha*: anger (*kodha*) and so on; [Sn 245]
 - (5) the sixfold *āmagandha*: being habitually immoral (*papa,sīlatā*) and so on; [Sn 246]
 - (6) the sixfold *āmagandha*: being unrestrained towards living being (*pāṇesu asaṃyutatā*), etc; [Sn 247]
 - (7) the threefold *āmagandha*: lust, hate and delusion (*raga,dosa,moha*); [Sn 248]
- (SnA 286-290)

2.1.2.3 The term *āma,gandha*, then, does not consist of merely eating of meat (*maṃsa,bhojana*),² but rather refers to mental defilements (*kilesa*) and unwholesome states (*akusalā dhammā*). Stealing, lying, deception, adultery, lasciviousness, annihilationism, etc, are said to be *āmagandha*, for they give one, as it were, a bad immoral odour or the stench of bad deeds (Mvst 3:214).¹¹

Hence, I have rendered *āmagandha* as “raw stench,” that is, “the carrion-like raw and rank,” which can be taken literally but more so figuratively. “Raw” here is figurative, meaning “unrefined, unpleasant.” It is possible that some critics may argue that to ask, “What is the flavor of raw stench” [Sn 241f] suggests a mismatch between sense and sensing.

But this is clearly a case of metaphorical synaesthesia, where there is a play on the “smell” (*gandha*), which is significant weakened, even lost, when we render *āmagandha* as “carrion,” which highlights the taste aspect rather than the smell, as found, for example, in the phrase: “the fragrance of the good goes against the wind” (Dh 54c).¹²

2.1.3 A unique synonym of *āmagandha* is the double negative *anirāmagandha* [Sn 252b], probably merely a metrical form to harmonize the verse-line.¹³ The opposite of *āmagandha* is *nirāmagandha*.¹⁴

2.2 The Kaṭuviya Sutta (A 3.126) uses the word *āmagandha* as a metaphor, taking it to mean “ill will” (*vyāpāda*) in a context of wry humour. The Sutta shows the Buddha admonishing a dissatisfied monk who is seeking gratification “externally” (through sensual pleasures). From the Sutta context, he is probably upset with his inability to attain dhyanas, which spurs him to compensate himself psychologically with sensual pleasure.

Hence, the Buddha explains that by “pollution” (*kaṭuviya*) he means “longing” (*abhijjhā*); by “raw stench” (*āmagandha*), ill will; and “flies,” bad unwholesome thoughts.¹⁵ The Commentary explains that by *āmagandha* is meant “the raw stench that is anger” (*āmagandhe'ti kodha,sankhate vissa,gandhe*, AA 2:378,12).¹⁶

2.3 The Mahā Govinda Sutta (D 19) contains another passage on *āmagandha*¹⁷ in connection with the Buddha’s remark on *nirāmagandha*, “free of raw stench, or free of the foul stench,” where he explains that being yoked to the different vices (*kodha*, anger, etc) makes one *anirāmagandha*, “not free of the foul stench.”¹⁸

¹¹ Cf Dh 54 (“the aroma of the virtuous”).

¹² On Dh 54, see SD 48.9 (6.2.3.2).

¹³ See also.

¹⁴ **Mahā,govinda S** (D 19,46/2:243,5*); **Kaṭuviya S** (A 3.126/3:373,8*×2), SD 19.17 = Kvu 114; Sn 251 f, 717.

¹⁵ A 3.126/1:280,6+20+26+28 & 281,3* (SD 91.17) & AA 2:378.

¹⁶ Cf AA 3:387,21.

¹⁷ D 19,46-56/2:242-249; DA 665.

¹⁸ Cf Mvst 3:214 (where it is fig used as “the stench of immorality”; opp: “odour of sanctity.”)

2.4 The Pali and Sanskrit Buddhist literature, therefore, take *āmagandha* (n) or *anirāmagandha* (adj) and its opposite *nirāmagandha* (adj) in the metaphorical sense to refer respectively to the morally impure (*kilesa, akusala, dhamma*) and to the morally pure (Sn 717). **The Mahāvastu**, however, also uses *āmagandha* in its literal sense.¹⁹

2.5 The Āmagandha Sutta states that ascetic practices and religious observances in themselves cannot purify one who has not crossed over doubts (*avitiṇṇa, kaṅkham*, Sn 249). Based on this point, it has been argued that, for a Buddhist, meat-eating in itself is not ethically wrong provided the meat obtained is pure on the three points (*tikoṭi, parisuddha*).²⁰ The Sutta, however, gives the harming of life (*pāṇātipāta*) as an example of *āmagandha*, together with “killing, cutting and binding” (*vadha, cheda, bandhana*, Sn 242a). After a refutation of a literal and material uses of the term (as in Sn 240), its true moral meaning is explained in full at Sn 242-248.

3 Meat-eating and the meatless diet

3.0 Even though the Buddha does not prohibit the taking of meat (as far as the Pali tradition goes), many practising Buddhists today are vegetarian, or at least vegetarian at certain times (such as on new-moon and full-moon days). Most of such vegetarians or part-time vegetarian Buddhists, significantly, are of the Mahayana tradition. While the Theravāda Buddhists fall back on the Pāli Canon and Commentaries, those professing the Mahāyāna invoke the Buddha’s teaching of compassion and respect for life. These “horns” of dilemma are here summarized here according to the Theravada and the Mahāyāna viewpoints.

3.1 THE THERAVĀDA STAND

Nine important references can be culled from the Pali texts classified under three headings—historical (1-3), disciplinary (4-7) and doctrinal (8-9):

3.1.1 The general Sīha episode. On converting to Buddhism, the erstwhile Jain general Sīha offered the Buddha and his monks a meal comprising meat (bought from the market) but the jealous Jains rumoured that the Buddha had caused a large animal to be slaughtered for the occasion. The Buddha then promulgated a Vinaya rule on the **“three points of purity”** (*tikoṭi, parisuddha*) regarding meat-eating by order members, that is, meat is allowable for order members only when they have not seen, heard or suspected that the meat has been specially prepared for them.²¹

3.1.2 Devadatta’s 5 points (*pañca, vatthuni*). In his plot to discredit the Buddha and take over the leadership of the sangha from the aged Buddha, Devadatta proposed the 5 ascetic rules. One of these was a meatless diet (knowing very well that the Buddha would reject them—which he did). (V 2:197, 3:172)²²

3.1.3 The Buddha’s last meal. According to **the Mahā Parinibbāna Sutta** (D 2:127 f), the Buddha’s last meal, a dish of *sūkara, maddava*, was offered by Cunda the blacksmith. This dish has been variously interpreted as:

1. meat of well-bred pig neither too young nor too old (DA 2:568);
2. tender succulent pork on sale in the market (UA 400 quoting the Mahā Aṭṭhakathā);
3. bamboo shoot which has been trampled by pigs (UA 400);

¹⁹ Mvst 1:75; cf Saddharma-pundarika S 96.16.

²⁰ See below (3)(A)1 The General Sīha episode.

²¹ V 1:237 f, 2:197; M 1:368; A 4:187 f; SnA 286; cf V 3:172 & **Tel’ovāda J** (J 246).

²² See **Anaṅgaṇa S** (M 5) @ SD 37.3 (3.3.1).

4. the “snake’s hood” mushroom (*ahi-c-chattaka*, *ibid*);
5. a kind of sauce or flavouring (*rasāyana* or *ras’āyatana*, UA 400); and
6. truffles (D:R 2:137.1).²³

3.1.4 The 10 kinds of prohibited meat, namely, those of human being, elephant, horse, dog, snake, lion, tiger, leopard, bear and hyena (V 1:218 ff). Human flesh is prohibited on obvious humane grounds: Buddhism is against cannibalism. Elephants and horses were the rajah’s emblems and means of defence. Dog and snake meat are regarded as loathsome, while the other animals are fierce jungle creatures which could sense and attack those who had taken such meat. It is argued that if these kinds of meat are prohibited, then, there would be others that are not, meaning that some of them would be allowable.

3.1.5 Pācittiya 35 includes meat and fish in the list of sumptuous foods allowed by the Buddha (V 4:88). Again here, the rule of “available meat” applies [3.1.7]. The Tamil classic, Tirukkural, records that Valluvar, who some scholars believe to be a Jain, as criticizing the Buddhists for accepting the same of meat, with a contemporary ring to it: “If the world did not purchase and consume meat, no one would slaughter and offer meat for sale.”²⁴

This is, of course, based on the modern economic idea of “supply and demand.” The reality is that the number of Buddhists who do take meat today would somehow have significant impact of the meat demand. However, this may be an issue in an avowedly “Buddhist” country like Sri Lanka, Myanmar or Thailand. Interestingly, in such countries, the slaughterers and butchers were, as a rule, non-Buddhists.

Strictly, the food rules apply only to the monastics but not to the laity. The laity are, of course, bound by the spirit of the precepts to avoid killing and to save lives. Understandably, conscientious Buddhists generally find it religiously less problematic to be vegetarian, or at least to avoid meat periodically, or take very little meat, only special occasions such as invited meals.

3.1.6 Rejection of raw meat. In the Vinaya and the Lesser Precepts (*cūla,sīla*) of the “moralities” (*sīla*) passage of the first 13 suttas of the Dīgha Nikāya, and elsewhere in the Nikāyas,²⁵ the Buddha says that raw meat (*āmaka,maṁsa*, V 1:203; D 1:5) is not allowable for monastics, implying that only proper offerings of cooked meat are allowable.

The Mahāvastu, too, records a ruling against eating (raw?) meat (Senart 1897 3:265,14), where a newly ordained monk is told: “You have to abstain from red meat,” *māṁsa,śonitam te...parityajitavyam*.²⁶ Otherwise, **Waldschmidt** notes that in the older texts there is no trace of any ruling against partaking of meat (1939:105).

The Vinaya, however, allows the taking of raw meat in case of “affliction by a non-human” (*anujānāmi bhikkhave amanussik’ābādhe āmaka,maṁsam āmaka,lohitaṁ*), that is, a “possession by an evil spirit” or dissociative possession (V 1:203,1).²⁷ Nevertheless, it should be understood here that rules regarding how such meat or raw blood is obtained apply, that is, they should not be specially prepared for the monastic [3.1.1].

3.1.7 “Available meat” (*pavatta,maṁsa*), ie meat which has already been prepared and the animal not intentionally (*sañcicca*) killed or caused to be killed for one, ie indicated meat (*uddissa,kata,maṁsa*) (V 1:27, 237 f). The understanding here is that such meat, bereft of life, is simply an aggregate of the four

²³ Cf CAF Rhys Davids, *A Manual of Buddhism*, London, 1932:260 where she observes that “*maddava* is nowhere else associated with meat” and prefers the term “truffles”; EJ Thomas 1949:149 where he remarks that “the word is not the obvious *sūkara,maṁsa*, ‘pig flesh,’ which we would expect if this was meant.” See Miln:R 1:244n; D:R 2:137n.

²⁴ Tiruvaḷḷuvar, tr Satguru Sivaya Subramuniaswami, 2000. *Tirukkural* = *Tirukural: Ethical masterpiece of the Tamil people*. New Delhi: Abhinav Publications, 2000 §256.

²⁵ Eg D 2,45/1:64,22; M 27,13(14)/1:180,10.

²⁶ Basak 1968:158,33 has *maṁsa,śonitam*.

²⁷ For parallels in other Vinayas, see Frauwallner 1956:93. See also Zysk 1991:87.

elements (earth, water, fire and wind), keeping to the teaching of **the Satipaṭṭhāna Suttas** (D 22; M 10), that says:

Furthermore, bhikshus, a monk reviews²⁸ this body, however it may be placed or disposed, in terms of the elements:²⁹

“There are in this body

- (1) the earth-element,
- (2) the water-element,
- (3) the fire-element,
- (4) the air-element.”³⁰

Just as a skilled butcher or his apprentice, having slaughtered a cow, were to sit at the cross-roads with the carcass divided into portions, so, too, a monk reviews this body. However, it may be placed or disposed, in terms of the elements:

“There are in this body (the 4 elements).”

(M 10,12/1:57 f), SD 13.3

This teaching, however, should not be misconstrued as a fiat for amorality of meat-eating, which is in fact the atomist view of Pakudha Kaccayāna.³¹ It merely says that the physical body is composed of the 4 elements, and advocates a reflection on it as being composite, and as such, is impermanent, and so on.³² [3.4.3]

3.1.8 The Abhidharma tradition, according to some of its exponents, emphasizes the intention of the act (*cetanā*), ie it is more concerned with “psychological” ethics rather than the socioeconomics. A popular argument amongst meat-eating used by Abhidharma proponents is that **the “mind” that kills the animal is different from the one that eats it**—one can therefore partake of meat of the animal as long as one has not killed or caused to be prepared especially for one!

This last argument is of course not flawless—not to say it borders on dogmatism and casuistry. For, by the laws of causal relationship (*paccaya*) and dependent origination (*paṭicca,samuppāda*), one thing leads to another and everything is connected in one way or other. Though the unwholesome roots of greed and hate may be absent in this situation, delusion still exists. After all, a simple economic sense would make one understand that the demand creates the supply!

However, we should note, too, that this is an *economic* argument, and neither a historical nor a scriptural one. The point is that a universal non-meat diet can only be possible when *all* the religions and *all* members of the community of society agree to it. Only then, it is possible to take the argument that not taking meat effectively saves lives. Of course, such a non-meat life-style is still possible on a communal scale, such as the Mahayana community exemplifies.

3.1.9 Āmagandha. As mentioned above [2], both the Āmagandha Sutta (Sn 2.2) and **the Mahā Govinda Sutta** (D 2:242 ff) state that a meatless diet is not regarded as a mark of the holy life and the term *āma-*

²⁸ “Reviews,” *paccavekkhati*, see SD 13 Intro (3.9b).

²⁹ In the Tibetan Buddhist tradition, the 4 elements dissolve in the death-process thus: earth dissolves into water, water into fire, fire into air, air into space; the consciousness dissolves in 4 further stages (white flash, red flash, black flash, clear light). See Lati Rinbochay & Jeffrey Hopkins, *Death, Intermediate State and Rebirth in Tibetan Buddhism*, Ithaca, NY: Snow Lion, 1979:13-57; Terry Clifford, *Tibetan Buddhist Medicine and Psychiatry: The Diamond Healing*, York Beach, ME: Samuel Weiser, 1984:108-114; Kalu Rimpoche, *Luminous Mind: The Way of the Buddha*, Boston: Wisdom Publications, 1997:53-56; Margaret Coberly, *Sacred Passage: How to provide fearless, compassionate care for the dying*, Boston & London: Shambhala, 2002:79-98.

³⁰ “Earth” (*pathavī*) or extension, “water” (*āpo*) or cohesion, “fire” (*tejo*) or temperature, “air” (*vāyo*) or motion. These are the ancient Indian names for the four “great elements” (*mahā,bhūta*) or qualities present in varying proportions in all matter, that is, the various states of matter.

³¹ See **Sāmañña,phala S** (D 2,24-25/1:56 f), SD 8.10.

³² See Ariyaseko 1998:85 f.

gandha is taken metaphorically. One should not read too much into such discourses as they do *not* prove that the Buddha was a meat eater or that he favoured meat-eating or that he was against vegetarianism. The main idea of the discourses is that one's diet is no measure of one's spirituality.

If one should still insist that Āmagandha Sutta “proves” that it is all right to take meat, then how would one reconcile the Buddha's admonition in **the Dhammika Sutta**:

*Pāṇaṃ na hane, na ca ghātayeyya
na cānujaññā hanataṃ paresaṃ*

Let one not destroy life, nor cause to kill,
Nor indeed approve of killing by others.
(Sn 394)

3.2 THE MAHĀYĀNA VIEW

The Mahāyāna tradition is commonly understood as rejecting the nine points presented above, and invoking the Buddha's sanction for the abrogation of the “lesser and minor rules” (V 2:287 = D 2:154) and taking a more liberal view of the monastic rules. The Mahayanists as such often grow their own vegetables and prepare their own meals. Traditional Mahayanists, however, tend to deny that the Buddha ever took meat; indeed, he is said to have categorically condemned meat-eating. Among the reasons given for the vegetarian tradition in Mahāyāna are the following:

(1) The Tathāgata,garbha doctrine, that is, the ethical and philosophical reason. Scholars are certain now that the practice of vegetarianism amongst the Mahayana Buddhists is not derived from a primitive pre-Aryan source or as a result of the influence of the *sannyasi* (Hindu ascetics), but rather in connection with the Tathāgata,garbha doctrine which essentially defines that all life have the Buddha-seed and are therefore interconnected and essentially one. **The Laṅkāvatāra Sutta** expounds this doctrine and Ch 8 (said to be a late addition though) deals with the evils of meat-eating.

(2) Rebirth, that is, the metaphysical reason. As an extension of the Tathāgata,garbha doctrine, **the Aṅgulimālaya Sutta**, records the dialogue between Mañjuśrī and the Buddha. In answer to Mañjuśrī who asks, “Is it because of the Tathāgata,garbha that the Buddhas do not eat meat?” the Buddha explains not only that in the infinite rounds of existences there exist no sentient being who has not been one's mother, sister, etc, since the world of living beings is like a dancer (who assumes multiple roles; cf Lnk 220), and that another's flesh and one's own are accordingly the same, but also that the element (*dhātu*) of the beings is in fact the Dharmadhātu itself (Lhasa ed fol 300b-301a).³³

(3) Lovingkindness & compassion. The Mahāyāna stresses on great benevolence (*mahā maitri*) and compassion (*kripa* or *karuṇā*). Though the term *ahimsa* is not prominently used here, its effect is implied, for in both the Theravada and Mahayana traditions, we find many discourses (eg **Kūṭadanta Sutta**, D 1:127 ff; **Ujjaya Sutta**, A 2:41) and references against the causing of harm to living beings (eg D 3:235; M 3:214; A 3:203, 275, 301 f; Dh 129 130; Vbh 285).

According to Mahāyānist proponents, the explanation that “a monk must eat what has been offered to him” is taken as a convenient excuse. If pious lay people know that monks disapproved of food involving the slaughter of innocent animals, which of them would even dream of offering meat-food to the monks? Furthermore, a monk can still *choose* not to eat everything that has been offered to him!

(4) Right livelihood. Even in the Pali Canon, the Buddha discourages his disciples from earning a living by exploiting lives or the environment, that is, dealing in weapons, dealing in living beings (trapping and selling animals, hunting, fishing, slavery), dealing in meat (rearing animals for meat, slaughtering,

³³ Cf: “It is not easy, O monks, to find a being who has not formerly been one's mother ... father ... brother ... sister ... son ... daughter during this long, long time.” (S 2:189 ff)

butchering), trade in intoxicants (including drugs) and trade in poisons (A 3:107). The Mahayanists argue: how could someone like the Buddha, who has given these instructions, have taken meat?³⁴

3.3 MAHĀYĀNA RATIONALE. The following points may serve to support the Mahayana stand on vegetarianism (or vegetarianism in general):

(1) Evolution. It is sometimes argued that early man—the defenceless naked ape—was a vegetarian. In the course of evolution, he **turned to meat eating** for 4 main reasons:

1. through observing and imitating the eating habit of carnivores and birds of prey;
2. he discovered the leftovers of animal carcass;
3. meat had a greater concentration of protein than plant-food; and
4. the discovery of fire which allowed him to cook meat (which he otherwise had great difficulty biting and chewing, and perhaps digesting poorly too).

It is also interesting to note that the human jaw is not as a rule suitable for eating raw meat. Human teeth serve better as grinder of plant food than as tearer and cutter of flesh. The discovery of fire and cooking of course made the difference giving us the impression that we have been natural meat eaters all the way. On the contrary, man, by nature, is more likely to be a vegetarian. Man became a meat-eater through his own conditioning of his diet. In other words, he *can* certainly be a vegetarian if he chooses to!

(2) History. In his 5th Rock Edict, the Indian emperor **Asoka** prohibited the killing of certain animals, and in his 1st Pillar Edict he ordered only three animals be allowed for the emperor's table. In due course, this encouraged a vegetarian way of life in India, which has perhaps the world's most developed vegetarian cuisine.³⁵

John Blofeld in a short article (dated 3rd Aug 1960) remarked that “Hindu India (except Bengal and Kashmir) is entirely vegetarian” (Foreword to Yen Kiat's *Mahāyāna Vinaya*, Bangkok, 1961). Yet, he further argues, ancient books show that vegetarianism was unknown to India until the period when Buddhism swept over the country. Hindu scholars themselves admit that the practice was received from Buddhism, and there seems to be sufficient proof that Indian Buddhists in former days were strictly vegetarian, as Chinese Mahāyāna Buddhists are today.

In China, **the emperor Wu of Liang** (Liángwǔdì 梁武帝, 464-549) proclaimed the abolition of liquor and meat in his kingdom (511 CE). He put an end to the killing and injuring of animals, prohibited the use of fish nets, and in 517 issued a decree prohibiting his subjects from killing any living being on the days of religious service dedicated to the ancestors (Ency Bsm 1:291ef). Emperor Wu's devotion, understandably, was not so much out of deep faith in Buddhism as it was the desire to exert full control over the Buddhist monastics, who were wealthy as well as influential, and he also needed Buddhism to legitimize his position and exert his charisma over the masses.³⁶

(3) Economic conditions. When Buddhism arrives in a new country, its exponents have the task of winning the faith of the people. Almsfood may not be so easily available. The Buddhist missionaries have therefore to be self-reliant and adapt themselves to their new environment. One of the most convenient and logical way, without breaking the Precept against taking life, is to be vegetarian.

In modern times, animals are seldom specially killed for individuals. Yet it is clear that all of us are indeed responsible for their death, as the butchers supply meat according to our demand for it. It is therefore

³⁴ For more details on right livelihood, see SD 10.16 (5). See also Kapleau 1982:31

³⁵ Ency Brit Macro 7:944de.

³⁶ See eg Tom de Rauw & Ann Heirman, “Monks for hire: Liang Wudi's use of household monks (*jiāsēng* 家僧),” *The Medieval History Journal* 14,1 2011:45-69.

illogical and against the grain of the Dharma for any Buddhist to claim, under contemporary conditions, that one can eat meat as one is unaware that the slaughtering takes place for them.

Conditions in ancient times when Buddhist devotees offered meat to the monks—assuming that they did, even then very probably on a small scale—were different from those of today. In ancient times, when a farmer killed a single animal for the use of his family, usually only the *remainder or a part of the dish* was offered to the monastics. If there were only a handful of monks and nuns, their abstaining from meat would not save many lives, but where there were thousands of monks and nuns, it is obvious that they added considerably to the demands upon the slaughterers and butchers.

3.4 CONCLUSION

3.4.1 Historical developments. A careful survey of the early Mahāyāna sutras and texts will show that none of them took any strict stand on a meatless diet for monastics. Even **the (Mahāyāna) Mahā,parinirvāṇa Mahā,sūtra**,³⁷ according to which the Buddha enjoins a vegetarian diet (since to consume meat will be obstructive to the cultivation of lovingkindness),³⁸ refers to the rule on the 3 allowable conditions of consuming meat, a rule also found in the Mūla,sarvāstivāda Vinaya (Dutt 1984a:236,17) and in T1458.³⁹

Historically, such texts mark the watershed between the early Buddhist stand on allowable meat and the 3 points of purity, and the later traditional Mahāyāna practice of vegetarianism. As often is the case in Mahāyāna Buddhism (and of course Theravāda Buddhism, too)⁴⁰ their patronage by the power of the land, as a rule, significantly shaped some of their later realities.

In India, for example, the vegetarian tradition became entrenched with the policies and works of Asoka (304-232 BCE).⁴¹ In China, vegetarianism became widespread on account of the efforts of pious Buddhist emperor Wu of Liang⁴² [3.3(2)]. Furthermore, vegetarianism was entrenched in Chinese Buddhism with the rise of settled and well-organized monasteries that have their own kitchens and refectories, and monastics themselves often being good cooks. In such circumstances, it is only natural and proper that they keep to a vegetarian lifestyle. Furthermore, Chinese Buddhism served as the basis for east Asian Buddhism, so that vegetarianism is also the rule in Korean, Japanese and Vietnamese Buddhism. In other words, Mahāyāna vegetarianism is more of a historical, social and cultural phenomenon.

3.4.2 Moderate eating. The Mahayanists simply refuse to believe that the Buddha took meat but the Theravadins argue otherwise basing their conviction on various references to meat-eating in the Pali Canon. It is indeed difficult to prove or disprove those Pali references but they are too many and too coherent to be summarily brushed away. However, one should not use this as an excuse for one's indulgence either! For the Buddha also constantly spoke of "moderate eating" (*bhojane mattaññutā*).⁴³

It is probable, considering all the nine Pali references given above, that the Buddha and the early monks ate *very little* meat and, even if they did, it was only incidental (*pavatta,mamsa*). Xuanzang records in his travels that the early Hinayanist monks in China were allowed meat of animals that died of natural death and of animals killed by predators (Watters, London 1904, 1:53-56). The early Indian monks probably did the same.

³⁷ On this title, see Habata 2007:xliii-li.

³⁸ See T374 (T12.386a15): 食肉者, 斷大慈種 *shí ròu zhě, duàn dà cí zhòng*.

³⁹ T1458 (T24.570a15). For a study of this rule in the light of different Vinayas, see Prasad 1979 & Heirman 2006: 60.

⁴⁰ On secular influences on Theravāda developments, see eg Neil DeVolta, *Sinhalese Buddhist Nationalist Ideology*, Washington, 2007.

⁴¹ See esp his 1st rock edict and 5th pillar edict: see "[The Edicts of King Asoka](#)".

⁴² See **How Buddhism became Chinese**, SD 40b.1 (1.2.4).

⁴³ S 2:218; A 1:113; Nm 2:482. See **How Pasenadi overcome his gluttony**, SD 37.13 (2).

3.4.3 Local practice. In the 1980s, the Community of Dharmafarers, a pioneer group of lay Buddhist workers started by the Malaysian monk, Piyasilo, kept to a **lacto-ovo (“milk-egg”) vegetarian diet** for the following reasons:

- (1) The principle of the first precept regarding the value of life.
- (2) In his Dharma talks, Piyasilo was often questioned as to why Theravada monks took meat despite the Buddha’s clear stand on the value of life.
- (3) We can live quite healthily and comfortably enough without meat.
- (4) During his monkhood, Piyasilo encountered some “monks” who became visibly upset when they did not get meat for their meals!⁴⁴

The rule of thumb for healthy food is that which helps and heals the body, giving it the effort and comfort for spiritual practice, especially meditation. At least, we should keep to the five precepts in our eating habits, and that this should keep us healthy. On the other hand, in difficult situations (where vegetarian food is not available or simply unaffordable), then we should eat what is available (such as “available meal,” *pavatta,mamsa*) [3.4.4] in moderation.

3.4.4 We are not always what we eat. One of the key words in early Buddhism regarding wholesome eating is “**moderation**” (*mattaññutā*) [3.4.1]. In the **Mahā Sīha,nāda Sutta** (M 12), the Bodhisattva experiences that a body deprived of proper food will not be able to progress spiritually.⁴⁵ Another key word in the practice of sensible eating, especially when vegetarian food is unavailable or difficult to obtain, is to moderately eat “**available meat**” (*pavatta,mamsa*), which, according to the **Jīvaka Sutta** (M 55) refers to meat that is pure in three ways, that is, we have not seen, heard or suspected that it has been prepared especially for us. In short, we do not ask for such a food.⁴⁶

In conclusion, it should be said that a non-meat diet is not in itself a spiritual practice, but which entails many other wholesome qualities. The Buddhist training is the avoidance of taking life or causing pain to others (including oneself). We should create the conditions wherein a healthy non-meat or vegetarian life-style wherever or whenever possible. It is not a perfect world, even growing plants entails harming some kinds of living beings. As such, we have to consider growing and harvesting our food in a manner that respect living beings.⁴⁷

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⁴⁴ On practical vegetarianism, see eg M Polunin, ed. *The Health and Fitness Handbook*, London, 1981:116 f.

⁴⁵ M 12,52-56/1:80 f (SD 49.1).

⁴⁶ M 55,5/1:369 (SD 43.5). Christ, in the Bible, makes a supportive stand here: “It is not what goes into the mouth that makes a person unclean. It is what comes out of the mouth that makes a person unclean” (Matt 15.11), which he explains as: “Don’t you know that everything that goes into the mouth passes into the stomach and then is expelled as waste? But the things that come out of the mouth come from the heart, and it is those things that make a person unclean. It is out of the heart that evil thoughts come, as well as murder, adultery, sexual immorality, stealing, false testimony, and slander. These are the things that make a person unclean. But eating with unwashed hands doesn’t make a person unclean.” (Matt 15.17-20, International Standard Version, 2008)

⁴⁷ On the future of food, see SD 10.16 (5.2.2.8).

The Āmagandha Discourse

Sn 2.2

The ascetic Tissa:

- 1 *Sāmāka,ḍiṅgulaka,cīnakāni ca*⁴⁸
patta-p,phalaṃ mūla-p,phalaṃ gavi-p,phalaṃ
*dhammena laddhaṃ sataṃ asnamānā*⁴⁹
na kāma,kāmā alikaṃ bhamanti
Millet, tear grass seed, and panicum,
leafy vegetable, storage root and creeper fruit—
good people who eat them, justly obtained,
do not speak falsehood for the sake of sense-pleasures.
[239]
- 2 *Yad asnamāno*⁵⁰ *sukataṃ suniṭṭhitam*
parehi dinnam payatam paṇītam
sālīnam annam paribhuñjamāno
*so bhuñjati*⁵¹ *kassapa āmagandham*
[240]
Eating what is well-made, well-readied,
given by others, piously adorned, exquisite, [43]
enjoying a meal of boiled rice,
that person, O Kassapa, partakes of raw stench.⁵²
- 3 *Na āmagandho mama kappatīti*
icc-eva tvaṃ bhāsasi brahma,bandhu
sālīnam annam paribhuñjamāno
sakunta,maṃsehi susaṅkhatehi
pucchāmi taṃ kassapa etam attham
katha-p,pakāro tava āmagandho
“Āmagandha is not proper for me!”
So, indeed, you say, O kinsman of Brahma,
while enjoying a meal of boiled rice
well-dressed with bird’s meat.
I ask you regarding this matter, O Kassapa:⁵³
to you, what is the flavour of raw stench?
[241]

Kassapa Buddha:

- 4 *Paṇātipato vadha,cheda,bandhanam*
theyyam musā,vādo nikaṭi vañcanāni ca
*ajjhena,kujjam*⁵⁵ *para,dāra,sevanā*
esāmagandho na hi maṃsa,bhojanam
Harming life, killing, cutting and binding,
stealing, lying, deception and fraud,⁵⁴
useless studies,⁵⁶ fraternizing with others’ wives—
this is raw stench, not the taking of meat. [242]
- 5 *Ye idha kāmesu asaṅṅatā janā*
*rasesu giddhā asucika,missitā*⁵⁸
Those persons here, unrestrained in sense-pleasures,⁵⁷
greedy for flavours, mixed with the impure,⁵⁹ holding

⁴⁸ Only Be SnA ca.

⁴⁹ Be *asnamānā*, vl *asamānā*; Ce Ke Se *assamānā*; Ee SnA *añhamānā*: part med, “eating”; from *asnāti*, “to eat, enjoy” (often misread as *asanāti*). See SPD: *asnāti*. See Sn:N 213 n239.

⁵⁰ Be Ce *asnamāno*; Ee *añhamāno*; Se *assamāno*. See prec n.

⁵¹ Be Ce Se *bhuñjasi*; Ee *bhuñjati*.

⁵² **2d (Sn 240d)**. So *bhuñjati* *kassapa āmagandham*. Be Se & SnA lemma *bhuñjasi/bhuñjasi*; Ce Ee *bhuñjati*. If we accept *so* and the context of the verse itself, then *bhuñjati* (mc) makes good sense. Clearly, the ascetic Tissa is merely making a general statement rather than merely accusing the Buddha of immorality. Notwithstanding that Comy records Tissa as asking the Buddha directly, “Do you or do you not take *āmagandha*?” (*āmagandham bho gotama bhuñjasi na bhuñjasi*, SnA 1:280,12)—Tissa may well have asked the Buddha this question outside the sutta context.

⁵³ **3e (Sn 241e)** || V 1:36; J 1:83 6:221.

⁵⁴ **4b (Sn 242)** || J 6:11.

⁵⁵ Be Se *ajjhena,kuttam*; Ce *ajjhena,kujjam*; Ee *ajjhena,kujjam*.

⁵⁶ **4c (Sn 242c) useless studies**. PED: a hypocrite, a pharisee. Comy: Ee *niratthakānattha,janaka,gantha,pariyāpuṇanam*, “the study of texts that is without benefit and from which arises no benefit” (SnA 1:286,3); Be *niratthakam-an-eka,gantha,pariyāpuṇanam*, “the study of various texts that is without benefit” (SnA:Be 25:302,25).

⁵⁷ **5a (Sn 243)** || Sn 247; A 2:6, 19.

⁵⁸ Be *asuci,bhavamassitā*; Ce Ee Ke Se SnA *asucika,missitā*.

⁵⁹ **5b (Sn 243b)** “Mixed with the impure,” *asucika,missitā*, ie obtained through wrong livelihood. (SnA 286).

- n'atthika, diṭṭhi visamā durannayā
esāmagandho na hi maṃsa, bhojanam*
[243]
- the view nothing exists, inconsistent, obscurantist⁶⁰—
this is raw stench, not the taking of meat.
- 6** *Ye lūkhasā dāruṇā piṭṭhi, maṃsikā⁶¹
Mittadduno nikkaruṇātimānino
Adāna, sīlā na ca denti kassaci
esāmagandho na hi maṃsa, bhojanam*
[44]
- Whosoever are harsh,⁶² cruel, back-biting,
harming friends,⁶³ heartless, arrogant,
grasping by nature,⁶⁴ and who gives not to anyone—
this is raw stench, not the taking of meat. [244]
- 7** *Kodho mado thambho paccuṭṭhāpanā ca
māyā usūyā⁶⁵ bhassa. samussayo ca
mānātimāno ca asabbhi santhavo
esāmagandho na hi maṃsa, bhojanam*
- Anger, intoxication [with pride], obstinacy, hostility,
deceit, envy, and self-glorification,
arrogance, and intimacy with the bad—
this is raw stench, not the taking of meat.⁶⁶ [245]
- 8** *Ye papa, sīlā iṇa, ghāta, sūcakā⁶⁷
vohāra, kūṭā idha paṭirūpikā
narādhamā ye 'dha karonti kibbisam
esāmagandho na hi maṃsa, bhojanam*
[246]
- One of immoral habits, repudiating debts, slandering,⁶⁸
untrue in dealings, dissembling⁶⁹ here,
the lowest of people who commit bad here—⁷⁰
this is raw stench, not the taking of meat.
- 9** *Ye idha pānesu asaṅṅatā janā
paresam ādāya⁷¹ vihesam uyyutā
dussīla, luddā pharusā anādārā
esāmagandho na hi maṃsa, bhojanam*
- Those people here, unrestrained towards living beings,
taking the property of others, intent on oppression,
bad by nature, cruel in deed, harsh in speech,⁷² without
regard for others—⁷³
this is raw stench, not the taking of meat. [247]
- 10** *Etesu giddhā viruddhātipātino*
- Those beings who are greedy, harmfully hostile,⁷⁴
-
- ⁶⁰ **5c (Sn 243c) obscurantist**, *du-r-annayā* [du + anvayo, lit “one who is difficult to follow”], indocile, intractable (*du, viññāpayā*, SnA 287). Cf n13d below.
- ⁶¹ *Piṭṭhi, maṃsika*, “one who talks sweetly to one, but talks bad behind one’s back” (SnA 1:187,11); J 2:186 of an unfair judge, 5:1; Pv 3.9,7; ~*maṃsiya*. J 5:10; n ~*maṃsikatā*, Nc 39.
- ⁶² **6a.1 (Sn 244a) crude**. Comy: ruthless and unruly. CPD has *lūkhatā* (2:118e): unpleasantness, wretchedness, poor-ness, misery (PugA 229). Comy: gloomy and self-mortifying. Both are derived from *lūkha* (rough, coarse, unpleasant; bad (usu of dress or food); mediocre; opp: *pañīta* (exquisite, excellent) (V 1:212; S 2:153; A 4:10; J 1:228); *lūkha, puggala*, a miserable, offensive character; opp: *siniddha, puggala*, lovable person (Vism 132; VbhA 282).
- ⁶³ **6b (Sn 244b) harming friends**, *mitta-d, duno*, cf S 1:225. Comy: *mitta, dūbhakā*, deceiving, treacherous, harmful (cf fem *-dūbhikā*, J 2:297), Ba *mitta, dussaka* (SnA 287). Cf *mitta, dubbhika, mitta, dubbhi*. See PED: Du (3).
- ⁶⁴ **6c (Sn 244c) grasping by nature**, *adāna, sīlā*, lit: ungenerous by nature. Comy: *ādāna, sīla*, disposed to grasping.
- ⁶⁵ Be Ce *usūyā*; Ee Se *usūyā*.
- ⁶⁶ **7 (Sn 245)** || D 2:243.
- ⁶⁷ Be Ce Ee *iṇa, ghāta, sūcakā*; Se *iṇaghā ca sūcakā*.
- ⁶⁸ **8a (Sn 246a) repudiating debts, slandering**, Be Ee Pe *iṇa, ghāta, sūcakā*; Sb *iṇaghā ca sūcakā*. As tatpurusha (determinative compound): “who repudiates (their) debts”; our tr as dvandva (copulative cpd) in accordance with SnA 289. See CPD 2:274f.
- ⁶⁹ **8b (Sn 246b) dissembling**, *paṭirūpikā*, ie hiding one’s true feelings with ill intent.
- ⁷⁰ **8c (Sn 246c)** || J 5:69.
- ⁷¹ SnA also suggest reading *pare samādāya*.
- ⁷² **9c.2 (Sn 247c) without regard for others**, *anādārā*: disrespectful, regardless, indifferent, making no account (CPD).
- ⁷³ **9c.1 (Sn 247c)** || A 4:93; J 2:349.
- ⁷⁴ **10a (Sn 248a) harmfully hostile**, *viruddhātipātino*. Comy: “constantly offending living beings, grasping them with desire, being hostile with hate, not seeing the perils of delusion,” in other words, breaking the 5 precepts.

*Nicc'uyyutā pecca tamam vajanti ye
patanti sattā nirayaṃ avamsirā
esāmagandho na hi maṃsa, bhojanam*

ever bent on bad—having departed, they go to darkness,
falling headlong into hell—⁷⁵
this is raw stench, not the taking of meat. [248]

The true recluse

11 *Na maccha, maṃsam nānāsakattam⁷⁶
na naggiyam^[77] muṇḍiyam jaṭā jallam
kharājināni⁷⁹ vā nāggi, huttass'upasevanā⁸⁰
ye vā pi loke amarā bahū tapā
mantāhutī yañña-m-utūpasevanā*

either meat nor fish, nor fasting,
nor nakedness, nor a shaven head, matted hair nor dirt,⁷⁸
nor donning rough garments of animal skin, nor tending
the sacred fire,
nor even the great devotion [austerities] in the world for
the sake of eternal life;
neither mantras nor offerings, neither sacrifices nor
seasonal feasts,
will purify a mortal who has not crossed beyond doubt.⁸¹
[249]

*sodhenti maccam avitiṇṇa, kaṅkham
[45]*

12 *Sotesu⁸² gutto vidit'indriyo care*

*dhamme thito ajjava, maddave rato
saṅgātigato sabba, dukkha-p, pahīno
na lippati⁸⁷ diṭṭha, sutesu dhīro
[250]*

With sense-doors guarded,⁸³ the senses-faculties
understood,⁸⁴ let one wander,
firm in good, delighting in uprightness and gentleness.⁸⁵
Gone beyond sensual bonds, all suffering left behind,⁸⁶
the wise clings not to what is seen or heard.⁸⁸

Āmagandha's going-forth

13 *Icc-etam attham⁸⁹ bhagavā puna-p, punam
akkhāsi nam⁹⁰ vedayi manta, pārāgū
citrāhi gāthāhi muni-p, pakāsayi*

Thus the Blessed One repeatedly taught this matter.
The brahmin (Tissa), accomplished in the (Vedic)
Mantras, understood it.
With various colourful verses, the sage, free from *d*

⁷⁵ **10c (Sn 248c)** || S 1:48; J 1:233 4:103 6:100; DhA 1:447. “*patanti sattā nirayaṃ avamsirā*,” lit: beings fall with heads down into hell. The subject *sattā* is tr with the demonstr in line a.

⁷⁶ Be *na maccha, maṃsāna manāsakattam*; Ce Ee Se *na maccha, maṃsam nānāsakattam*;

⁷⁷ Be Ce Se adds *na* here; Ee omits.

⁷⁸ **11b (Sn 249b)** || Dh 141.

⁷⁹ Only Ee puts *kharājināni* in prec line.

⁸⁰ Ee adds *va yā*; Ce has only *vā*.

⁸¹ **11f (Sn 249f)** || Dh 141.

⁸² Only Be:Ka Se *yo tesu*.

⁸³ **12a.1 (Sn 250a)** || Sn 971. “**Guarded in the sense-avenues**,” *sotesu gutto*. Ee SnA *sotesu* (pref); Sb *yo tesu*. “**the sense-avenues**,” alt tr “guarded over the sense-doors” or “guarded in the sense-apertures” (Sn:N), *sotesu* < *sota*, alt tr: the sense-organs. See Sn:P n20:4b.2 for other meanings of *sota*.

⁸⁴ **12a.3 (Sn 250a) subduing the senses**, Ee *vijit'indriyo*; Be Ce *vidit'indriyo*, knowing the senses. Comy: “He should live having fully understood the 6 sense-faculties, having become clear about them” (*vidit'indriyo care'ti nāta, pariññāya chaṅindriyāni viditvā pākāṭāni katvā careyyā* (SnA 1:292,12); cf Sn 935d.

⁸⁵ **12b (Sn 250b)** || Sn 327; J 4:303 5:17 33.

⁸⁶ **12c (Sn 250c)** || Dh 237.

⁸⁷ Be Se *limpati*; Ce Ee *lippati*.

⁸⁸ **12d (Sn 250d)** || Sn 778.

⁸⁹ Only Ee *-attham*.

⁹⁰ Be Ce Se *nam*; Ee *taṃ*.

	raw stench, ⁹¹	
<i>nirāmagandho asito durannayo</i>	unattached, difficult to fathom, ⁹² proclaimed it.	c [251]
14 <i>Sutvāna buddhassa subhāsitaṃ padam</i>	Having heard the Buddha's well-spoken word, ⁹³	
<i>nirāmagandham sabba,dukkha-p,panūdanam</i> ⁹⁴	free from raw stench, ⁹⁵ pushing away all suffering, ⁹⁶	
<i>nīca,māno vandi tathāgatassa</i>	with a humble heart, he saluted the Tathagata.	
<i>Tatth'eva pabbajjam arocayitthā</i> ⁹⁷	There and then he declared to go forth.	[252]

— evaṃ —

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⁹¹ **13c (Sn 251c)** || J 3:245 349 4:470.

⁹² **13d (Sn 251d) difficult to fathom**, *du-r-annayo* [*du* + *anvaya*, conformity, following] difficult to trace, follow or find (S 1:19; Dh 92 93; Tha 92; J 2:86 4:65 6:571); impossible to be led into external views based on craving and wrong view (*netum asakkuneyyattā*; not to be guided (by others) (*du-n-neyyo*, SnA 293). Here (Sn 251) the sense is positive. Cf n5c above where the sense is negative.

⁹³ **14a (Sn 252a)** || Tha 26.

⁹⁴ Only Se *-panudanam*.

⁹⁵ Here, "raw and rank" is *nirāmagandha* [2.1.3].

⁹⁶ *Nirāmagandham sabba,dukkha-p,panūdanam*. **14b (Sn 252b)** || V 2:148 164; D 3:196; A 3:41 43; J 1:94; Ap1 145; DA 1:304.

⁹⁷ *Arocayitthā*, aor of *āroceti* = *ārocayati*, "to declare, announce, inform, relate, communicate, tell"; the short *a*-prefix is mc: glossed as *ayāci*, "he beseeched" (SnA 1:293,16): VA 588,31; SA 1:217,3 = AA 5:57,15; cf J 4:243,17 v1 ~*ettha*.

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