

Dhānañjāni Sutta

The Discourse to Dhānañjāni

[Sāriputta guides a dying person to the Brahmā world]

(Majjhima Nikāya 97/2:184-196)

Translated by Piya Tan ©2003

1 Related suttas

The Dhānañjāni Sutta gives an account of how Sāriputta guides the dying brahmin Dhānañjāni by stages to be reborn in the Brahmā world. At the close of the sutta, the Buddha rebukes him for leaving the brahmin in the “lowly Brahmā world” (*hīne brahmā,loke*) when he could have been guided to a higher level.¹

In the **Gilāyana Sutta** (S 55.54/5:408-410), the Buddha instructs Mahānāma how a dying “wise lay follower” (ie a streamwinner) could be “directed to the cessation of self-identity, —then, Mahānāma, there is no difference between a lay follower who is thus liberated in mind and a monk who has been liberated in mind for a hundred years, that is, there is no difference between the one liberation and the other” (S 55.54.19/5:410), ie he becomes an arhat.

This clearly shows that there are two routes to awakening: one monastic and the other the lay life. The monastic life properly lived is the best direct “one way” route to spiritual liberation. However, for a lay person who is properly trained in meditation, the indirect route, albeit longer, still reaches the goal. At the moment of dying, there is neither monastic nor lay, except the mind that struggles with a rush of thought moments.

The Nakula Sutta (A 6.16/3:295-298) is a heart-warming example of how a loving wife counsels her husband when he falls sick on the verge of dying. Her counselling is so effective that he immediately recovers from his illness.

Such texts belong to a fascinating group of suttas dealing with Death Studies.² They show that it is possible for a skillful person or counsellor to guide a dying person to die well,³ have a good rebirth, even gain spiritual liberation itself.

2 Dhānañjāni’s illness

Both the Dhānañjāni Sutta [27a] and its Āgama version in Chinese⁴ say that Sāriputta is informed of Dhānañjāni’s illness. According to the Pali version, Dhānañjāni sends a messenger to inform Sāriputta, but the Āgama version says that Sāriputta is told about it by another monk who has just come from Rājagaha, that though Dhānañjāni is now eager to see the Buddha and hear the Dharma, he is unable to as he is ailing. “The passage thus comes as a counterpart to the earlier instance when a monk from Rājagaha had informed Sāriputta and Dhānañjāni was well but was not eager to see the Buddha not delighted in hearing the Dhamma.”⁵

When Sāriputta visits Dhānañjāni, the Āgama version⁶ says that, on seeing Sāriputta approaching, Dhānañjāni tries to get up from his bed, but is told by the former to remain where he is. Dhānañjāni then describes his pains to Sāriputta, according to the Pali version, as being that of “cutting, crushing, tearing, and burning” in this manner:

¹ See M:H 2:xxix f. Cf the brahmin youth Subha Todeyya,putta (M 99) who, however, was not yet ready to go beyond the instruction on companionship with Brahmā, ie the cultivation of the 4 Divine Abodes (*brahma, vihāra*).

² For references on death according to Buddhism, see Bibliography.

³ This is the true meaning of *euthanasia*, a Greek word that means “good death.”

⁴ M 97.27a/2:191,34 and MĀ 27 = T1.457c20.

⁵ Analayo 2005 at M 2:191 n17.

⁶ MĀ 27 = T1.457c27.

Violent winds are cutting⁷ through my head like a strong man cleaving it open with a sharp sword...

Violent pains are crushing my head as if a strong man were tightening a strong leather strap around my head as a headband...

Violent winds are tearing my belly as if a skilled butcher or his apprentice were to carve up a cow's⁸ belly with a sharp butcher's knife. ...

Violent pains are burning up my body⁹ as if two strong men were to seize a weaker man by both arms and burn and roast him over a pit of hot coals. [29]

There is however a minor difference. While the Pali version¹⁰ gives three similes illustrating violent winds in Dhānañjāni's head and belly, *adhimattā vātā*, while the Āgama version simply speaks of his "headache," 頭痛 tóutòng,¹¹ and of "belly pains," 腹痛 fùtòng.¹² According to **Analayo**,

Especially in the last case the Pāli version fits better, since the carving up of a cow's belly can indeed be taken as an illustration of the action of various winds in the stomach, while it would not illustrate the pain experienced by Dhānañjāni so well, as the cow is already dead at the time of carving up and will thus no longer experience pain. (2005 at M 2:293)

According to **Visuddhi,magga**, "winds" are responsible for the various internal motions of the body, namely, "up-going winds" (*uddhañ,gamā vātā*) for vomiting and belching, "down-going winds" (*adho,-gamā vātā*) for the expelling of faeces and urine (Vism 350). "Wind" here clearly refers to elemental "motion," not to the object moved.

According to ancient Indian medicine, an imbalance in these winds can cause illness. **The Vinaya**, for example, records that the monk Pilinda,vaccha has "wind ailment" (*vātābādha*) (V 1:205). He is given an oil decoction as remedy: as such, this "wind ailment" is probably a stomach problem. The Vinaya again records Pilinda,vaccha as having winds in his limbs (*aṅga,vāta*) and joints (*pabba,vāta*), which **Horner** thinks refers to rheumatism (M:H 4:278 f).

3 Lovingkindness without dhyanas?

The Dhānañjāni Sutta describes how Dhānañjāni lies on his deathbed in great agony [8-9]. Sāriputta then counsels him gradually leading him to the cultivation of the divine abodes (*brahmnā,vihārā*). Dhānañjāni, who has been leading an unexemplary life, now lies on his deathbed, suffering from agonizing headaches, severe stomach cramps and high fever. Soon after being taught how to pervade the universe with the four divine abodes (lovingkindness, compassion, altruistic joy and equanimity), passes away and is reborn in the Brahmā world. According to **Analayo**

This circumstance suggests that he must have been able to put the instructions to good use, even though his physical condition would have made it impossible for him to develop absorption. It is only with the commentaries, possibly because they associated pervasion exclusively with absorption (cf Vism 308), that meditation on loving kindness becomes an exercise in conceptual imagination, directed towards oneself, a friend, a neutral person, and an enemy in turn (cf Vism 296). This method is not found anywhere in the discourses. (2003:196 n 57)

It should be noted that the Buddha's way of teaching the cultivation of lovingkindness is by way of its immeasurable and unlimited pervasion of all directions, as stated for example in **the Vatthūpama Sutta**

⁷ "Cutting," *ūhananti*, "piercing," lit "are rising upwards."

⁸ "Cow," *go*, "cattle," which is actually a collective term meaning, "cow, ox, bull."

⁹ "Burning up my body," *kāyasmim dāho*, lit "burning in the body."

¹⁰ M 97.29/1:422,2+14.

¹¹ MĀ 27 = T1.458a6.

¹² MĀ 27 = T1.458a9.

(M 7).¹³ This is the standard teaching we find throughout the Suttas. **The Cūḷaccharā Sutta** (A 1.6)¹⁴ records the Buddha as simply admonishing

Bhikkhus, if even for just the moment of a finger-snap¹⁵ a monk associates with (*āseveti*)...cultivates (*bhāveti*)...pays attention (*manasikaroti*) to a thought of lovingkindness, he is called a monk. His meditation is not in vain. He acts in accordance with the Master's teaching. He follows his advice. He does not eat the country's alms in vain.¹⁶ How much more so if he were to often cultivate it! (A 1.6.3-5/1:10 f)

4 Vindicating Sāriputta

At the close of the sutta, when Sāriputta reports to the Buddha that Dhānañjāni is seriously ill and that he (Sāriputta) has taught Dhānañjāni the four divine abodes (*brahma, vihāra*) so that he might have companionship with Brahmā,¹⁷ the Buddha replies to Sāriputta [38],

“But, Sāriputta, why did you, having established the brahmin Dhānañjāni [196] in the lowly Brahmā world, rise from your seat and leave—while there was still a higher task to be done?”¹⁸

“Bhante, I thought thus: ‘These brahmins are devoted to the Brahmā world.’ What if I were to teach the brahmin Dhānañjāni the way to companionship with Brahmā?”

“And, Sāriputta, the brahmin Dhānañjāni has died and arisen in the Brahmā world.”

(M 97.38/2:195 f)

It is evident from this dialogue that Sāriputta is unaware of Dhānañjāni's death and is consulting the Buddha regarding his act of compassion towards Dhānañjāni. Apparently, it is too late for the Buddha to give Sāriputta any advice except to state the real situation.

It is possible that Sāriputta thinks that Dhānañjāni, in his undeveloped state of mind, would be unable to attain higher states. Perhaps, on this special occasion, his compassion is greater than his wisdom. In fact, this sutta is remarkable in recording how the master of wisdom himself is capable of great compassion and religious tolerance.

If Sāriputta's act of compassion in giving instructions to the dying Dhānañjāni that only brings him to the Brahmā world, and not nirvana, is a misjudgement, then it is an error on the side of compassion. For lesser beings, this is an inspiring lesson that even great masters like Sāriputta errs, so one need not be perfect to work for the good of others, that is, as long as one errs on the side of goodness, not of evil.

5 Laymen addressed as *bhante* and *āyasmā*

5.1 DHĀNAÑJĀNI ADDRESSED AS BHANTE. When the dying brahmin **Dhānañjāni** instructs his servant to inform the Buddha and Sāriputta of his grave illness [27a], the servant addresses Dhānañjāni as “*bhante*” (literally “sir”), a term we now usually use when addressing monastics. There are two possible explanations for this mode of address. Firstly, it is proper mode of address since the servant is addressing his master. Secondly, the Majjhima Reciters might have retained (or introduced) this mode of address—after the fact—since the addressee, Dhānañjāni, is reborn in the Brahmā world, that is, as a high divine being [36, 38].

A clear example of a layman being addressed as *bhante* is found in **the Yamaka Sutta** (S 22.86).¹⁹ Anyway, *bhante* was probably a common way by which juniors addressed their seniors, or those of lower

¹³ M 7.13-19/1:38. See also D 1:251, M 2:207, S 4:322.

¹⁴ See SD 2.13.

¹⁵ “Even for just the moment of a finger-snap,” *accharā, saṅghāta, mattaṃ*. Also in **Velāma S** (A 9.21/4:395 f).

¹⁶ Comy say that there are 4 ways in which a monks use his alms: (1) an immoral monk uses them (undeservedly) like a thief; (2) a virtuous ordinary person who does not reflect on them is like a debtor; (3) a trainee (*sekhā*, ie one of the 7 Saints, short of the arhat-become) uses them as an inheritance; (4) an arhat uses them as a proper owner.

¹⁷ “Companionship with Brahmā,” *brahmā, saḥavyatā*, ie rebirth in the Brahmā world.

¹⁸ See n to §36.

status (such as servants) addressed those of higher status (such as their masters), and the Buddha adopted and adapted this common mode of address for the monks.

5.2 LAY SAINTS ADDRESSED. In **the Gilayāna Sutta** (S 55.54), Mahānāma, the dying “wise layman,” is similarly addressed as “venerable one” (*āyasmā*).²⁰ When questioned by Mahānāma on how a dying “wise lay follower” should be counselled, the Buddha replies that he should let go of all worldly and heavenly attachments. Once the instructions turn to rebirth in the heavens, the mode of address changes to “friend” (*āvuso*).²¹ In these instructions, the dying layman is told to let go of all thoughts of loved ones, of sense-pleasures, and of heavenly births, even the Brahmā world, and to “direct your mind to the cessation of self-identity.” [18b]

19 If he says thus, ‘My mind has turned away from the Brahmā world and is directed to the cessation of self-identity,’—then, Mahānāma, **there is no difference between a lay follower who is thus liberated in mind and a monk who has been liberated in mind for a hundred years,**²² that is, there is no difference between the one liberation and the other.” [19]²³

It should be noted that it is the Buddha himself who is giving these instructions, where the wise layman is addressed as *āyasmā* and *āvuso*. There is a clear hint here that such respectful modes of address (that is, *bhante*, *āyasmā* and *āvuso*) are also used for virtuous laymen or lay saints.²⁴ After all, lay saints are also “noble individuals” (*ariya, puggalā*), or members of the “noble sangha” (*ariya, saṅgha*) (D 1:156), and as such are worthy of the respectful mode of address.

Further evidence is found in **the Dhamma, cetiya Sutta** (M 89.18), where rajah Pasenadi similarly refers to his two pious ministers, Isidatta and Purāṇa, as “bhante.”²⁵ In the Dhamma, cetiya Sutta and **the Thapataya Sutta**,²⁶ both are “chamberlains” or keepers of the women’s quarters (*thapataya*; Skt *sthapataya*) of king Pasenadi. The commentary to the Thapataya Sutta says that at the time (in the Thapataya Sutta) Isidatta is a once-returner, and Purāṇa a streamwinner, content with his own wife (that is, one who is chaste but not celibate) (SA 3:278).²⁷ It is these two lay saints that rajah Pasenadi addresses as *bhante*.

The **Madhyama Āgama** parallel passage,²⁸ however, does not record such an expression. This is understandable, perhaps because the Chinese translator feels that *bhante* should be reserved for monastics. There is, of course, as argued by Analayo below, the possibility that the Pali passages (or rather, the Reciters) err. However, I think that this is a remote possibility; more likely a later monasticization of the terms *bhante* and *āyasmā*.

In **the Naḷaka, pāna Sutta** (M 68.18-20), the Buddha himself, in speaking of the attainment of streamwinning, of once-return and of non-return by a layman, addresses such a one (at least twice in each case) as “that venerable one” (*so āyasmā*), “a form of address usually only employed by laity when addressing monks and recluses” (Analayo 2005 at M 1:464). **Analayo** goes on to say that **the Madhyama Āgama** version “presents the same reflection in a more fitting manner, since it reports the male lay

¹⁹ S 22.86.39/3:113 = SD 16.5.

²⁰ Or simply “venerable.” See **Gilayana S** (S 55.54.5(1)) & n = SD 4.10; cf **Ṭhānāni S** (S 4.92/2:187-190) = SD 14.11b.

²¹ *Āvuso* (lit “one with age”) is a voc form of *āyasmā*. CPD: = Amg *āuso*, derived by Leumann (Aup Gloss) and Pischel §396 from Ved voc **āyuṣmas* (Whitney 3rd ed §454), but phonetically rather < **āvusso* < **āyuṣvas*. The term *āvuso* is used by monks and nuns to address lay followers at V 1:84,29, 2:294,15; M 1:299 ff; DhA 1:18,4. For other usages and citations, see CPD: *āvuso*.

²² I follow the Thai Pali here. See S:B 1961 n371.

²³ S 55.54.18b-19/4:410 = SD 4.10.

²⁴ The exception here is that of Dhānañjāni, who is not yet an *ariya*, and who, only upon listening to Sāriputta’s instructions, is reborn in the Brahmā world [36-38].

²⁵ See Intro (5) above & also **Dhamma, cetiya S** (M 89.18/2:123).

²⁶ M 89.18/2:124 & S 55.6/5:348-352.

²⁷ See S:W 5:303 n1, S:B 1955 n326.

²⁸ MĀ 213 = T 1.797b7.

follower recollecting another male lay follower in terms of ‘that lay follower’ [彼優婆塞]²⁹ (2005 id), and he concludes that

In an oral transmission that aims at verbatim recall of a text, however, it could occur that the honorific term used in the earlier passage [in the Naḷaka,pāna Sutta] on a monk recalling a monk was unintentionally repeated again when reciting the passage on a layman. Similarly, in the case of the Dhammacetiya Sutta king Pasenadi earlier had referred to monks, which may have misled the reciters to use the same honorific term appropriate for monks when reciting the passage on king Pasenadi’s lay employees. Once such an error had taken place, the fidelity of the tradition was such that in both discourse[s] the evidently incorrect way of address was kept as part of the oral heritage. (2005 at 1:464)

However, there is an alternative view, where the textual usage of *bhante* and *āyasmā* may be regarded as properly used when addressing certain laymen. In the Naḷaka,pāna Sutta, we again see the Buddha addressing lay saints, who as I have mentioned earlier, qualify to be addressed as *bhante* and *āyasmā*, since they are “noble individuals” and member of the “noble sangha.” The Chinese Buddhist tradition and later (post-Buddha) Pali tradition is that only monastics should be addressed as such.

Apparently, vocatives such as *āyasmā* and *bhante* are common ways of how addressing a master (employer, etc), a senior, or a teacher. When the early Buddhists adopted it (actually they were simply keeping to popular convention) and addressed monks the same way, those modes of address evolved in due course to refer more specially to monastics.

In all the above contexts, however, where laymen are addressed as *bhante* or as *āyasmā*, they are either reborn in a high divine plane—as in the case of the brahmin Dhānañjāni [36, 38]—or they are lay saints. As saintly members of the spiritual sangha, they clearly deserve to be addressed as such.

5.3 BHIKKHU. Context helps in identifying the intended audience, especially where *bhikkhu* (both nominative and vocative), and its vocative plural, *bhikkhave*, are used. If the context concerns some issue of monastic discipline where rules or decisions are made or to be observed—that is, an ecclesiastical or monastic context—these words would address the monastics. In a Dharma context (as a rule in the Suttas), such terms address would encompass all of the fourfold company (*catu,parisā*),³⁰ that is, the monks, nuns, laymen and laywomen. On the term *bhikkhu*, **Analayo**, in his *Satipaṭṭhāna: The Direct Path to Realization*, comments that

These instances [where besides monks, nuns and lay followers, too, were accomplished meditators] clearly show that the word “monks” (*bhikkhave*), used in the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta by the Buddha as a form of address to his audience, was not intended to restrict the instructions to fully ordained monks.³¹ (2003:275 f)

In his footnote to this comment, Analayo, further quotes the Majjhima Commentary where Buddhaghosa explains that in the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta context, the word *bhikkhu* includes whoever engages in the practice, that is, being a “monk” in deed, rather than as a person.

However, a caveat is important here: this statement should in no way be construed as degrading or doing away with monkhood. It simply means that “clothing does not make a man,” but one’s conduct makes one, and if such a conduct is wholesome, it should also be emulated by all. This sentiment is clear from numerous Sutta statements, such as this one:

*Na cāhaṃ brāhmaṇaṃ brūmi
yonijaṃ matti,sambhavaṃ*

I do not call one a brahmin
Simply because one is womb-born so.

²⁹ MĀ 77 = T1.546b8.

³⁰ A 2:132.

³¹ MA 1:241 explains that in the present context “monk” includes whoever engages in the practice.

*bho, vādi nāma so hoti
sace hoti sakiñcano
akiñcanaṃ anādānaṃ
tam ahaṃ brūmi brāhmaṇaṃ*

He is merely a “sir” (*bho*) by word³²
If he (still) has attachments to things.
He is one without attachments, without grasping,
That I call a brahmin.

(M 98.11 (v27) = Sn 620/p119)³³

The Sutta goes on with many other verses of similar sentiment showing that birth or status is no measure of one’s spirituality.

In Thailand, even today, the word *ajahn* (from Skt *ācārya*, P *ācariya*), meaning “teacher,” is used as a respectful way of addressed either a monk or a lay person (male or female) who is a teacher (whether secular or religious). This mode of address is very similar to the Chinese *sifu* (sometimes rendered as “master”) and the Japanese *sensei*, used both of the lay and the ordained. Such modes of address is not so much an acknowledgement of *status*, as it is the rejoicing in *the spiritual potential* that such vocatives point to.

The Kathāvatthu, dealing with the question on whether a layperson may become an arhat, states that the Uttarāpathakas (“Northerners”)³⁴ answer affirmatively, mentioning Yasa the layman, Uttiya the householder and Setu the brahmin youth as examples of lay arhats (Kvu 1:268), and its Commentary (KvuA 4.1/73) quotes the **the Dhammapada**:³⁵

Though well adorned [finely clad], if he fares in calmness,
At peace, tamed, self-controlled, living the holy life,
Having put down the rod towards all beings—
He is a brahmin, he is a recluse, he is a monk.³⁶

(Dh 142; Kvu:SR 157 f)

— — —

³² “‘Sir’ caller” (*bho, vādi*) is polysemous (it has two meanings), meaning, “he is merely one who is addressed as ‘sir,’ and who addresses others so,” “he is ‘sir’-called and a ‘sir’-caller.” Alt trs giving only either meaning but not both: (A) In the sense of “sir”-caller: Ñāṇamoli & Bodhi: “He is just one who says ‘Sir’” (M:ÑB), Norman: “he becomes one who addresses others disrespectfully” (Sn:N); (B) In the sense of merely being addressed as “sir”: Hare, and Horner foll him: “tho’ he be ‘Sir’-ed” (Sn:H; M:H); Saddhatissa: “Just because a man is entitled to be called ‘Sir’” (Sn:S); Jayawickrama: “he is but to be addressed as ‘sir’ (Sn:J). Apparently, both senses apply: a status-mind Brahmin is addressed as “sir” and is wont to address others in the same way.

³³ See also M 98 vv 27-54 = Sn 620-647 = Dh 396-423 (but Dh 423 has an additional couplet).

³⁴ *Uttarāpathaka* refers to a “northerner,” probably an inhabitant of the region of Gandhāra, Kasmīra (Kashmir) and Kambojā. See DPPN: Uttarāpatha.

³⁵ See **Laymen Saints** = SD 8.6.

³⁶ *Alaṅkato ce pi samaṃ careyya | santo danto niyato brahmacārī | sabbesu bhūtesu nidhāya daṇḍaṃ | so brāhmaṇo so samaṇo so bhikkhu.*

The Discourse to Dhānañjāni

(M 97/2:184-196)

[184]

1 Thus have I heard.

At one time the Blessed One was staying in the Squirrels' Feeding Ground in the Bamboo Forest near Rājagaha.

Sāriputta at Dakkhina, giri

2 At that time, the venerable Sāriputta was wandering in the Southern Hills [Dakkhina, giri]³⁷ by stages (on a teaching tour)³⁸ with a large community of monks. Then a certain [185] monk who had spent the rains retreat at Rājagaha approached the venerable Sāriputta and having exchanged greetings with him, sat down at one side. Sitting thus at one side, the venerable Sāriputta said this him:

“Friend, is the Blessed One well and strong?”

“The Blessed One, friend, is well and strong.”

“Friend, is the Order of Monks well and strong?”

“The Order of Monks, friend, is well and strong, too.”

“Friend, there is a brahmin named Dhānañjāni, living at the Taṇḍula, pāla Gate.³⁹ Is that brahmin Dhānañjāni well and strong?”

“The brahmin Dhānañjāni is well and strong.”

“Friend, is the brahmin Dhānañjāni heedful?”

“How can he be heedful, friend? The brahmin Dhānañjāni, friend, uses the rajah to plunder the brahmin householders and uses the brahmin householders to plunder the rajah.⁴⁰ His wife, a person of faith, coming from a clan of faith, has died, and he has taken another wife, one faithless, coming from a faithless clan.”

“What bad news indeed that we hear, my friend; what bad news indeed that we hear, friend, that Dhānañjāni has become heedless. Perhaps we should sometime meet Dhānañjāni for a dialogue.”⁴¹

3 Then the venerable Sāriputta, having stayed in the Southern Hills for as long as he wished, set out for Rājagaha, and walking in stages, eventually reached Rājagaha. There he resided in the Squirrels' Feeding Ground in the Bamboo Park near Rājagaha.

Sāriputta meets Dhānañjāni in Rājagaha

4 Then, when it was morning, the venerable Sāriputta dressed and, taking bowl and robe, entered Rājagaha for alms. [186] Now at that time, the brahmin Dhānañjāni was having his cows milked in a cowshed outside the city.

³⁷ Dakkhina, giri. This is the northern part of the Avantī kingdom, lying to the SW corner of the India, north of the Vindhya mountains. Its capital is Ujjenī (Skt Ujjayinī; modern Ujjain), north of Indore, on the Sipra River (which rises in the Vindhyas and flows into the Chambal, a tributary of the Yamuna). It is today part of the Deccan Plateau: “Deccan” comes from the Skt *dakṣiṇa* (Pali *dakkhiṇa*), meaning “south.” See MA 3:429.

³⁸ “Touring... by stages,” *cārikaṃ caramāno*, lit “walking the walk,” that is, wandering about teaching the Dharma and ministering the people. See n ad loc in **Tevijja S** (D 13.1/1:235) = SD 1.8.

³⁹ *Taṇḍula, pāla, dvāra*, one of the smaller city gates of Rājagaha (MA 3:429). *Taṇḍula* is rice “without husk, fragrant and clean-grained [ready as food]” (D 3.6a/3:88) which PED defines as “husked and ready for boiling. In Malay, this would be called “beras” which when boiled is called “nasi”; unhusked rice is called “padi” (English “paddy”). *Taṇḍula, pāla* may be rendered as “the rice-keeper,” ie one who guards the husked rice.

⁴⁰ *Dhānañjāni āvuso brāhmaṇo rājānaṃ niṣṣāya brāhmaṇa, gahapatike vilumpati; brāhmaṇa, gahapatike niṣṣāya rājānaṃ vilumpati*, lit “The brahmin Dhānañjāni, friend, depending on the rajah, plunders the brahmin householders; depending on the brahmin householders plunders the rajah.”

⁴¹ “Dialogue,” *kathā, sallāpa*, also “conversation.”

Then the venerable Sāriputta having gone for his almsround and finished his meal of almsfood, approached the brahmin Dhānañjāni. The brahmin Dhānañjāni saw the venerable Sāriputta coming in the distance, approached him and said this to him:

“Here, master Sāriputta, drink some fresh milk since there is still time for your meal.”⁴²

“Enough, brahmin, I have finished my meal for today. I will be spending the afternoon rest⁴³ at the foot of that tree. You may come there.”

“Yes, master,” the brahmin Dhānañjāni replied in assent to the venerable Sāriputta.

5a Then the brahmin Dhānañjāni, having finished his morning meal, approached the venerable Sāriputta, and after exchanging greetings with him, sat down at one side. While the brahmin Dhānañjāni was seated thus at one side, the venerable Sāriputta said this to him:

“Are you heedful, brahmin?”

Dhānañjāni’s heedlessness

5b “Master Sāriputta, how can I be heedful when I have parents to support; wife and children to support; slaves, labourers and servants to support; services towards friends and companions to discharge; duties to relatives and blood relations; duties to my guests; duties to my ancestors; duties to the gods; duties to the rajah; and this body, too, needs satisfaction and care.”⁴⁴

6 “What do you think, Dhānañjāni? Suppose someone here, on account of his parents, were not a Dharmafarer and were to live a life of vice, and because of such conduct, the hell wardens were to drag him off to hell, would he gain anything by claiming,

‘It was on account of my parents that I am not a Dharmafarer, that I live a life of vice! [187] Let not the hell wardens take me to hell!’?

Or, would his parents be able to gain anything by claiming,

‘It was on our account that he was not a Dharmafarer, that he lived a life of vice! Let not the hell wardens take him to hell!’?”

“No, indeed, master Sāriputta! Even as he cries out, the hell wardens would cast him into hell.”

7 “What do you think, Dhānañjāni? ... would he gain anything by claiming,

‘It was on account of my wife and children that I am not a Dharmafarer, that I live a life of vice! Let not the hell wardens take me to hell!’?

Or, would his wife and children be able to gain anything by claiming, ‘It was on our account that he was not a Dharmafarer, that he lived a life of vice! Let not the hell wardens take him to hell!’?”

“No, indeed, master Sāriputta! Even as he cries out, the hell wardens would cast him into hell.”

8 “What do you think, Dhānañjāni? ... would he gain anything by claiming,

‘It was on account of slaves, labourers and servants that I am not a Dharmafarer, that I live a life of vice! Let not the hell wardens take me to hell!’?

Or, would his slaves, labourers and servants be able to gain anything by claiming, ‘It was on our account that he was not a Dharmafarer, that he lived a life of vice! Let not the hell wardens take him to hell!’?”

“No, indeed, master Sāriputta! Even as he cries out, the hell wardens would cast him into hell.”

9 “What do you think, Dhānañjāni? ... would he gain anything by claiming,

‘It was on account of friends and companions that I am not a Dharmafarer, that I live a life of vice! Let not the hell wardens take me to hell!’?

⁴² *Ito bho Sāriputta payo pīyatam tāva bhattassa kālo bhavissati*, lit “Drink from this milk, master Sāriputta, there will still be time for your meal.” Evidently, this is well before noon.

⁴³ “The afternoon rest,” *divā, vihāra*, lit “the day residence,” ie afternoon siesta, often spent in meditation. See for examples in **Bhikkhūṇī Saṃyutta** (S 5).

⁴⁴ The duties that Dhānañjāni claim to be encumbered with here are actually household duties extolled by the Buddha whereby one’s wealth, justly and properly obtained, should be enjoyed (**Ādiya S**, A 5.41/3:45 f). However, here, Dhānañjāni is ironically using these very same blessings as an excuse for not being heedful.

Or, would his friends and companions be able to gain anything by claiming, ‘It was on our account that he was not a Dharmafarer, that he lived a life of vice! Let not the hell wardens take him to hell!’?”

“No, indeed, master Sāriputta! Even as he cries out, the hell wardens would cast him into hell.”

10 What do you think, Dhānañjāni? ...would he gain anything by claiming,

‘It was on account of relatives and blood relations that I am not a Dharmafarer, that I live a life of vice! Let not the hell wardens take me to hell!’?”

Or, would his relatives and blood relations be able to gain anything by claiming, ‘It was on our account that he was not a Dharmafarer, that he lived a life of vice! Let not the hell wardens take him to hell!’?”

“No, indeed, master Sāriputta! Even as he cries out, the hell wardens would cast him into hell.”

11 “What do you think, Dhānañjāni? ...would he gain anything by claiming,

‘It was on account of guests that I am not a Dharmafarer, that I live a life of vice! Let not the hell wardens take me to hell!’?”

Or, would his guests be able to gain anything by claiming, ‘It was on our account that he was not a Dharmafarer, that he lived a life of vice! Let not the hell wardens take him to hell!’?”

“No, indeed, master Sāriputta! Even as he cries out, the hell wardens would cast him into hell.” **[188]**

12 “What do you think, Dhānañjāni? ...would he gain anything by claiming,

‘It was on account of ancestors that I am not a Dharmafarer, that I live a life of vice! Let not the hell wardens take me to hell!’?”

Or, would ancestors be able to gain anything by claiming, ‘It was on our account that he was not a Dharmafarer, that he lived a life of vice! Let not the hell wardens take him to hell!’?”

“No, indeed, master Sāriputta! Even as he cries out, the hell wardens would cast him into hell.”

13 “What do you think, Dhānañjāni? ...would he gain anything by claiming,

‘It was on account of the gods that I am not a Dharmafarer, that I live a life of vice! Let not the hell wardens take me to hell!’?”

Or, would the gods be able to gain anything by claiming, ‘It was on our account that he was not a Dharmafarer, that he lived a life of vice! Let not the hell wardens take him to hell!’?”

“No, indeed, master Sāriputta! Even as he cries out, the hell wardens would cast him into hell.”

14 “What do you think, Dhānañjāni? ...would he gain anything by claiming,

‘It was on account of the rajah that I am not a Dharmafarer, that I live a life of vice! Let not the hell wardens take me to hell!’?”

Or, would the rajah be able to gain anything by claiming, ‘It was on my account that he was not a Dharmafarer, that he lived a life of vice! Let not the hell wardens take him to hell!’?”

“No, indeed, master Sāriputta! Even as he cries out, the hell wardens would cast him into hell.”

15 “What do you think, Dhānañjāni? Suppose someone here, on account of his body that needs satisfaction and care, were not to be a Dharmafarer and were to live a life of vice, and because of such conduct, the hell wardens were to drag him off to hell, would he gain anything by claiming,

‘It was on account of my body that needs satisfaction and care, that I am not a Dharmafarer, that I live a life of vice! Let not the hell wardens take me to hell!’?”

Or, would others be able to gain anything by claiming,

‘It was on account of his body that needs satisfaction and care that he was not a Dharmafarer, that he lived a life of vice! Let not the hell wardens take him to hell!’?”

“No, indeed, master Sāriputta! Even as he cries out, the hell wardens would cast him into hell.”

Dharmafaring

16 “What do you think, Dhānañjāni? Who is the better: one who, on account of his parents, is not a Dharmafarer and lives a life of vice, or one who, on account of his parents, is a Dharmafarer and lives a harmonious life?”

“Master Sāriputta, the one who, on account of parents, is not a Dharmafarer and lives a life of vice is not the better one. The one who, on account of parents, is a Dharmafarer and lives a harmonious life, is better than the one who is not....”

“Dhānañjāni, there are other kinds of work, wholesome in cause and just,⁴⁵ by means of which one could support one’s parents, and yet avoid evil and follow the way of merit.⁴⁶”

17 “What do you think, Dhānañjāni? Who is the better...? [189]

“Master Sāriputta, the one who, on account of wife and children, is not a Dharmafarer and lives a life of vice is not the better one. The one who, on account of wife and children, is a Dharmafarer and lives a harmonious life, is better than the one who is not....”

18 “What do you think, Dhānañjāni? Who is the better...?”

“Master Sāriputta, the one who, on account of slaves, labourers and servants, is not a Dharmafarer and lives a life of vice is not the better one. The one who, on account of slaves, labourers and servants, is a Dharmafarer and lives a harmonious life, is better than the one who is not....”

19 “What do you think, Dhānañjāni? Who is the better...?”

“Master Sāriputta, the one who, on account of friends and companions, is not a Dharmafarer and lives a life of vice is not the better one. The one who, on account of friends and companions, is a Dharmafarer and lives a harmonious life, is better than the one who is not....”

20 “What do you think, Dhānañjāni? Who is the better...? [190]

“Master Sāriputta, the one who, on account of relatives and blood relations, is not a Dharmafarer and lives a life of vice is not the better one. The one who, on account of relatives and blood relations, is a Dharmafarer and lives a harmonious life, is better than the one who is not....”

22 “What do you think, Dhānañjāni? Who is the better...?”

“Master Sāriputta, the one who, on account of guests, is not a Dharmafarer and lives a life of vice is not the better one. The one who is a Dharmafarer and lives a harmonious life, is better than the one who is not....”

23 What do you think, Dhānañjāni? Who is the better...?”

“Master Sāriputta, the one who, on account of ancestors, is not a Dharmafarer and lives a life of vice is not the better one. The one who is a Dharmafarer and lives a harmonious life, is better than the one who is not....”

“What do you think, Dhānañjāni? Who is the better...?”

“Master Sāriputta, the one who, on account of the gods, is not a Dharmafarer and lives a life of vice, is not the better one. [191] The one who is a Dharmafarer and lives a harmonious life, is better than the one who is not....”

24 “What do you think, Dhānañjāni? Who is the better...?”

“Master Sāriputta, the one who on account of the rajah is not a Dharmafarer, who on account of the rajah lives a life of vice, is not the better one. The one who is a Dharmafarer, who lives a harmonious life, is better than the one who is not....”

25 “What do you think, Dhānañjāni? Who is the better...?”

“Master Sāriputta, the one who, on account of the body that needs satisfaction and care, is not a Dharmafarer and lives a life of vice, is not the better one. The one who, on account of the body that needs satisfaction and care, is a Dharmafarer and lives a harmonious life, is better than the one who is not....”

“Dhānañjāni, there are other kinds of work, wholesome in cause and just, by means of which one can give the body satisfaction and care, and yet avoid evil and follow the way of merit.”

26 Then the brahmin Dhānañjāni delighted in the venerable Sāriputta’s word and having rejoiced in it, rose from his seat and left.

⁴⁵ “Wholesome in cause and just,” *sahetuka dhammika*, or “profitable and Dharma-based.”

⁴⁶ “Follow the way of merit,” *puññaṃ ca paṭipadam paṭipajjituṃ*. “Merit” (*puñña*) here refers to mundane goodness the opp of which is *pāpa*. Such meritorious deeds still bind one to the world. It is skillful deed (*kusala*) that frees one from the world. Merit, however, can form the basis for skillful acts if one is not attached to merit as worldly action. See eg (**Puñña**) **Mettā S** (A 7.59a): “Monks, be not afraid of merit. This ‘merit’ is another name for happiness.” (A 7.59a/4:88-91). This passage as a whole is an exhortation regarding right livelihood.

The dying Dhānañjāni takes leave

27a Then, at a later time, the brahmin Dhānañjāni was sick, in pain and seriously ill. Then, the brahmin Dhānañjāni addressed a certain servant,

“Come, my good man, [192] approach the Blessed One and bow at his feet in my name, saying, ‘Bhante, the brahmin Dhānañjāni is sick, in pain and seriously ill. He bows his head at the Blessed One’s feet.’ Approach the venerable Sāriputta and bow at his feet in my name, saying, ‘Bhante, the brahmin Dhānañjāni is sick, in pain and seriously ill. He bows his head at the venerable Sāriputta’s feet.’ And say thus: ‘It is good, bhante, if the venerable Sāriputta, were to come to the house of the brahmin Dhānañjāni out of compassion.’”⁴⁷

“Yes, bhante,”⁴⁸ the brahmin Dhānañjāni’s servant replied in assent to Dhānañjāni.

27b Having approached the Blessed One, the servant saluted him and sat down at one side. Sitting thus at one side, he said this to the Blessed One:

“Bhante, the brahmin Dhānañjāni is sick, in pain and seriously ill. He bows his head at the Blessed One’s feet.”

27c Then he approached the venerable Sāriputta, and having saluted him, sat down at one side. Sitting thus at one side, he said this to the venerable Sāriputta,

“Bhante, the brahmin Dhānañjāni is sick, in pain and seriously ill. He bows his head at the venerable Sāriputta’s feet and says thus: ‘It is good, bhante, if the venerable Sāriputta, were to come to the house of the brahmin Dhānañjāni out of compassion.’”

The venerable Sāriputta assented by his silence.

Dhānañjāni’s pains

28 Then the venerable Sāriputta, having taken his robe and bowl approached the house of the brahmin Dhānañjāni, and sat down on the prepared seat.⁴⁹ Thus seated, the venerable Sāriputta said this to the brahmin Dhānañjāni,⁵⁰ [M 3:264; S 4:56]

“I hope you are bearing it, Dhānañjāni. I hope you are getting better, and your pains⁵¹ are abating, not rising; that their abating is evident, not their rising.”

29 “Master Sāriputta, I cannot bear it; I am not getting better, and my pains are not abating, but rising; their rising is evident, not their abating. [193]

Violent winds are cutting⁵² through my head like a strong man cleaving it open with a sharp sword. I cannot bear it; ...

Violent pains are crushing my head as if a strong man were tightening a strong leather strap around my head as a headband.

I cannot bear it; ...

Violent winds are rending my belly as if a skilled butcher or his apprentice were to carve up a cow’s⁵³ belly with a sharp butcher’s knife.

I cannot bear it; ...

Violent pains are burning up my body⁵⁴ as if two strong men were to seize a weaker man by both [S 4:57] arms and burn and roast him over a pit of hot coals.

⁴⁷ See Intro (2).

⁴⁸ *Bhante* (lit “sir”). See above Intro (5).

⁴⁹ According to MĀ 27 = T1.457c27, on seeing Sāriputta approaching, Dhānañjāni tries to get up from his bed, but is told by the former to remain where he is.

⁵⁰ The rest of this para as at **Mahā Saccaka S** (M 36.23-25/1:243 f) & **Chann’ovāda S** (M 144.4-5/3:264; S 4:56 f). See Sutta Discovery 2004.

⁵¹ “Pains,” *dukkhā vedanā*, lit “painful feelings.”

⁵² “Cutting,” *ūhananti*, “piercing,” lit “are rising upwards.”

⁵³ “Cow,” *go*, “cattle,” which is actually a collective term meaning, “cow, ox, bull.”

⁵⁴ “Burning up my body,” *kāyasmim dāho*, lit “burning in the body.”

I cannot bear it; I am not getting better, and my pains are not abating, but rising; their rising is evident, not their abating.

Sāriputta's admonition

30 What do you think, Dhānañjāni, which is better: hell or the animal world?"

"The animal world, master Sāriputta, is better than hell."

"What do you think, Dhānañjāni, which is better: the animal world or the ghost realm?"

"The ghost realm, master Sāriputta, is better than the animal world."

"What do you think, Dhānañjāni, which is better: the ghost realm or the human world?"

"The human world, master Sāriputta, is better than the ghost realm."

"What do you think, Dhānañjāni, which are better: the human world or the devas of the Four Great Kings [*Cātum, mahārājika*]?"⁵⁵

"The devas of the Four Great Kings, master Sāriputta, are better than the human world." [194]

"What do you think, Dhānañjāni, which are better: the devas of the Four Great Kings or the devas of the heaven of Thirty-three [*Tāvatisa*]?"

"The devas of the heaven of Thirty-three, master Sāriputta, are better than the devas of the Four Great Kings."

"What do you think, Dhānañjāni, which are better: the devas of the heaven of the Thirty-three or the devas of the heaven of Yāma?"

"The devas of the heaven of Yāma, master Sāriputta, are better than the devas of the heaven of the Thirty-three."

"What do you think, Dhānañjāni, which are better: the devas of the heaven of Yāma or the devas of Tusita heaven [of the contented gods]?"

"The devas of Tusita heaven, master Sāriputta, are better than the devas of the heaven of Yāma."

"What do you think, Dhānañjāni, which are better: the devas of Tusita heaven or the Nimmāna, ratī devas [who delight in creation]?"

"The Nimmāna, ratī devas, master Sāriputta, are better than the devas of Tusita heaven."

"What do you think, Dhānañjāni, which are better: the Nimmāna, ratī devas or the Para, nimitta, vasavatti [who lord over the creations of others]?"

"The Para, nimitta, vasavatti devas, master Sāriputta, are better than the Nimmāna, ratī devas."

Companionship with Brahmā

31 "What do you think, Dhānañjāni, which are better: the Para, nimitta, vasavatti devas or the Brahmā world?"

"Master Sāriputta says, 'The Brahmā world'? Master Sāriputta says, 'The Brahmā world'?"

Then the venerable Sāriputta thought, "These brahmins are devoted to the Brahmā world. What if I were to teach the brahmin Dhānañjāni the way to companionship with Brahmā?"⁵⁶

Then he said to the brahmin, "Dhānañjāni, I shall teach you the way to companionship with Brahmā. Listen, pay close attention to it, I will speak."

"Yes, master Sāriputta," the brahmin Dhānañjāni replied in assent to the venerable Sāriputta. [195]

The venerable Sāriputta said this:

32 "And what, Dhānañjāni, is the way to companionship with Brahmā?"

Here, Dhānañjāni, a monk dwells pervading

one quarter with a mind filled with lovingkindness;

likewise the second quarter,

likewise the third quarter,

likewise the fourth quarter.

⁵⁵ For a fuller list of the heavenly realms, see eg **Sāleyyaka S** (M 41.15-42/1:289).

⁵⁶ "Companionship with Brahmā," *brahmā, sahavyatā*, ie rebirth in the 1st-absorption Brahmā world.

Thus above, below, across, everywhere and to everyone as well as to himself, he dwells pervading the whole world with lovingkindness that is vast, exalted, boundless, without enmity, without ill-will.

This, Dhānañjāni, is the way to companionship with Brahmā.

33 Furthermore, Dhānañjāni, the monk, dwells pervading one quarter with a mind filled with compassion; likewise the second quarter, likewise the third quarter, likewise the fourth quarter.

Thus above, below, across, everywhere and to everyone as well as to himself, he dwells pervading the whole world with compassion that is vast, exalted, boundless, without enmity, without ill-will.

This, Dhānañjāni, is the way to companionship with Brahmā.

34 Furthermore, Dhānañjāni, the monk dwells pervading one quarter with a mind filled with altruistic joy; likewise the second quarter, likewise the third quarter, likewise the fourth quarter.

Thus above, below, across, everywhere and to everyone as well as to himself, he dwells pervading the whole world with altruistic joy that is vast, exalted, boundless, without enmity, without ill will.

This, Dhānañjāni, is the way to companionship with Brahmā.

35 Furthermore, Dhānañjāni, the monk dwells pervading one quarter with a mind filled with equanimity, likewise the second quarter, likewise the third quarter, likewise the fourth quarter.

Thus above, below, across, everywhere and to everyone as well as to himself, he dwells pervading the whole world with equanimity that is vast, exalted, boundless, without enmity, without ill-will.

This, Dhānañjāni, is the way to companionship with Brahmā.”

Dhānañjāni takes his leave

36 “In that case, master Sāriputta, I bow my head at the feet of the Blessed One, saying: ‘Bhante, the brahmin Dhānañjāni is sick, in pain, seriously ill; he bows his head at your feet.’”

Then the venerable Sāriputta, having established the brahmin Dhānañjāni in the lowly Brahmā world, rose from his seat and left—while there was still a higher task to be done.⁵⁷

Then not long after the venerable Sāriputta had left, the brahmin Dhānañjāni died and arose in the Brahmā world.”

37 Then the Blessed One addressed the monks,

“Bhikshus, this Sāriputta,⁵⁸ having established the brahmin Dhānañjāni in the lowly Brahmā world, rose from his seat and left—while there was still a higher task to be done.”

38 Then the venerable Sāriputta approached the Blessed One, saluted him and then sat down at one side. Sitting thus at one side, the venerable Sāriputta said this to the Blessed One:

“Bhante, the brahmin Dhānañjāni is sick, in pain, seriously ill; he bows his head at your feet.”

“But, Sāriputta, why did you, having established the brahmin Dhānañjāni [196] in the lowly Brahmā world, rise from your seat and leave—while there was still a higher task to be done?”

“Bhante, I thought thus: ‘These brahmins are devoted to the Brahmā world.’ What if I were to teach the brahmin Dhānañjāni the way to companionship with Brahmā?””

⁵⁷ “While there was still a higher task to be done,” *sati uttari, karaṇīye*. Sāriputta failed to teach the dying Dhānañjāni how to gain the supramundane path and be assured of enlightenment, compared to which the Brahmā world is “lowly” (*hīna*). Comy is silent on this point. The Majjhima Reciters, in a rare gesture, here express their own opinion here regarding Sāriputta’s deed, but it is recorded as the Buddha’s word later [38].

⁵⁸ “This Sāriputta,” *eso Sāriputto*, which suggests a gentle disapproval from the Buddha.

“And, Sāriputta, the brahmin Dhānañjāni has died and arisen in the Brahmā world.”⁵⁹

— evaṃ —

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⁵⁹ Although the epithet “lowly” (*hīna*) is not mentioned of the Brahmā world here, the Buddha is clearly rebuking Sāriputta. Although elsewhere (eg **Subha S**, M 99.24-27; cf **Brahmavihāra S**, A 10.28), the Buddha teaches the way to the Brahmā world, here Dhānañjāni has the potential of attaining liberation itself. See **Esukārī S** (M 96/2:181 f)