

# Bhaddeka,ratta Sutta

## The Discourse on the Wholesome Night

[Living here and now]  
(Majjhima Nikāya 131/3:187-189)  
Translated by Piya Tan ©2004

### Introduction

#### 1 Bhaddekaratta as “the wholesome night”

The sutta title is puzzling. **Bodhi**, in his Majjhima translation note, concludes with the interesting notion that *bhadd’eka,ratta* is “a term coined by the Buddha himself to describe a certain aspect of development.”<sup>1</sup> This sutta is essentially about the practice of mindfulness through the cultivation of insight (*vipassanā*) by watching mental states as each arise through a night of meditation.<sup>2</sup>

In fact, the Majjhima Commentary on the Sutta explains *bhadd’eka,ratta* as “delighting in the one of the auspicious, that is, the mind’s accomplishment in devotion to insight” (MA 5:1).<sup>3</sup> It should be noted here that “insight” (*vipassanā*) here does *not* refer to any system of meditation (certainly not the Insight Meditation of our times),<sup>4</sup> but simply to the wisdom that leads one to see true reality and liberation.

The word *bhadda* is common and has many meanings: “good, excellent, noble, worthy, pious; fortunate, auspicious, happy, blest” (Childers’ DPL). Although the word is polysemic, here it refers to the wholesome practice of a meditator, and as such is best rendered as “wholesome,” or more simply “good” or “auspicious.”

An important clue on the meaning of *bhadda* is found in **the (Cattāro) Padhāna Sutta** (A 4.14), where the “exertion of guarding” (*anurakkhaṇa-p, padhāna*) is defined by the Buddha, thus: “Here, bhikkhus, a monk guards the auspicious (*bhaddaka*) sign of concentration when it has arisen...”<sup>5</sup> The Aṅguttara Commentary defines *bhaddaka*, simply as “obtained” (*laddhakam*) (AA 3:20). The Ṭīkā, however, gives more details, saying:

*Bhaddakan ti abhaddakānaṃ nīvaraṇ’ādi,pāpa,dhammānaṃ vikkhambhanena rāga,vigama-  
nena ekanta,hitattā dullabhata ca bhaddakam sundaram. Na hi aññaṃ samādhi.nimittam evam  
dullabham rāgassa uju,vipaccanika,bhūtam atthi.*

*Bhaddaka* means beautiful, by way of the suppression of such inauspicious evil states such as the hindrances, and auspicious by way of the singular benefit, difficult to obtain, by way of the ridding of lust. For the direct knowledge of the samadhi-sign is not difficult to obtain as such, when there a direct opposition to lust.” (AAṬ:Be 2239)

Here we see a close connection between *bhaddaka* = *bhaddeka* and samadhi, which also fits the context of the Bhaddeka,ratta Suttas.

Furthermore, since this discourse is about spiritual insight, it is possible to resolve *bhaddekaratta* as *bhadda* + *eka* + *ratta*, where *eka* means “one,” as a synecdoche<sup>6</sup> for samadhi (oneness of mind), or even

<sup>1</sup> M:ÑB 1343 f n1210 (2005).

<sup>2</sup> For another possible interpretation, see **Samiddhi S** (S 1.20) = SD 21.4 Intro (1).

<sup>3</sup> *Bhadd’eka,rattassā ti vipassanānyoga,samannāgatattā bhaddakassa eka,rattassa.*

<sup>4</sup> What we call Insight Meditation today comprises systems based on the teachings of Jetavana Sayadaw of Burma, and promoted by his pupil, Mahasi Sayadaw, and by the famous lay teacher U Ba Khin, which is promoted by the Indian lay teacher Goenka. I am not evaluating the system here, as I find those Vipassana methods works very well with the Forest Meditation of Ajahn Chah, both of which are harmoniously taught by the Minding Centre, Singapore.

<sup>5</sup> A 4.14.5/2:17 = SD 10.2.

<sup>6</sup> A **synecdoche** is a figure of speech in which a part is used to refer to the whole, eg “the robe” for monkhood, or where a whole refers to a part (common in political language), eg “Kosala conquered Magadha.”

dhyana, and *ratta* (Skt *rakta*) as the past participle of *rañjati* = *rajjati* (“to delight in,” used in a wholesome sense). Hence, *bhaddeka,ratta* could mean “delighting in the wholesome oneness (of mind).”

In his Majjhima comparative study,<sup>7</sup> **Analayo**, the Sanskrit title of this sutta reads *bhadraga,rātrīya*,<sup>8</sup> or *bhadraka,rātrīyaḥ*,<sup>9</sup> or *bhadraka,rātrīyasya sūtrasya*,<sup>10</sup> all of which translate as “a good night” or “a wholesome night.” The Chinese Āgama version transcribe the same title as 跋地羅帝,<sup>11</sup> corresponding to *bat di<sup>h</sup> la tej<sup>h</sup>* in early middle Chinese (according to EG Pulleyblank).<sup>12</sup> Another Chinese Āgama text similarly speaks of “an auspicious night,” 善夜,<sup>13</sup> and three Tibetan versions speak of ‘*phags pa mtshan mo bzang po* (*ārya,bhadraka,rātrī*), “noble good night” or “noble auspicious night.”<sup>14</sup>

**Bodhi**, in his Majjhima translation note, says that

*ratta* and *ratti* could be taken to represent respectively either Skt *rātra* and *rātrī* (= night) or Skt *rakta* and *rakti* (= attachment)... The Central Asian Skt version, the Skt title at the head of the Tibetan version and the Tibetan translation itself all use *bhadrakarātri*. This confirms the identification of *ratta* with “night”: the change from *-e-* to *-a-* can be understood as an attempt to convert a difficult reading into a more familiar one. (M:ÑB 1343 f n1210, 2005)

## 2 Origins of the Bhaddekaratta texts

**2.1 THE BHADDEKARATTA SUTTAS.** The heart of this sutta is a short verse, **the Bhaddeka,ratta Gāthā** [3, 10], which is well known. There are altogether four suttas entitled *Bhaddeka,ratta*, namely:

**Bhaddeka,ratta Sutta** (M 131/3:187-189): The Buddha himself explains the verse.

**Ānanda Bhaddeka,ratta Sutta** (M 132/3:190-190 f): Ānanda elaborates on the verse.

**Mahā Kaccāna Bhaddeka,ratta Sutta** (M 133/3:192-199): Mahā Kaccāna elaborates on the verse.

**Lomasak’āṅgiya Bhaddeka,ratta Sutta** (M 134/3:199-202): The Buddha himself explains the verse.

The Bhaddekaratta verse is also found in **the Netti-p,pakaraṇa** (Nett 149) and **the Apadāna** (Lomasak’āṅgiya Therāpadāna, Ap 545.20-23/506).

In the Bhaddeka,ratta Sutta (M 131) (our sutta) and the Lomasak’āṅgiya Bhaddekaratta Sutta (M 134), **the Buddha** himself elaborates on three and a half lines [abeg]. **Ānanda** repeats verbatim the Buddha’s explanations in the Ānanda Bhaddeka,ratta Sutta. From this selective explanation, we can immediately surmise that the other stanza lines expand on these selected lines by way of internal commentary.

Mahā Kaccāna, too, elaborates on the same three and a half lines, but gives a more detailed explanation in the Mahā Kaccāna Bhaddeka,ratta Sutta. While **the Buddha** explains the verse using the framework of **the five aggregates** (*pañca-k,khandha*), **Mahā Kaccāna** frames his explanations around **the twelve sense-fields** (*dvādas’āyatana*), that is, the six internal sense-bases (sense organs) and **the six external sense-objects**. The common underlying element in the sense-experiences is **consciousness** (*viññāna*), that is, those in the grasp of sensual desire, and those free from it. As such, his framework is actually the **eighteen elements** (*aṭṭhārasa dhātuyo*), namely, the six sense-bases, the six sense-objects, and

<sup>7</sup> *A Comparative Study of the Majjhima Nikāya*, draft, 2005.

<sup>8</sup> Cat no 816 V3 in SHT (*Sanskrihandschriften aus den Turfanfunden*) 3:32 (1971); cf also R2.

<sup>9</sup> Fragments no 3 b3 in Minayeff & Oldenburg (*Buddhist Texts from Kashgar and Nepal*) 1983:243.

<sup>10</sup> Fragment no 4 b1 in Minayeff & Oldenburg 1983.

<sup>11</sup> MĀ 165 = T1.696c7.

<sup>12</sup> *Lexicon of Reconstructed Pronunciation in Early Middle Chinese, Late Middle Chinese and Early Mandarin*, Vancouver: UBC Press, 1991:27, 76, 203.

<sup>13</sup> T1362 = T21.881c10.

<sup>14</sup> Tibetan versions no 313 = *mdo sde sa* 161b2, no 617 = *rgyud ’bum ba* 56a7, and no 974 = *gzungs ’dus vam* 90a3.

the six sense-consciousnesses, forming “the eighteen physical and mental elements that constitute the conditions or foundations of the process of perception.”<sup>15</sup>

Sanskrit fragments of the Bhaddekaratta Sutta found in Central Asia<sup>16</sup> parallel M 131 (our sutta) in stating that the Buddha at Jeta, vana near Sāvattihī addresses the monks unprompted.<sup>17</sup> The Sanskrit version however shows a remarkable departure in the direction of popular Buddhism. It preserves parts of the verses, but the rest of the fragment continues with dharanis (mantras for meditation or protection),<sup>18</sup> so that the rest of it must have been quite different from the Pali version.

**2.1 LATENESS OF THE BHADDEKA,RATTA SUTTA (M 131).** Scholars have noted an interesting discrepancy in the Vibhaṅga Vagga, where the Bhaddekaratta Suttas are located. All the other vaggas (chapters) of the Majjhima each has exactly ten discourses, except for the Vibhaṅga Vagga.<sup>19</sup> Apparently, scholars propose that **the Bhaddeka,ratta Sutta** (M 131) and the Dakkhiṇa Vibhaṅga Sutta (M 142) are later additions, which does not, however, mean that they are late works. **Analayo**, in his *Comparative Study of the Majjhima Nikāya*,<sup>20</sup> gives a helpful summary of the problem here:

Looking back on the altogether four Pāli discourses concerned with the *bhaddekaratta* verses, a noteworthy circumstance is that the chapter in which they are found, the *Vibhaṅga Vagga*, counts altogether twelve discourses. All other chapters in the *Majjhima Nikāya* consist of ten discourses only. Due to the present chapter’s departure from the standard count of ten discourses, the overall count of *Majjhima Nikāya* discourses runs into one-hundred-fifty-two, even though its main division is into three “fifties,” *pañṇāsa*, headings which suggests that there should be only one-hundred-fifty discourses.<sup>21</sup>

This suggests the possibility that the *Vibhaṅga Vagga* originally may have had only ten discourses, to which subsequently two discourses were added. As the four discourses concerned with the *bhaddekaratta* verses treat the same topic, perhaps one or the other among them could be related to such an addition to an earlier set of ten discourses.

The first discourse among the four, the *Bhaddekaratta Sutta*, records exactly the same exposition as found in the Pāli and Chinese versions of the *Lomasakaṅgiyabhaddekaratta Sutta*, namely a treatment of the implications of the *bhaddekaratta* verses from the perspective of the five aggregates, given by the Buddha. It could easily be imagined how during the course of oral transmission the introductory part of the *Lomasakaṅgiyabhaddekaratta Sutta* was lost and only the exposition itself was remembered, which then became the *Bhaddekaratta Sutta*.

As the *Bhaddekaratta Sutta* is the only out of the four Pāli versions that does not have a Chinese counterpart, this discourse could indeed be the outcome of a transmission mistake, which perhaps was added to the *Vibhaṅga Vagga*, thereby causing an increase of the number of discourses in this chapter.<sup>22</sup> The Sanskrit fragments paralleling the *Bhaddekaratta Sutta* do not necessarily contradict this hypothesis, as after the verses on an auspicious night the Sanskrit

<sup>15</sup> See important def in BDict: Dhātu (II).

<sup>16</sup> Cat no 816 in SHT (*Sanskrihandschriften aus den Turfanfunden*) III:32 f.

<sup>17</sup> Cat no 816 SHT V:1 f.

<sup>18</sup> Cat no 816 SHT V:4 f.

<sup>19</sup> L Renou, “Les divisions dans les texts sanscrits,” in *Indo Iranian Journal*, 1957:2 & 29 notes that groups of ten is a principal grouping in Vedic texts, which was also frequently used by the Buddhists and the Jains.

<sup>20</sup> 2005, draft (personal communications).

<sup>21</sup> Norman 1983:48.

<sup>22</sup> Horner (1959) at M 3:233 n1 arrives at the opposite hypothesis, as in relation to the Bhaddekaratta Sutta, she comments: “This is the Vagga that has 12 Discourses. If it were thought desirable to reduce them to the normal 10, this Discourse [ie the Bhaddekaratta Sutta], spoken by the Lord, would rank as one, and the next three, spoken by disciples, would have to be counted together as another single Discourse.” Yet, the other three discourses are not all spoken by disciples, as only M 132 and M 133 are spoken by disciples, whereas the exposition in M 134 is spoken by the Buddha, so that authorship alone would not suffice for considering them as three versions of a single original. (Analayo’s n)

version continues with *dhāraṇīs* etc., so that the Sanskrit discourse seems to stem from a different line of development.<sup>23</sup>

On this assumption, the count of discourses in this chapter could be reduced to eleven. A further reduction to ten through selecting another of the discourses concerned with the *bhaddekaratta* verses, however, does not seem possible. Though the introductory section of the *Mahākaccānabhaddekaratta Sutta* about the meeting between Samiddhi and a *deva* recurs in the same terms as the introduction to another discourse of different content in the *Samyutta Nikāya*,<sup>24</sup> and the description of how the monks approached Mahākaccāna recurs in the same terms in the *Madhupīṇḍika Sutta*,<sup>25</sup> the *Madhyama Āgama* parallel agrees in both respect with the presentation in the *Mahākaccānabhaddekaratta Sutta*. Hence, at least from a comparative perspective, it would seem that the presentation in the *Mahākaccānabhaddekaratta Sutta* is well established, as is the case for the other two discourses treating the *bhaddekaratta* verses.

Another discourse that could have made its way into the *Vibhaṅga Vagga* at a later stage is the *Dakkhiṇāvibhaṅga Sutta*, a discourse which records how the Buddha refused a gift made to him by his fostermother and then gave an exposition on the merits of offerings to different recipients.<sup>26</sup>

(Analayo at M 3:201, 2005)

Although the *Bhaddekaratta Sutta* is a late addition to the *Vibhaṅga Vagga* and the *Majjhima* as a whole, it is a useful addition, in that it preserves or purport to preserve the Buddha's own version of the *Bhaddekaratta* teaching generally addressed to the whole community, not to a particular individual, as is the case in the other *Bhaddekaratta Suttas*.

### 3 The 15 wrong views and the 16 doubts

The *Bhaddekaratta Sutta* here presents fifteen wrong views that are to be avoided [§§4, 6, 8] and their antidotes [§§7, 9, 11]. This simple framework showing the wrong views is based on the five aggregates (*pañca-khandha*), wrongly viewed over the three periods of time (past, present, future), thus totalling 15 wrong views. Conversely, the avoidance of them is regarded as the 15 right views, that is, no views.

Elsewhere, such as in **the Sabb'āsava Sutta** (M 2.7 f), **the Mahā Taṇhā,saṅkhaya Sutta** (M 38.23)<sup>27</sup> and **the Paccaya Sutta** (S 12.20), we find a slightly different way of dealing with wrong views, that is, classifying them as "the sixteen doubts," in sets according to past, future and present:

- (1) 'Was I in the past?'
- (2) 'Was I not in the past?'
- (3) 'What was I in the past?'
- (4) 'How was I in the past?'
- (5) 'Having been what, did I become in the past? [What was I before I became that in the past?]'”
- (6) 'Will I be in the future?'
- (7) 'Am I not in the future?'
- (8) 'What will I be in the future?'
- (9) 'How will I be in the future?'

<sup>23</sup> Cf cat no 816 R in SHT III:32 f.

<sup>24</sup> **The Samiddhi S** (S 1.20/1:8,16) records a visit by a *deva* to Samiddhi who had just taken a bath at the same hot springs (cf also J167/2:57). This meeting leads to a different discussion, as the visiting *deva* tries to tempt Samiddhi into enjoying sensual pleasures. The *Āgama* parallels to Samiddhi S (S 1.20)—SĀ 1078 = T2.281c4 & SĀ<sup>2</sup> 17 = T2.379a24—do not identify the monk.

<sup>25</sup> M 18/1:110,6; MĀ 115 = T1.603c17 and EĀ 40.10 = T2.743a23.

<sup>26</sup> M 142/3:253-257.

<sup>27</sup> See SD 7.9 (2005).

- (10) ‘Having been what, what will I become in the future? [What now would lead me to that future state?]<sup>28</sup>’
- (11) ‘Am I?’
- (12) ‘Am I not?’
- (13) ‘What am I?’
- (14) ‘How am I?’
- (15) ‘Where has this being come from?’
- (16) ‘Where will it [this being] go?’” (M 2.7/1:8, 38.23/1:265; S 12.20/2:26 f)

**The Visuddhi, magga**<sup>29</sup> discusses the abandonment of these 16 doubts in some detail. **The Saṃyutta Commentary** explains that the basic division expressed in the doubts—between existing and not existing in the past, etc—reflects the antinomy of eternalism and annihilationism. The other doubts pertaining to past lives arise within an eternalist framework. Similar discussions apply to the doubts pertaining to the future and the present (SA 2:241 f).

#### 4 The 4 self-identity views

The explanation in **verse 8** of the Sutta relates how an uninstructed ordinary person tends to regard any of the five aggregates (form, feeling, perception, mental formations, consciousness) in these ways:

- the aggregate as the self, or
- the self as possessing the aggregate, or
- the aggregate as in the self, or
- the self as in the aggregate).

The **Paṭisambhidā, magga** illustrates the four basic modes of self-identity view in connection with form in these manners:

- One wrongly regards form as self, just as that the flame of a burning oil-lamp is identical to the colour of the flame.
- One wrongly regards self as possessing form, just as a tree possesses a shadow.
- One wrongly regards form as in self, just as the scent is in the flower.
- One wrongly regards self as in form, just as a jewel is in a casket.<sup>30</sup>

**The Mahā Puṇṇama Sutta** (M 109.10/ 3:17 f) and **the Cūḷa Vedalla S** (M 44.7 f/1:300) list the 20 kinds of self-identity view in connection with the five aggregates.

**Verse 9** of the sutta shows the opposite cycle, how an instructed noble disciple does not identify any of the five aggregates in terms of self.

A more elaborate application of this formula, differently worded but conveying the same idea, is found in **the Mūla,pariyāya Sutta** (M 1), where it is said, for example, that

The uninstructed ordinary worldling perceives earth as earth, but having perceived earth as earth,<sup>31</sup> he conceives<sup>32</sup> (himself as) earth;

<sup>28</sup> See **Sabb’āsava S** (M 2.7/1:8).

<sup>29</sup> *Vism* 19.5 f/599 & 19.21-27/603-605.

<sup>30</sup> *Pm* 2.50, 74, 77, 90 = 1:144 f.

<sup>31</sup> Comy says that there are 4 wrong ways of regarding the body due to mental conceivings and false views: (1) he sees physical form as self; (2) he sees self in physical form; (3) he thinks self is other than physical form; (4) he sees self as having physical form or physical form as in self (MA 1:31). The first is an annihilationist view; the rest are eternalist views.

<sup>32</sup> “He conceives,” *maññati*, “he thinks.” This is the predominant verb here. The verb *maññati* is often used in the Pali suttas to refer to distorted thinking, ie, ascribing to an object or experience characteristics and significance that are not derived from that object or experience, but from one’s own subjective imaginings (*maññanā*). “The cognitive distortion introduced by conceiving consists, in brief, in the intrusion of the egocentric perspective into the experience already slightly distorted by spontaneous perception.” (M:ÑB 1162 n6). Comy says that the activity of

he conceives (himself) in earth;  
 he conceives (himself apart) from earth;  
 he conceives earth to be ‘mine’  
 —he delights in earth.

Why is that? Because he lacks full understanding,<sup>33</sup> I say. (M 1.3/1:1)

In this connection, the Bhaddeka,ratta Sutta, or **the Pārileyya Sutta** (S 22.81)<sup>34</sup> should be studied first and then the more difficult **Mūla,pariyāya Sutta** (M 1).<sup>35</sup>

## 5 Related texts

The theme of watching the present is central to Buddhist meditation. A number of texts attest to this admonition. In **the Atta,daṇḍa Sutta** of the Sutta Nipāta, the Buddha admonishes

Let the past wither away.	<i>yaṃ pubbe taṃ virosehi</i>	
Let what comes later be nothing—	<i>pacchā te māhu kiñcanaṃ</i>	
If you grasp not at anything in between,	<i>majjhe ce no gahessasi</i>	
You will wander about calmed.	<i>upasanto carissasi</i>	(Sn 949/15.15)

This verse is interesting in that the key words *pubbe*, *pacchā* and *majjhe* do not have their usual dictionary sense of “front,” “back” and “middle,” respectively. Instead here, according to the Mahā Niddesa, they mean “the past,” “the future” and “the present” respectively (Nm 434).

The exact sentiments of **Sn 949** (in the Atta,daṇḍa Sutta) is found in the Dhammapada Commentary story of the acrobat **Uggasena**, who, after doing 14 somersaults, lands on his feet on the top of a bamboo pole. Then he hears the Buddha’s koan-like teaching and becomes an arhat:

Let go of the front [future]!  
 Let go of the back [past]!  
 Let go of the middle [the present]!  
 Cross over to the farther shore [nirvana]!  
 With the mind released from everything,  
 Suffer no more birth nor decay. (Dh 348; DhA 24.6/4:62 f)

Another Dhammapada verse—in the Brāhmaṇa Vagga—says:

For whom there is nothing  
 In front, behind or in the middle,  
 Who has nothing, ungrasping,  
 Him I call a brahmin. (Dh 421)

By “who has nothing” (*akiñcanaṃ*) is meant that there is no “grasping through craving” in the three aspects (past, future, present) (DhA 26.38/4:230). A similar teaching is given in **the Brahma,deva Sutta** (S 6.3).<sup>36</sup>

The benefits of the practice exhorted by the Bhaddeka,ratta Suttas are mentioned in **the Araññe Sutta** (S 1.10), where a forest deva asks the Buddha why the monks meditating in the forests, living only on a single meal a day, look very serene. The Buddha’s reply, echoing of the sentiment of the Bhaddeka,ratta Suttas, thus:

conceiving is governed by the three defilements—craving, conceit, views—that accounts for the different ways it manifests itself (MA 1:26). For a shorter version of this teaching, see eg **Nakula,pitā S** (S 22.1/ 3:1-5).

<sup>33</sup> “Lack of full understanding,” *apariññāta*. See **Mūlapariyāya S** (M 1) = SD 11.8 Intro (2).

<sup>34</sup> S 22.81/3:94-99 = SD 6.1.

<sup>35</sup> M 1/1:1-6 = SD 11.8.

<sup>36</sup> S 6.3/1:140-142 = SD 12.4.

They do not sorrow after the past,  
Nor do they long for the future.  
They keep themselves to what is before them—  
Hence their demeanour is so serene.

Through longing for the future,  
Through sorrowing after the past,  
Fools dry up and wither away  
Like green reed that is cut down. (S 1.10/1:5)

The same sentiment is succinctly expressed in a stanza of **the Eka,viḥāriya Thera,gāthā**:

If no one at all is found in front or behind,      *purato pacchato vāpi ce na vijjati*  
It is very pleasant for one dwelling in the forest.      *atīva phāsu bhavati ekassa vasato vane.*  
(Tha 537)

As already mentioned [2], this sutta should be studied with such as suttas as **the Mahā Taṇhā,saṅkhaya Sutta** (M 38),<sup>37</sup> **the Sabb'āsava Sutta** (M 2.7/1:8) and **the Paccaya Sutta** (S 12.20/2:26 f), all of which give a slightly different way of dealing with wrong views, that is, classifying them as “the sixteen doubts,” instead of the fifteen wrong views mentioned below in the Sutta [§§4, 6, 8].

Ñāṇananda has written an enlightening introduction and notes to his translation of the Bhaddekaratta Sutta, called *The Ideal Solitude*.<sup>38</sup>

## 6 Ānanda's story

Scholars of comparative Buddhism have noted how the simple teachings of self-reliance of the Bhaddekaratta Sutta later, in the Mahāyāna, developed apotropaic (magical and protective) departures. The Sutta's Āgama parallel, found at MĀ 167 = T1.699c-700b, has the title “spoken by Ānanda,” 阿難說, and agrees with M 132 on locating the discourse in Jeta,vana, near Sāvattihī. Sanskrit fragments<sup>39</sup> have also preserved a discourse on the verses on an auspicious night with Ānanda as its main protagonist.

Analayo, in his *Comparative Study of the Majjhima Nikāya*, notes that, “[j]udging from what has been preserved of the introductory narration,”<sup>40</sup> this discourse begins with a tale also found in **the Divyāvadāna**<sup>41</sup> and in **the Śūrāngama Śūtra**.<sup>42</sup> According to this tale, Ānanda has been overpowered by a magic spell by an outcaste or untouchable (*caṇḍāla*) woman, whose daughter has fallen in love with him and is rescued by a magical counterspell by the Buddha just in time to prevent him from having sexual intercourse with the girl. Winternitz (1912:249) comments that

the whole literature of mantras and *dhāraṇīs*, of spells and incantations, found in later Mahāyāna, finds its explanation in this episode. The common people felt a need for mantras and spells, and Buddhism had to take this need into account. In order to be able to counter the mantras of other sorcerers, the Buddhist monks needed to have their own mantras. At first these “mantras” were moral sayings like the Maṅgala Sutta and the Ratana Sutta...but eventually that did not suffice.  
(Analayo's tr fr the German original)

Analayo further notes that, similar to this Sanskrit fragment,<sup>43</sup> in the individual Chinese parallel<sup>44</sup> and the three Tibetan parallels<sup>45</sup> to **the Mahā Kaccāna Bhaddekaratta Sutta** (M 133), the verses on the auspi-

<sup>37</sup> M 38.23/1:265 = SD 7.9.

<sup>38</sup> Wheel 188. Kandy: Buddhist Publication Society, 1973.

<sup>39</sup> Minayeff & Oldenburg, *Buddhist Texts from Kashgar and Nepal*, 1983:242-243.

<sup>40</sup> At M 132 Introd.

<sup>41</sup> EB Cowell et al, *The Divyāvadāna, a collection of early Buddhist legends*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1886:611,2.

<sup>42</sup> T945 = T19.106c9.

<sup>43</sup> Cat no 816 in SHT III:32 f.

cious night are followed by *dhāraṇīs*, etc, “thereby furnishing additional examples for the tendency discerned by Winternitz.” (id) [1]

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## The Discourse on Delighting in the Wholesome Night

(M 131/3:187-189)

### Preamble

1 Thus have I heard.

At one time the Blessed One was staying in Anātha,piṇḍika’s Park in Jeta’s Forest near Sāvattḥī. Then the Blessed One addressed the monks thus:

“Monks!”

“Venerable sir!” the monks replied to the Blessed One.

The Blessed One said this:

2 “Monks, I will teach you the summary and analysis of ‘the one of the wholesome night’ (*bhaddeka,ratta*).<sup>46</sup> Listen, monks, pay close attention to it, I will speak.”

“Yes, venerable sir!” the monks replied the Blessed One.

The Blessed One said this:

### Bhaddeka,ratta Gāthā

3 **Let one not go back after<sup>47</sup> the past,  
Nor harbour fond hope for the future.**

For what is past has passed away,<sup>48</sup>  
And the future has not yet come.<sup>49</sup>

**The present state as it arises,<sup>50</sup>**

With insight, see each of them;

**Immovable, unshakable,<sup>51</sup>**

Having known that, let one be sure of it.

*Atītaṃ nānvāgameyya  
n’appaṭikaṅkhe anāgataṃ;  
yad atītaṃ pahīnaṃ taṃ  
appattaṅ ca anāgataṃ.*

*paccuppannaṅ ca yo dhammaṃ,  
tatha tatha vipassati;  
asamhīraṃ asaṅkappaṃ,  
taṃ vidvā manubrūhaye.*

<sup>44</sup> T1362 = T21.881c10.

<sup>45</sup> Tib versions no 313 = *mdo sde sa* 161b2, no 617 = *rgyud ’bum ba* 56a7, and no 974 = *gzungs ’dus vaṃ* 90a3.

<sup>46</sup> On this title, see Intro (1) above.

<sup>47</sup> “Let one... go back after” (*anvāgameyya*), pot 3 sg of *anvāgameti* (caus of *anvāgacchati* = *anu* + *ā-gacchati*), lit “to let come back,” ie to wish something back (CPD).

<sup>48</sup> Alt tr: “For the past is gone.”

<sup>49</sup> Alt tr: “And the future is yet unreached.”

<sup>50</sup> Comy: One should contemplate each state as it arises by way of the 7 contemplations of insight (ie by way of insight into impermanence, suffering, not-self, disenchantment, dispassion, cessation, relinquishment) (MA 5:1 f).

<sup>51</sup> Comy explains that this is said for the purpose of showing insight (*vipassanā*) and counter-insight (*paṭivipassanā*) [ie, the application of the principles of insight to the act of consciousness that exercises the function of insight, on the basis of which it is possible to attain arhathood: see M 52.4/1:350, 121.11/:108; also M:ÑB 1333 n1143.] For insight is “**immovable, unshakable**” [following Sn:N 1149] because it is not defeated or shaken [moved] by lust and other defilements (MA 5:2). Elsewhere, “immovable, unshakable” are epithets of Nirvana (Sn 1149) or of the liberated mind (Tha 469). Here, however, it seems to refer to a stage in the development of insight. The recurrence of the verb *samhīrati* [8, 9] “suggests that the intended meaning is contemplation of the present state without being misled into the adoption of a view of self” (M:ÑB 1343 n1213).

Work at the task this very day!<sup>52</sup>  
 Who knows, death would come tomorrow?  
 For, there is no bargaining whatsoever  
 With death's great horde.

*Ajj'eva kiccam ātappaṃ  
 ko jaññā maraṇaṃ suve;  
 na hi no saṅgaraṃ tena,  
 mahā, senena maccunā.*

One who dwells thus ardently,  
 Relentlessly, day and night—  
 He is *bhaddeka, ratta*,  
 Says the peaceful sage.<sup>53</sup>

*Evaṃ vihāriṃ ātāpiṃ,  
 aho, rattam atanditaṃ;  
 Taṃ ve bhaddeka, ratta 'ti,  
 santo ācikkhate muni. [188]*

### Let go of the past

#### 4 “How, monks, does one go back after the past?”

- (1) One seeks delight there, thinking: ‘I had such form in the past.’<sup>54</sup>  
 (2) One seeks delight there, thinking: ‘I had such feeling in the past.’  
 (3) One seeks delight there, thinking: ‘I had such perception in the past.’  
 (4) One seeks delight there, thinking: ‘I had such formations in the past.’  
 (5) One seeks delight there, thinking: ‘I had such consciousness in the past.’  
 This is how, monks, one brings back the past.

#### 5 And how, monks, does one *not* go back after the past?

- (1a) One does not seek delight there, thinking: ‘I had such form in the past.’<sup>55</sup>  
 (2a) One does not seek delight there, thinking: ‘I had such feeling in the past.’  
 (3a) One does not seek delight there, thinking: ‘I had such perception in the past.’  
 (4a) One does not seek delight there, thinking: ‘I had such formations in the past.’  
 (5a) One does not seek delight there, thinking: ‘I had such consciousness in the past.’  
 This is how, monks, one does not bring back the past.

### Let go of the future

#### 6 And how, monks, does one harbour fond hope for the future?

- (6) One seeks delight there thinking: ‘May I have such form in the future.’<sup>56</sup>  
 (7) One seeks delight there, thinking: ‘May I have such feelings in the future.’  
 (8) One seeks delight there, thinking: ‘May I have such perception in the future.’  
 (9) One seeks delight there, thinking: ‘May I have such formations in the future.’  
 (10) One seeks delight there, thinking: ‘May I have such consciousness in the future.’

<sup>52</sup> This line and the next are qu at UA 89, DhA 3:430. Cf *tumhehi kiccam ātappaṃ | akkhātāro tathāgatā | paṭipannā pamokkhanti | jhāyino māra, bandhanā* (Dh 276).

<sup>53</sup> The peaceful sage here is of course the Buddha (MA 5:3).

<sup>54</sup> Comy says that one thus “**seeks delight**” by associating the past in terms of craving or a view associated with craving (MA 5:3). “It should noted that it is not the mere recollection of the past through memory that causes bondage, but the reliving of past experiences with thoughts of craving. In this respect the Buddha’s teaching differs significantly from that of Krishnamurti, who seems to regard memory itself as the villain behind the scene” (M:ÑB 1143 n1215).

<sup>55</sup> *Eva, rūpo ahoṣiṃ atītaṃ addhānan ti tattha nandati na samanvāneti*. Comy glosses *samanvāneti* as *anupavatteti*, “he keeps moving on after; keeps pursuing” (MA 5:3). Bodhi says that the Pali syntax allows the sentence here means that either (1) one thinks, “I had such form in the past,” yet does not find delight in that thought; or (2) that one does not find delight in the past by thinking such a thought. Horner (M:H), Ñānananda (*Ideal Solitude*) and Ñānamoli (MS) construe the sentence following (1), which Bodhi followed in the 1<sup>st</sup> ed of M:ÑB, but “on reconsideration, I now believe that the second interpretation is more true to the intention of the text. This also ties in better with the stanzas themselves, which enjoin the disciple not to dwell in the past and future but to contemplate ‘each presently arisen state’ just as it presents itself” (M:ÑB 1344 n1216). In the tr here I try to reflect the lack of delight in *both* the contemplation itself and in the arisen thought.

<sup>56</sup> *Eva, rūpo siyam anāgataṃ addhānan ti tattha nandim samanvāneti*.

This is how, monks, one lives in fond hope of the future.

**7 And how, monks, does one *not* harbour fond hope for the future?**

- (6a) One does not seek delight there, thinking, ‘May I have such form in the future.’
- (7a) One does not seek delight there, thinking: ‘May I have such feelings in the future.’
- (8a) One does not seek delight there, thinking: ‘May I have such perception in the future.’
- (9a) One does not seek delight there, thinking: ‘May I have such formations in the future.’
- (10a) One does not seek delight there, thinking: ‘May I have such consciousness in the future.’

This is how, monks, one does not live in fond hope of the future.

Let go of the present

**8 And how, monks, is one dragged along [distracted]<sup>57</sup> by each present state as it arises?**

(11) Here, monks, an untaught ordinary person, who has no regard for the noble ones and is unskilled and undisciplined in their Dharma, who has no regard for true persons and is unskilled and undisciplined in their Dharma, regards form as self, or self as possessed of form, or form as in self, or self as in form.<sup>58</sup>

- (12) He regards feeling as self....
- (13) He regards perception as self....
- (14) He regards formations as self....
- (15) He regards consciousness as self, or self as possessed of consciousness, or consciousness as in self, or consciousness as in form.

This is how, monks, one is dragged along [distracted] by each present state as it arises.

**9 And how, monks, is one *not* dragged along [undistracted] by each present state as it arises?**

(11a) Here, monks, a well-taught noble disciple, who has regard for the noble ones and is skilled and disciplined in their Dharma, who has regard for true persons and is skilled and disciplined in their Dharma, does not regard form as self, or self as possessed of form, or form as in self, or self as in form.

- (12a) He does not regard feeling as self....
- (13a) He does not regard perception as self....
- (14a) He does not regard formations as self....
- (15a) He does not regard consciousness as self, or self as possessed of consciousness, or consciousness as in self, or consciousness as in form.

This is how, monks, one is not dragged along [undistracted] by each present state as it arises.”

Conclusion

**10** Let one not go back after the past,  
 Nor harbour fond hope for the future.  
 For what is past has passed away,  
 And the future has not yet come.

The present state as it arises,  
 With insight, see each of them;  
 Immovable, unshakable,  
 Having known that, let one be sure of it,

Work at the task this very day!  
 Who knows, death would come tomorrow?  
 For, there is no bargaining whatsoever  
 With death’s great horde.

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<sup>57</sup> “Is dragged along by” (*samhīrati*), or “is moved, distracted by,” passive of *samharati*, “he gathers together.” This verb, *samhīrati*, here and in the next para, refers back to the line in the verse, *asamhīram asankuppan* (“immovable, unshakable”). Comy says: “One is dragged along by craving and views because of the lack of insight.” (MA 5:4).

<sup>58</sup> On these four self-identity views, see Intro (4).

One who dwells thus ardently,  
Relentlessly, day and night—  
He is *bhaddeka,ratta*,  
Says the peaceful sage.

11 “So it was in reference to this that it is said, ‘Monks, I will teach you the summary and analysis of “the one delighting in the good oneness.”’

The Blessed One said this. The monks joyfully approved<sup>59</sup> of the Blessed One’s word.

— evaṃ —

## Bibliography

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<sup>59</sup> “Joyfully approved,” *attamaṇā...abhinanduṃ*.