

Dīgha Nikāya - The Long Discourses

The Great Steward A Past Life of Gotama (Mahà-Govinda Sutta)

[220] 1. THUS HAVE I HEARD.⁵³⁷

Once the Lord was staying at Rajagaha, on Vultures' Peak. And when the night was nearly over, Pañcasikha of the gandhabbas,⁵³⁸ lighting up the entire Vultures' Peak with a splendid radiance,⁵³⁹ approached the Lord, saluted him, stood to one side and said: 'Lord, I wish to report to you what I have personally seen and observed when I was in the presence of the Thirty-Three Gods.' 'Tell me then, Pañcasikha', said the Lord.

2. — 3. 'Lord, in earlier days, long ago, on the fast-day of the fifteenth at the end of the Rains the Thirty-Three Gods assembled and rejoiced that the devas' hosts were growing, the asuras' hosts declining (as Sutta 18, verse 12). [221] Then Sakka uttered the verse:

"The gods of Thirty-Three rejoice, their leader too,
Praising the Tathagata, and Dhamma's truth,
Seeing new-come devas, fair and glorious
Who've lived the holy life, now well reborn.
Outshining all the rest in fame and splendour,
The mighty Sage's pupils singled out.
Seeing this, the Thirty-Three rejoice, their leader too,
Praising the Tathagata, and Dhamma's truth." [222]

At this, Lord, the Thirty-Three Gods rejoiced still more, saying: "The devas' hosts are growing, the asuras' hosts are declining!"

4. [Pañcasikha continued:] ‘Then Sakka, seeing their satisfaction, said to the Thirty-Three Gods: “Would you like, gentlemen, to hear eight truthful statements in praise of the Lord?” and on receiving their assent, he declared:

5. ““What do you think, my lords of the Thirty-Three? As regards the way in which the Lord has striven for the welfare of the many, for the happiness of the many, out of compassion for the world, for the welfare and happiness of devas and humans — we can find no teacher endowed with such qualities, whether we consider the past or the present, other than the Lord.

6. ““Well-proclaimed, truly, is this Lord’s Teaching, visible here and now, timeless, inviting inspection, leading onward, to be realised by the wise each one for himself — and we can find no proclaimer of such an onward-leading doctrine, either in the past or in the present, other than the Lord.

7. ““The Lord has well explained what is right and what is wrong, what [223] is blameworthy and what is blameless, what is to be followed and what is not to be followed, what is base and what is noble, what is foul, fair and mixed in quality.⁵⁴⁰ And we can find none who is a proclaimer of such things... other than the Lord.

8. ““Again, the Lord has well explained to his disciples the path leading to Nibbāna,⁵⁴¹ and they coalesce, Nibbāna and the path, just as the waters of the Ganges and the Yamunā coalesce and flow on together. And we can find no proclaimer of the path leading to Nibbāna ... other than the Lord.

9. ““And the Lord has gained companions, both learners⁵⁴² and those who, having lived the life, have abolished the corruptions,⁵⁴³ and the Lord dwells together with them, all rejoicing in the one thing. And we can find no such teacher ... other than the Lord.

10. ““The gifts given to the Lord are well-bestowed, his fame is well established, so much so that, I think, the Khattiyas will continue to be attached to him, yet the Lord takes his food-offering without conceit. And we can find no teacher who does this... [224] other than the Lord.

11. ““And the Lord acts as he speaks, and speaks as he acts. And we can find no teacher who does likewise, in every detail of doctrine ... other than the Lord.

12. ““The Lord has transcended doubt,⁵⁴⁴ passed beyond all ‘how’ and ‘why’, he has accomplished his aim in regard to his goal and the supreme holy life. And we can find no teacher who has done the like, whether we consider the past or the present, other than the Lord.”

‘And when Sakka had thus proclaimed these eight truthful statements in praise of the Lord, the Thirty-Three Gods were even more pleased, overjoyed and filled with delight and happiness at what they had heard in the Lord’s praise.

13. ‘Then certain gods exclaimed: “Oh, if only four fully-enlightened Buddhas were to arise in the world and teach Dhamma just like the Blessed Lord! That would be for the benefit and happiness of the many, out of compassion for the world, for the benefit and happiness of devas and humans!” And some said: “Never mind four fully-enlightened Buddhas - three would suffice!” and others said: “Never mind three — two would suffice!” [225]

14. ‘At this Sakka said: “It is impossible, gentlemen, it cannot happen that two fully-enlightened Buddhas should arise simultaneously in a single world-system. That cannot be. May this Blessed Lord continue to live long, for many years to come, free from sickness and disease! That would be for the benefit and happiness of the many, out of compassion for the world it would be for the benefit and happiness of devas and humans!”

‘Then the Thirty-Three Gods consulted and deliberated together about the matter concerning which they had assembled in the Sudhamma Hall, and the Four Great Kings were advised and admonished on this matter as they stood by their seats unmoving:

The Kings, instructed, marked the words they spoke,
Standing calm, serene, beside their seats.

15-16. ‘A great radiance was seen, heralding the approach of Brahma. All took their proper seats (as Sutta 18, verses 15-17), each hoping Brahmā would sit on his couch. [226-7]

17. ‘Then Brahmā Sanankumāra, having descended from his heaven, and seeing their pleasure, uttered these verses:

“The gods of Thirty-Three rejoice, their leader too

... ” (as above).

18. ‘Brahmā Sanankumāra’s voice had eight qualities (as Sutta 18, verse 19).

19. ‘Then the Thirty-Three Gods said to Brahmā Sanankumāra: “It is well, Brahmā! We rejoice at what we have heard. [228] Sakka, lord of the devas, has also declared eight truthful statements to us about the Lord, at which we also rejoice.” Then Brahmā said to Sakka: “It is well, Lord of the devas. And we too would like to hear those eight truthful statements about the Lord.” “Very well, Great Brahmā”, said Sakka, and he repeated those eight statements:

20. — 27. ““What do you think, Lord Brahmā...?” (as verses 5 — 12). [229] [230] And Brahmā Sanankumāra was pleased, overjoyed and filled with delight and happiness at what he had heard in the Lord’s praise.

28. ‘Brahmā Sanankumāra assumed a grosser form and appeared in the shape of Pañcasikha (as Sutta 18, verse 18).⁵⁴⁵ And sitting thus cross-legged, he said to the Thirty-Three Gods: “For how long has the Blessed Lord been one of mighty wisdom?

29. ““Once upon a time there was a king called Disampati. His chaplain⁵⁴⁶ was a Brahmin called the Steward.⁵⁴⁷ The King’s son was a youth called Renu, and the Steward’s son was called Jotipāla. Prince Renu and Jotipāla, together with six other Khattiyas, formed a band of eight friends. [231] In the course of time the Steward died, and King Disampati mourned him, saying: ‘Alas, at the very moment when we had entrusted all our responsibilities to the Steward, and were abandoning ourselves to the pleasures of the five senses, the Steward has passed away!’

““Hearing this, Prince Renu said: ‘Sire, do not mourn the Steward’s death overmuch! His son Jotipāla⁵⁴⁸ is cleverer than his father was and has a better eye for what is advantageous. You should let Jotipāla manage all the business you entrusted to his father.’ ‘Is that so, my boy?’ ‘Yes, Sire.’

30. ““Then the King called a man and said: ‘Come here, my good man, go to the youth Jotipāla and say: ”May the Reverend Jotipāla be well! King Disampati sends for you, he would like to see you.”’ ‘Very good, Your Majesty’, said the man, and delivered the message. [232] On receiving the message, Jotipāla said: ‘Very good, sir’, and went to see the King. On entering the royal presence, he exchanged courtesies with the King, then sat down to one side. The King said: ‘We wish the Reverend Jotipāla to manage our affairs. Do not refuse. I will install you in your father’s place and consecrate⁵⁴⁹ you as Steward.’ ‘Very good, Lord’, replied Jotipāla.

31. ““So King Disampati appointed Jotipāla as steward in his father’s place. And once installed, Jotipāla carried out the business his father had carried out, not doing any business his father had not done. He accomplished all the tasks his father had accomplished, and no others. And people said: ‘This Brahmin is truly a steward! Indeed he is a great steward!’ And that is how the young Brahmin Jotipāla came to be known as the Great Steward.

32. ““And one day the Great Steward went to the group of six nobles and said: ‘King Disampati is aged, decrepit, [233] stricken with age. His life is near its end and he cannot last much longer. Who can tell how long people will live? When King Disampati dies, the king-makers⁵⁵⁰ are bound to anoint Prince Renu as King. You should go, gentlemen, to Prince Renu and say: ”We are the beloved, dear and favoured friends of the Lord Renu, sharing his joys and his sorrows. Our Lord King Disampati is aged... When he dies, the king-makers are bound to anoint the Lord Renu as King. If the Lord Renu should gain the kingship, let him share it with us.”’

33. “““Very good, sir’, said the six nobles, and they went to Prince Renu and spoke to him as the Great Steward had proposed. ‘Well, gentlemen, who, apart from myself, ought to prosper but you? If, gentlemen, I gain the kingship, I will share it with you.’ [234]

34. ““In due course King Disampati died, and the king-makers anointed Prince Renu King in his place. And having been made King, Renu abandoned himself to the pleasures of the five senses. Then the Great Steward went to the six nobles and said: ‘Gentlemen, now King Disampati is dead the Lord Renu, who has been anointed in his place, has abandoned himself to the pleasures of the five senses. Who knows what will come of this? The sense-pleasures are intoxicating. You should go to him and say: ”King Disampati is dead and the Lord Renu has been anointed King. Do you remember your word, Lord?”’

“They did so, and the King said: ‘Gentlemen, I remember my word. Who is there who can divide this mighty realm of earth, so broad in the north and so [narrow] like the front of a cart⁵⁵¹ in the south, into seven equal parts?’ ‘Who indeed, Lord, if not the Great Steward?’

35. “So King Renu sent a man to the Great Steward to say: ‘My lord, the King sends for you.’ [235] The man went, and the Great Steward came to the King, exchanged courtesies with him, and sat down to one side. Then the King said: ‘My Lord Steward, go and divide this mighty realm of earth, so broad in the north and so narrow like the front of a cart in the south, into seven equal parts.’ ‘Very good, Sire’, said the Great Steward, and he did so.

36. “And King Renu’s country was in the centre:

Dantapura to the Kalingas, Potaka to the Assakas,

Mahissati to the Avantis, Roruka to the Soviras.

Mithila to the Videhas, Campa to the Angas goes,

Benares to the Kāsī, thus did the Steward dispose. [236]

The six nobles were delighted with their respective gains and at the success of the plan: ‘What we wanted, desired, aimed at and strove for, we have got!’

Sattabhū, Brahmadatta, Vessabhū and Bharata,

Renu and two Dhataratthas, these are the seven

Bhārat kings.”⁵⁵²

[End of first recitation-section]

37. ““Then the six nobles came to the Great Steward and said: ‘Reverend Steward, just as you were a beloved, dear and faithful friend to King Renu, so you have been to us. Please manage our affairs for us! We trust you will not refuse.’ So he administered the realms of seven anointed kings,⁵⁵³ and he also taught the mantras to seven distinguished Brahmins and seven hundred advanced pupils.⁵⁵⁴ [237]

38. ““In course of time good reports were spread about concerning the Great Steward: ‘The Great Steward can see Brahmā with his own eyes, talks with him face to face and consults with him!’⁵⁵⁵ And he thought: ‘Now this good report is being spread about concerning me, that I can see Brahmā with my own eyes,... but it is not true. However, I have heard it said by aged and respectable Brahmins, the teachers of teachers, that anyone who withdraws into meditation for the four months of the Rains, developing the absorption on compassion, can see Brahmā with his own eyes, talk with him face to face and consult with him. Suppose I were to do this!’⁵⁵⁶

39. ““So the Great Steward went to King Renu and told him of the report, and of his wish to go into retreat and develop the absorption on compassion. ‘And nobody is to come near me except to bring me food.’ ‘Reverend Steward, do as you think fit.’ [238]

40. ““The six nobles likewise replied: ‘Reverend Steward, do as you think fit.’

41. ““He went to the seven Brahmins and the seven hundred pupils and told them of his intentions, adding: ‘So, gentlemen, you carry on with reciting the mantras you have heard and learnt, and teach them to each other.’ ‘Reverend Steward, do as you think fit’, they replied. [239]

42. ““Then he went to his forty equal-ranking wives, and they said: ‘Reverend Steward, do as you think fit.’

43. zoo the Great Steward erected a new lodging to the east of the city and withdrew there for the four months of the Rains, developing the absorption on compassion, and nobody came near him except to bring him food. But at the end of four months he felt nothing but dissatisfaction and weariness as he thought: ‘I heard it said... that anyone who withdraws into meditation for the four months of the Rains, developing the absorption on compassion, can see Brahmā with his own eyes...But I cannot see Brahmā with my own eyes, and cannot talk, discuss or consult with him!’

44. “‘Now Brahmā Sanankumāra read his thoughts and, [240] as swiftly as a strong man might stretch out his flexed arm or flex it again, he disappeared from the Brahmā world and appeared before the Great Steward. And the Great Steward felt fear and trembling, and his hair stood on end at such a sight as he had never seen before. And thus fearful, trembling, with hair standing on end, he addressed Brahmā Sanankumāra in these verses:

‘O splendid vision, glorious and divine,

Who are you, Lord? I fain would know your name.’

‘In highest heaven I am known by all:

Brahmā Sanankumāra — know me thus.’

‘A seat, and water for the feet, and cakes

Are fitting for a Brahmā. Let the Lord

Decide what hospitality he would.’⁵⁵⁷

‘We accept the gift that’s offered: now declare

What it is you wish from us — a boon

Of profit in this very life, or in the next.

Say, Lord Steward, what it is you’d have.’

45. ““Then the Great Steward thought: ‘Brahmā Sanankumara offers me a boon. What shall I choose — benefits in this life, or in that to come?’ [241] Then he thought: ‘I am an expert in matters of advantage in this life, and others consult me about this. Suppose I were to ask Brahmā Sanankumāra for something of benefit in the life to come?’ And he addressed Brahmā in these verses:

‘I ask Brahmā Sanankumāra this,
Doubting, him who has no doubts I ask
(For others too I ask): By doing what
Can mortals reach the deathless Brahmā world?’
‘That man who spurns all possessive thoughts,
Alone, intent, compassion-filled,
Aloof from stench, free from lust —
Established thus, and training thus,
Can mortals reach the deathless Brahmā world.’⁵⁵⁸

46. ““I understand “Spurning possessive thoughts”. This means that one renounces one’s possessions, small or great, leaves one’s relatives, few or many, and, shaving off hair and beard, goes forth from the household life into homelessness. This is how I understand “Spurning possessive thoughts”. [242] I understand “Alone, intent”. That means that one goes off on one’s own and chooses a lodging in the forest, at the foot of a tree, in a mountain glen, in a rocky cave, a charnel-ground, in the jungle or on a heap of grass in the open... I understand “Compassion-filled”. That means that one dwells suffusing one quarter with a mind filled with compassion, then a second, then a third and a fourth quarter. Thus one abides suffusing the whole world, up, down and across, everywhere, all around, with a mind filled with compassion, expanded, immeasurable, free from hatred and ill-will. That is how I understand “Compassion-filled”. But the Lord’s words about “Aloof from stench” I do not understand:

What do you mean, Brahma, by “stench” among men?

Pray lighten my ignorance, O wise one, on this.

What hindrance causes man to stink and fester,

Heading for hell, from Brahmā-realm cut off?’ [243]

‘Anger, lying, fraud and cheating,

Avarice, pride and jealousy,

Coveting, doubt and harming others,

Greed and hate, stupor and delusion:

The loathsome stench that these give off

Heads man for hell, from Brahmā-realm cut off.’

‘As I understand the Lord’s words about the stench, these things are not easy to overcome if one lives the household life. I will therefore go forth from the household life into the homeless state.’

‘Reverend Steward, do as you think fit.’

47. ““So the Great Steward went to King Renu and said: ‘My Lord, please appoint another minister⁵⁵⁹to manage your affairs. I wish to go forth from the household life into homelessness. After what Brahmā has told me about the stench of the world, which cannot easily be overcome by one living the household life, I am going forth into homelessness:

King Renu, lord of this realm, I declare,

You yourself must rule, I’ll counsel you no more!’

‘If anything you lack, I’ll make it good,

If any hurt you, my royal arms shall guard you.

You my father, I your son, Steward, stay!’

‘I lack nothing, none there is who harms me;
No human voice I heard — at home I cannot stay.’ [244]
““Non-human” - what’s he like who calls, that you
At once abandon home and all of us?’
‘Before I went on this retreat I thought of sacrifice,
Lighting the sacred fire, strewing kusa-grass.
But now — eternal Brahmā⁵⁶⁰ from Brahmā-realm’s appeared.

I asked, he answered: I now can stay no more.’
‘Reverend Steward, in your words I trust. Such words
Once heard, you had no other course.
We will follow: Steward, be our Master.
Like a beryl-gem, clear, of finest water,
So purified, we’ll follow in your wake.

If the Reverend Steward goes forth from the household life into homelessness, I will do the same.
Wherever you go, we will follow.’

48. ““Then the Great Steward went to the six nobles and said to them: ‘My lords, please appoint another minister to manage your affairs. I wish to go forth from the household life into homelessness...’ And the six nobles went aside [245] and consulted together: ‘These Brahmins are greedy for money. Perhaps we can win the Great Steward round with money.’ So they came back to him and said: ‘Sir, there is plenty of wealth in these seven kingdoms. Take as much as you like.’
‘Enough, gentlemen, I have received plenty of wealth from my lords already. That is the very thing that I am renouncing in order to go forth from the household life into homelessness, as I have explained.’

49. ““Then the six nobles went aside again and consulted together: ‘These Brahmins are greedy for women. Perhaps we can win the Great Steward round with women.’ So they came to him and said: ‘Sir, there are plenty of women in these seven kingdoms. Take your pick!’ ‘Enough, gentlemen, I already have forty equal wives, and I am leaving them in order to go forth from the household life into homelessness, as I have explained.’ [246]

50. ““If the Reverend Steward goes forth from the household life into homelessness, we will do likewise. Wherever you go, we will follow:

“If you renounce those lusts that bind most men, 561

Exert yourselves, be strong and patiently endure!

This is the path that’s straight, the peerless path,

The path of truth, guarded by the good, to Brahma’s realm.”

51. “““And so, Lord Steward, just wait seven years, and then we too will go forth into homelessness. Wherever you go, we will follow.’

““Gentlemen, seven years is far too long, I cannot wait for seven years! Who can tell how long people will live? We have to go on into the next world, we must learn by means of wisdom, 562 we must do what is right and live the holy life, for nothing that is born is immortal. Now I am going forth as I have explained.’

52. “““Well, Reverend Steward, just wait six years,... five year,... four years,... three years,... two years,... one year, and then we too will go forth into homelessness. Wherever you go, we will follow.’

53. ““gentlemen, one year is far too long...” ‘Then wait seven months...’

54. ““Gentlemen, seven months is far too long...” ‘Then wait six months,... five months,... four months,... three months,... two months,... one month,... half a month...’

55. ““Gentlemen, half a month is far too long...” [248] ‘Then, Reverend Steward, just wait seven days while we make over our kingdoms to our sons and brothers. At the end of seven days we will go forth into homelessness. Wherever you go, we will follow.’ ‘Seven is not long, gentlemen. I agree, my lords, to seven days.’

56. ““Then the Great Steward went to the seven Brahmins and their seven hundred advanced pupils, and said to them: ‘Now, Your Reverences, you must seek another teacher to teach you the mantras. I mean to go forth from the household life into homelessness. After what Brahma has told me about the stench of the world, which cannot be easily overcome by one living the household life, I am going forth into homelessness.’ ‘Reverend Steward, do not do so! There is little power and profit in the homeless life, and much power and profit in the life of a Brahmin!’⁵⁶³ ‘Do not say such things, gentlemen! Besides, who has greater power and profit than I have? I have been like a king to kings, like Brahma to the Brahmins, like a deity to householders, and I am giving all this up in order to go forth from the household life into homelessness, as I have [249] explained.’ ‘If the Reverend Steward goes forth from the household life into homelessness, we will do likewise. Wherever you go, we will follow.’

57. ““Then the Great Steward went to his forty equal wives and said: ‘Whichever of you ladies wishes to may go back to her own family and seek another husband. I mean to go forth into homelessness...’ ‘You alone are the kinsman we could wish for, the only husband we want. If the Reverend Steward goes forth into homelessness, we will do likewise. Wherever you go, we will follow.’

58. ““And so the Great Steward, at the end of the seven days, shaved off his hair and beard, donned yellow robes and went forth from the household life into homelessness. And with him went the seven anointed Khattiya kings, the seven wealthy and distinguished Brahmins with their seven hundred advanced pupils, his forty equal wives, several thousand Khattiyas, several thousand Brahmins, several thousand householders, even some harem-women.

“”And so, followed by this company, the Great Steward wandered through villages, towns and royal [250] cities. And whenever he came to a village or town, he was like a king to kings, like Brahma to the Brahmins, like a deity to householders. And in those days, whenever anyone sneezed or stumbled, they used to say: ‘Praise be to the Great Steward! Praise be to the Minister of Seven!’

59. ““And the Great Steward dwelt suffusing one quarter with a mind filled with loving-kindness, then a second, then a third and a fourth quarter. He dwelt suffusing the whole world, up, down and across, everywhere, all around, with a mind filled with compassion,... with a mind filled with sympathetic joy,... with a mind filled with equanimity,... free from hatred and ill-will. And thus he taught his disciples the way to union with the Brahmā-world.

60. ““And all those who had at that time been the Great Steward’s pupils and had fully mastered his teaching, were after death at the breaking-up of the body reborn in a happy sphere, in the Brahmā-world. And those who had not fully mastered his teaching were reborn either among the Paranimmita-Vasavatti devas, among the Nimmanarati devas, among the Tusita devas, among the Yama devas, [251] among the devas of the Thirty-Three Gods, or among the devas of the Four Great Kings. And the very lowest realm that any of them attained was that of the gandhabbas. Thus the going-forth of all those people was not fruitless or barren, but productive of fruit and profit.”

61. ‘Do you remember this, Lord?’ ‘I do, Pañcasikha. At that time I was the Brahmin, the Great Steward, and I taught those disciples the path to union with the Brahmā-world.

‘However, Pañcasikha, that holy life does not lead to disenchantment, to dispassion, to cessation, to peace, to super-knowledge, to enlightenment, to Nibbana, but only to birth in the Brahmā-world, whereas my holy life leads unfailingly to disenchantment, to dispassion, to cessation, to peace, to super-knowledge, to enlightenment, to Nibbana. That is the Noble Eightfold Path, namely Right View, Right Thought, Right Speech, Right Action, Right Livelihood, Right Effort, Right Mindfulness, Right Concentration.

62. ‘And, Pañcasikha, those of my disciples who have fully mastered my teaching have by their own super-knowledge realised, [252] by the destruction of the corruptions in this very life, the uncorrupted freedom of heart and mind. And of those who have not fully mastered it, some by the destruction of the five lower fetters will be reborn spontaneously, attaining thence to Nibbana without returning to this world; some by the destruction of three fetters and the reduction of greed, hatred and delusion will become Once-Returners, who will return once more to this world before making an end of suffering; and some by the destruction of three fetters will become Stream-Winners, incapable of falling into states of woe, assured of enlightenment. Thus the going-forth of all these people was not fruitless or barren, but productive of fruit and profit.’

Thus the Lord spoke, and Pañcasikha of the gandhabbas was delighted and rejoiced at the Lord’s words. And, having saluted him, he passed him by on the right and vanished from the spot.

537 Mention must be made of RD’s brilliant introduction to this Sutta, which he analyses in terms of a play, showing its obvious links with the previous Sutta with reference to ‘the episode told in Act I, Scenes 1 and 2’, and so on. He stresses the humour and the propagandist technique employed, which consists in accepting and then outflanking the opponents’ position rather than direct confrontation. While we may not be convinced that this Sutta goes back to the Buddha personally (but equally — are we sure that it does not, in some form?), this is indeed the method he uses in discussions with a variety of interlocutors. RD also analyses the differences between this Sutta and the version in the Sanskrit Mahāvastu, a product of the Lokuttaravāda school.

538 Referred to at DN 18.18, where Brahmā disguises himself as Pañcasikha, who now appears in person. He wore his hair in five knots or ringlets as he had done when he had died as a young boy.

539 The radiance of the devas is a standard feature: in the Deva Saṃyutta with which SN opens, we are introduced to a succession of devas who ‘light up the entire Jeta Grove with their effulgence’. Brahmā’s radiance is much greater and in DN 14.1.17 we learn of the even greater radiance which appears at the conception and birth of a Bodhisatta.

540 As at DN 18.25. Cf. the ‘eel-wiggler’ mentioned at DN 1.2.24.

541 The ‘path’ here is really the practice, paṭipadā. The Noble Eightfold Path is the ‘Middle Way’ or ‘Middle Practice’, majjhima-paṭipadā.

542 Sekhā: learners who, having gained one of the first three paths, have yet to attain enlightenment.

543 Arahants.

544 ‘Crossed over the sea of doubt’ (RD).

545 This repeated passage even includes the reference to Brahma’s adopting the form of Pañcasikha, even though it is Pañcasikha himself who is telling the tale.

546 Purohita: cf. n.173.

547 Govinda. RD notes: ‘It is evident...that Govinda, literally “Lord of the Herds”, was a title, not a name, and means Treasurer or Steward.’ But people were often known by some designation other

than their proper names, probably for taboo reasons. We may note how in Scotland the royal house of Stuart derived their name from the Steward who was originally the 'sty-ward'! Cf. n.365.

548 The name means 'Guardian of the Light'.

549 As RD remarks, the expression 'anoint' is noteworthy, suggesting that the office is of royal rank.

550 There is no note of any value in DA on this. Presumably the assembled nobles (Khattiyas).

551 Sakaṭamukha. This expression, which puzzled RD, has been explained as the (narrow) front of a cart, in reference to the tapering shape of India.

552 RD draws up a table showing the relationships and geographical distribution, which however, as he says, does not fit the story very well.

553 Not 'instructed...in government' (RD). The expression used is the same as that previously rendered 'administer'.

554 Nahātaka: lit. 'having bathed' (i.e. graduated).

555 Cf., per contra, DN 13.12ff.

556 This is also the way recommended by the Buddha in DN 13.

557 As RD indicates, he feels he must offer Brahmā something, but does not know what is right.

558 To the Buddhist, of course, Brahmā's realm is not really deathless. But in a pre-Buddhist age it was the highest goal one could aspire to.

559 Purohita: as at n.546. I have ventured to play on the two meanings of 'minister' in English: 'minister of religion' and 'government minister'. The Pali word approximates to a combination of the two.

560 Cf. n.558.

561 Puthujjanas: or 'worldlings'. See n.16.

562 Mantāya: apparently 'by mantra', but glossed in DA as 'wisdom'.

563 The delicious irony of this should not be missed. The suspicions of the six nobles, expressed in verses 48-49, were not without foundation so far as ordinary Brahmins were concerned. And cf., e.g. DN 4.26 !

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