The Concept of Saṃvega (Distress) in Early Buddhist Scripture

By

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Abstract

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The Concept of Saṃvega (Distress) in Early Buddhist Scripture is a study dedicated to the conception of emotions in the earliest strata of Buddhist literature. At the heart of this study lies the concept of *saṃvega*—a Sanskrit and Pāli word that covers a wide range of emotional states, including distress, fear, melancholy, awe, revulsion, shock, agitation, and shame. The use of *saṃvega* in the early Buddhist canonical texts is rife with tensions. *Saṃvega* is depicted as a horrifying and dejecting experience, yet at the same time, it is unequivocally recognized as beneficial and even essential. The complexity of *saṃvega* is the product of articulating a distinctly Buddhist emotional state, an occurrence and disposition carefully attuned to the reality of impermanence and suffering disclosed by the Buddha's teaching. This extensive inquiry of *saṃvega* unpacks the rich meaning of this philosophical concept and challenges some of the commonly held assumptions and beliefs about emotions in Buddhist thought. The textual sources presented in this dissertation reveal a largely neglected component of the early Buddhist vocabulary, imagination, and practice, providing the reader with materials to reconsider the role of emotions in early Buddhism.

For Dundee

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My dear grandfather, Angel Cimbler, passed away in the fall of 2020. He had a significant role in my life. He was the only person I ever deeply feared among my family and close friends. My fear of him, however, was different than any other frightening feeling I have experienced, for it was a source of motivation that encouraged me to devote my time and effort to the things I care about most. Perhaps it is no coincidence that shortly after he died, I started focusing my research on the positive role of fear in early Buddhist scripture, which gradually developed into this doctoral dissertation on the early Buddhist concept of *saṃvega*.

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Abbreviations

AN	Aṅguttara Nikāya
CBETA	Chinese Buddhist Electronic Text Association
DDB	Digital Dictionary of Buddhism
DN	Dīgha Nikāya
KN	Khuddaka Nikāya
Lat.	Latin
MN	Majjhima Nikāya
P.	Pāli
PDR	Pāli Digital Reader
PTS	Pāli Text Society
SAT	Saṃgaṇikīkṛtam Taiśotripiṭaka
SĀ	Saṃyukta Āgama (T.99)
SĀ^2	Saṃyukta Āgama (T.100)
SN	Saṃyutta Nikāya
Sn	Suttanipāta
Skt.	Sanskrit
T.	Taishō edition (SAT)

Introduction: *Saṃvega* as an Early Buddhist Concept of Emotion

A prevalent argumentation practice in classical Indian philosophy involves examining a proposition from four different angles. The Mādhyamika tetralemma (*catuṣkoṭi*) is the most famous example of this in the realm of Buddhist thought. Regardless of the particular philosophical position this fourfold polemical method may help refute or establish, its undeniable value lies in the capacity to fruitfully open up a topic for discussion, debate, and inquiry. To begin this exploration of *saṃvega* and the conception of emotions in early Buddhism,[1] I would like first to consider four possible answers to the question: *is there an early Buddhist concept of emotion*?

The first possible answer is a firm "no." Emotion is a modern English word associated with a specific category of phenomena,[2] therefore assuming it is applicable in a study of classical Asian texts seems ill-advised. Even in the context of discussing the intellectual history of premodern Europe, some scholars believe the use of the word emotion is anachronistic and misleading.[3] Adding to that the cross-cultural barrier of employing this term in an Asian context suggests the prospect of speaking about an early Buddhist concept of emotion is highly problematic. While it is worth considering this criticism and the body of work supporting such a firm negative reply to the aforementioned question, I adhere to a different view of what the term emotion can offer scholars of premodern Buddhist texts. I believe multifaceted phenomena like the one I explore in this dissertation, namely *saṃvega*, can benefit in some ways from the flexibility and familiarity that characterize the modern use of the term emotion in academic and non-academic circles.[4] While I do not consider emotion as a natural category or a catch-all term, I join other scholars of classical Indian thought in being content with the expectation that the phenomena examined in this dissertation "will be recognizable to contemporary English speakers as 'emotions' or as something

[1] Later in this introduction, I will elaborate on my use of the term "early" with respect to Buddhist texts and Buddhism more broadly. For now, suffice it to say I am using "early" in reference to the canonical Buddhist texts of the Nikāyas/Āgamas, which reflect the development of theories and practices during the first centuries in Buddhist history.

[2] For a useful glossary that includes terms such as emotion, affect, feeling, mood, and passion, see Flatley 2008. While generally I find the discussions regarding the distinct terms that make up the vocabulary of emotions illuminating, in the case of *saṃvega*, there is no single term to apply or associate with it. In some texts, *saṃvega* is best considered a passing feeling, yet in others, it resembles a prolonged mood. I most frequently refer to *saṃvega* as an emotion because it is the English word that seems to encompass the broadest range of affective phenomena. Throughout this dissertation, however, I also refer to *saṃvega* as a mood, feeling, disposition, or existential state when appropriate. The argument I make for considering *saṃvega* as a concept of emotion is partly meant to show its additive value to the vocabulary of emotions. On using classical Indian terms to expand the contemporary vocabulary of emotions, see Heim 2022: 2.

[3] One example of a strong critique of using the term "emotion" with respect to premodern European intellectual traditions is presented by Dixon (2003). Dixon's historical perspective offers a thick account of the theoretical discussions that developed around terms like passions and affections in Medieval Christian theology. These discussions were later followed by modern, predominantly secular debates that gave birth to the psychological category of emotion. Dixon's perspective reveals the obvious issues that may arise when superimposing the term emotion on any premodern text.

[4] Dixon (2003: 2) raises the question of whether the over-arching contemporary category of emotion is even coherent. One way of addressing this question, which I find appealing, points to the dynamic and open-ended character of the phenomena that the term emotion is meant to categorize. (Tzohar 2021: 294). In other words, perhaps the variegated and elusive nature of emotional phenomena requires a category that is not rigid, but malleable.

functionally akin to them,"[5] and I hope this study of Buddhist texts will encourage readers to reconsider the boundaries of the analytical category of emotion.

Another possible answer to whether there is an early Buddhist concept of emotion is "neither yes nor no." This answer is less concerned with the problem of using the term emotion in a classical Asian context, but it takes issue with the prospect of a single early Buddhist concept perfectly matching the contemporary category of emotion. In the vast corpus of early Buddhist scriptures, several terms (such as *vedanā* or *kleṣa*)[6] categorize a variety of emotional phenomena, and other terms (like *bhaya* or *dveṣa*) overlap with specific emotional states. However, none of these terms qualify exactly as a "concept of emotion" since they all appear to be too technical and narrow. These Buddhist terms do not encompass the array of phenomena that falls under the emotion category, and they also have starkly different connotations than those carried by the English word "emotion."[7] Nevertheless, if one is willing to work with a malleable category of emotion, perhaps some early Buddhist terms are worthy candidates to consider as concepts of emotion. These terms will only roughly overlap with the modern-day uses of the word emotion and they certainly come with their unique historical, cultural, and intellectual baggage.

The last point I made leads directly to the possibility of answering the question concerning the existence of an early Buddhist concept of emotion with "yes and no." The key to providing this answer is first acknowledging the wide variety of meanings and applications of some of the Buddhist emotion terms. A good example of this is found in the scholarship on the classical Buddhist concept of *vedanā* (feeling). Recent studies on *vedanā* reveal its relevance to the philosophical discourse on emotions by exploring the multiple ways of using this concept in Buddhist texts and underscoring the various interpretations and translations it warrants.[8] In this dissertation, I show that *saṃvega* is also a rich philosophical concept that is vital to the study of emotions in early Buddhist thought. *Saṃvega* covers a wide range of affective phenomena and works in several distinct capacities that are all pertinent to our understanding of emotions in early Buddhism. Shortly, I will discuss in detail *vedanā* and other Buddhist emotion terms, as I begin to map the conceptual landscape to which *saṃvega* belongs. While there is no single, central concept for emotion in Buddhism, gaining an understanding of emotions in early Buddhist thought requires exploring the fundamental Buddhist concepts of emotion. *Saṃvega,* I am convinced, is one of those fundamental concepts.

To complete this tetralemma, the fourth and final answer I will contemplate to the question at stake is a firm "yes." To claim there is a specific term in the premodern Buddhist world that ideally matches the contemporary category of emotion seems improbable, let alone arguing that such a term exists in the earliest strata of canonical Buddhist literature. Hence, answering the question regarding the existence of an early Buddhist concept of emotion with a firm "yes" is

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[5] Heim, Ram-Prasad, and Tzohar 2021: 4-5.

[6] Throughout the dissertation, I present the classical Indian terms in Sanskrit when generally addressing Buddhist or Hindu texts. However, when I discuss specific terms that appear in Pāli texts or in the Theravāda tradition, I supply the Pāli.

[7] I can think of no concept in early Buddhism that works exactly like the modern concept of emotion, nor do I expect there to be one given the significant temporal and cultural gap I mentioned previously. This is not surprising considering I share with other scholars the belief that "emotion is not a timeless and universal natural kind uninflected by historical, linguistic, and cultural networks of meaning and implication" (Heim, Ram-Prasad and Tzohar 2021: 4).

[8] For examples of recent philosophical studies of *vedanā,* see Kachru 2021; and Heim 2021.

extremely difficult to defend. I would point out, however, that *saṃvega* is one of the best available options to consider as an early Buddhist concept of emotion for several reasons. In its broadest sense, *saṃvega*, much like the term emotion, refers to the phenomenon of being stirred, excited, or moved by some set of circumstances, and etymologically, both *saṃvega* and emotion can be traced back to verbal roots that denote motion (Skt. *vij* and Lat. *mot*). Since these words carry the meaning of experiencing physical and mental movements, unsurprisingly, some scholars elected to use "emotion" as a translation for *saṃvega* or closely related words that appear in Buddhist scriptures.[9] That said, there are also several reasons one could easily highlight to show that *saṃvega* significantly differs from the contemporary concept of emotion. For starters, unlike terms such as *vedanā* or *kleśa, saṃvega* is never purposefully used in early Buddhist texts to categorize various types of emotional phenomena. *Saṃvega* is not a meta-category that groups together the gamut of emotions that includes love, hatred, pride, and so forth. This alone should be enough to deflate any claim that *saṃvega* perfectly overlaps with the modern category of emotion.

Having addressed these different answers to whether there is an early Buddhist concept of emotion, I would like to discuss now an entirely different interpretation of the question at stake. This interpretation is explicitly concerned with the meaning of referring to a concept of emotion as *Buddhist*.[10] I have already acknowledged that any possible concept of emotion that appears in early Buddhist texts will only roughly overlap with the contemporary category of emotion. Therefore, it logically follows that such a concept will differ in some respects from the way the term emotion is understood today, and in this regard, it may as well be considered uniquely Buddhist.[11] However, what if the question at stake is not at all about whether or not early Buddhist texts had a concept that roughly overlaps with the category of phenomena that contemporary English speakers call "emotion," but instead, is about whether these Buddhist scriptures developed a concept of emotion that fundamentally belongs to the Buddhist tradition or the Buddhist path. I invoke this interpretation of the question because *saṃvega* is such a Buddhist concept. *Saṃvega* is a momentous event in the life of a disciple in the Buddhist tradition and a pivotal juncture one is expected to pass through on the Buddhist path to liberation. On some occasions, *saṃvega* is presented as a distressing state one needs to inhabit in the process of coming to terms with the transient nature of things. On other occasions, it is portrayed as a terrified response to the Buddha's word that is necessary for changing one's entire outlook. While *saṃvega* takes on many shapes and has different tones, it remains *structurally* incorporated into the Buddhist path itself, like a gate one must enter or a site one must visit.

One way of explaining what it means that *saṃvega* is structurally Buddhist involves questioning whether accounts of saṃvegic experiences in early Buddhist scriptures are descriptive or prescriptive. Broadly speaking, there is good reason to be wary of construing accounts of

[9] For an example of this translation choice, see Walshe 1987: 263. Also, note that the early Pāli-English dictionary of Childers has "emotion" as one of the meanings of *saṃvega* (Childers 1875: 443), and the later, the PTS's Pāli-English dictionary has "religious emotion" as a gloss for *saṃvega* (Rhys-Davids and Stede 1921: 658)

[10] The methodology of changing the emphasis on the different components of the question in order to rethink its meaning is inspired by Ramanujan's famous essay, Is There an Indian Way of Thinking? An Informal Essay (Ramanujan 1989).

[11] This also depends on showing that *saṃvega* is uniquely Buddhist in the sense of not being identical to the way the term is used in Brahmanical and Jain texts, for example.

experiences in premodern Buddhist texts as descriptive.[12] When it comes to *saṃvega* in early Buddhist literature, the prospect of rendering accounts of this experience as descriptive seems almost impossible. In some canonical texts, occurrences of *saṃvega* are clearly not accounts of personal experiences. For example, in the Goad Sutta,[13] the experience of *saṃvega* is not associated with a specific human being, but is presented as emblematic of certain types of persons that are comparable to certain types of horses. Similarly, in the Lion Sutta,[14] the text compares the terrified reaction of the different animals that hear the lion's roar to the saṃvegic response of the gods (*devas*) who hear the Buddha's teaching of the Dharma. In these canonical examples of *saṃvega*, strictly speaking, there is no account of a personal human experience that one could even deem descriptive. Other scriptures, such as the Isolation Sutta,[15] actually include depictions of individual monks experiencing *saṃvega*; however, these depictions are intentionally impersonal, as they follow a stereotypical pattern, thus strongly indicating one should not take them at face value.[16] On the other hand, the generic and stereotypical features of saṃvegic experiences and the comparisons between different types of beings that experience this emotion,[17] all propose that the canonical accounts of *saṃvega* are more fitting to be deemed prescriptive. Thus, in this dissertation I claim that these accounts present the normative conditions, machinations, and implications of experiencing *saṃvega*.[18] In other words, the canonical occurrences of *saṃvega* are exemplary Buddhist depictions of facing existential distress. They reveal a normative structure of experiencing a transformative emotion that is essential to the Buddhist path.[19]

[12] Sharf (2000: 272) presents a strong argument against rendering descriptive accounts of meditative experiences in the Buddhist exegetical literature that delineates the different stages on the Path. His argument could be easily extended to canonical accounts of experiencing *saṃvega*, for these accounts are hardly ever focused on the significance of an individual's personal experience. Instead, they aim to highlight different elements of Buddhist doctrine. In other words, early Buddhist scriptures seem concerned with larger questions concerning what *saṃvega* means to the one who pursues the Path, rather than describing the experiences of certain individuals.
[13] Patodasutta (AN 4.118).
[14] Sīhasutta (AN 4.33).
[15] Vivekasutta (SN 9.1).
[16] There are accounts of *saṃvega* that tell us more about "what it feels like" to experience this emotion; yet, these accounts are found, for example, in Aśvaghoṣa's *mahākāvyas* and describe the *saṃvega* of the Buddha and his brother Nanda. Taking these poetic accounts as "descriptive" seems nonsensical, considering they appear in a work of *kāvya*. A more interesting case to consider as a possible descriptive account of *saṃvega* appears in the Attadaṇḍa Sutta. In chapter three, I discuss this text and my reasons for considering it as prescriptive rather than descriptive.
[17] In chapters two and four I address at length the use of *saṃvega* in comparisons between animals and humans, as well as the meaning of attributing the experience of *saṃvega* to a group of beings.
[18] On the one hand, I use terms like "prescriptive" or "normative" when referring to the early textual accounts of *saṃvega*, and on the other hand, I occasionally analyze these accounts through a phenomenological lens. One might find this problematic or confusing, for usually phenomenology is paired with "the descriptive." However, Crowell (2013) offers a different way of thinking about the relationship between phenomenology and normativity. He presents the work of phenomenologists like Husserl and Heidegger as inquiries into the normative structure and conditions of meaning. If we think about phenomenology in this way, it makes perfect sense to pair it with prescriptive or normative accounts.
[19] Cairns and Nelis (2017), whose methodology I find appealing, advocate for a form of constructivist approach to the study of emotions in the classical world. Their methodology strives to critically explore "cultural models of emotion phenomenology" that are available via their representation in texts. According to Cairns and Nelis, ancient Greek literature, for instance, should not be read naively as a description of what certain "people really felt," but as a prescriptive account of the shape a certain subjective experience was expected to take. Other studies of emotions in premodern European thought that had a substantial impact on my approach to the study of emotions in early Buddhism include Williams 1993; Largier 2003; and Long 2015.

Understanding *saṃvega* as structurally Buddhist is also useful when contemplating whether this emotion is a physical or mental phenomenon.[20] To begin with, the experience of *saṃvega* clearly has a corporal aspect to it. The physicality of *saṃvega* in Buddhist literature frequently provides the grounds for comparing the saṃvegic experiences of animals and human beings. However, several canonical texts also place a strong emphasis on the mental component of this emotion. In scriptures such as the Lion Sutta and the Attadaṇḍa Sutta,[21] *saṃvega* is not merely a mental event but a cognitive and intellectual achievement. The physical and mental aspects of *saṃvega*, according to Ananda Coomaraswamy, are representative of "two phases" of this emotion that are usually felt together. The first phase includes a poignant physical sensation, while the second phase completely transcends "the physical" and involves a meaningful realization.[22] My attempt to explain the complex nature of *saṃvega*, offers a slightly different interpretation, one which conceives of this emotion first and foremost as a Buddhist existential structure. While one can analyze *saṃvega* in early Buddhist texts through the lens of the body-mind duality (and in some cases this might be illuminating); [23] I think it is more telling to consider it as a mode of being-in-the-world. *Saṃvega* colors the field of experience as a whole and shapes the subject's entire engagement with the world.[24] Coomaraswamy highlights the dramatic impact that the shocking force of *saṃvega* has on a person's physical and mental state, and while there is no denying that, the depictions of this emotion in Buddhist literature tend to strongly focus on how it transforms the world one inhabits. For instance, before his experience of *saṃvega*, the Buddha lived in a beautiful world full of delightful and comforting scenes, yet after his *saṃvega*, that world turned into a horrifying place occupied by suffering, misery, and death. [25] *Saṃvega* is the fundamental structure or the existential stance that reconfigured the world the Buddha lived in, and by extension, it is designed to have a similar impact on the lifeworld of those who follow the Buddha's path.[26]

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[20] The distinction between *saṃvega* of the body and *saṃvega* of the mind appears in the Buddhist scriptures and the traditional commentaries. On this distinction, see for example p. 30. Also, in the modern scholarship on *saṃvega*, the discourse around this phenomenon begins with Coomaraswamy's analysis of the physical vs. mental aspects and phases of the saṃvegic experience.

[21] Attadaṇḍasutta (Sn 4.15).

[22] Coomaraswamy 1943: 178. I address in further detail Coomaraswamy's notion of *saṃvega* and my reflections on it in chapters three and five.

[23] The Pāli exegetical tradition often views *saṃvega*, much like other phenomena, through the lens of the body-mind duality. Like Coomaraswamy, the Buddhist exegetes seem to place a stronger emphasis on the mental aspect of this emotion. This is a topic I address at length throughout the dissertation.

[24] The phenomenological terminology I am adopting here, which is found in the work of philosophers like Heidegger and Sartre, has a lot to offer to the study of emotions in classical Buddhist texts. That said, my task in this dissertation is not to conduct a phenomenological analysis of *saṃvega*. Instead, my focus is on close reading the early Buddhist scriptures and the traditional commentaries, and only occasionally, I bring up phenomenology in my attempt to make sense of these rich and complex Buddhist texts, and more broadly, to bring the Buddhist materials into conversation with contemporaries issue in continental philosophy.

[25] I have in mind here the depiction of the Buddha's *saṃvega* in Aśvaghoṣa's Buddhacarita, which I address in chapter two. However, I also address in this dissertation at least one depiction of the Buddha's *saṃvega* in the Pāli canon (see chapter four).

[26] This way of presenting *saṃvega* can easily be associated with Brekke's characterization of this emotional experience as a moment of conversion (Brekke 2002). Generally speaking, the use of the term conversion can be helpful in the context of studying the concept of *saṃvega* in early Buddhist texts; however, I think *saṃvega* gives us insight into a traditional early Buddhist *model* of conversion. In other words, the textual study of *saṃvega* does not necessarily tell us much about the historical reasons and circumstances that led people to become Buddhists over two thousand years ago. In chapter four, I address Brekke's work on fear and *saṃvega* with more specificity.

Coomaraswamy's pioneering essay, "Saṁvega, 'Aesthetic Shock.'" published in 1943, is still the most widely cited and influential work of scholarship on the topic of *saṃvega*. Coomaraswamy's skillful presentation of the Vedic and Buddhist textual materials on this topic marks his most significant contribution to the study of *saṃvega*. Nonetheless, perhaps the main feature that makes his essay stand out to this day is Coomaraswamy's cross-cultural comparative framework, which is strongly associated with his scholarship. In his attempt to explain *saṃvega*, Coomaraswamy invokes Kant's "disinterested aesthetic contemplation" and the Platonic doctrine of recollection.[27] One can certainly point out the specific historical and conceptual ties between these philosophical ideas and the phenomenological approach that I occasionally use in this dissertation to discuss the nature of *saṃvega*. However, in the spirit of Coomaraswamy's cross-cultural comparative thought, I would rather present here a broader view of the role emotions and more specifically moods play in the tradition of European philosophy, which I find helpful when thinking about the Buddhist concept of *saṃvega*. I am referring to the view that distinguishes between the moods of philosophers and the moods of philosophy. Ilit Ferber addresses, for example, the difference between the melancholic mood that is characteristic of great European thinkers, such as the philosopher David Hume, and the notion of melancholy as a philosophical mood that rests at the foundation of the work and discourse of European philosophers.[28] The former conceives of melancholy as a psychological state of certain individuals, while the latter considers it an existential structure that impacts the type of questions philosophers ask and the way philosophy is done. The tradition of European philosophy includes other structural moods, such as wonder, nostalgia, and anxiety.[29] Interestingly, the mood of anxiety also plays a role in Rita Felski's claim that suspicion is the prevailing "critical mood" of academic disciplines today.[30] I bring this up because I view *saṃvega* as one of the structural moods of early Buddhism. *Saṃvega* is an emotional disposition that was considered foundational to the practice and worldviews of Buddhists.

At this point, one might ask why I am referring to *saṃvega* as a Buddhist *concept* of emotion instead of just a Buddhist emotion or mood. Part of the rationale behind this decision is that once we conceive of *saṃvega* as a Buddhist concept, we can detect more easily its presence in texts that do not explicitly include the word *saṃvega*. In this dissertation, for example, I examine early Chinese translations of Buddhist scriptures that deal with the concept of *saṃvega*, and in some cases, I highlight Chinese words that I believe are direct translations of the word *saṃvega*. Yet, regardless of whether the Chinese translators of these scriptures were actually translating the word *saṃvega*, I argue that these texts can tell us a great deal about the concept of *saṃvega* and the Buddhist view of emotions. In addition, one may also apply the concept of *saṃvega* to Pāli suttas that do not specifically include this word. A good example of this is Maria Heim's entry on *saṃvega* in her "Treasury of Emotion Terms from Ancient India."[31] To explain the meaning of *saṃvega*, Heim points to the Aggikkhandhopama Sutta,[32] in which the Buddha shares with a group of monks a hard and disturbing truth. The Buddha tells the monks that it is better to experience the agonizing pain of having a hot iron spike forcefully shoved into one's mouth at this very moment, than to violate the monastic code or even practice monasticism under false pretenses. That is

[27] Coomaraswamy 1943: 177, 179.
[28] Ferber 2013: 4-7.
[29] Kenaan and Ferber 2011.
[30] Felski 2015: 146.
[31] Heim 2022: 258.
[32] AN 7.72. The translation of the title of this scripture is the Sutta on the Metaphor of the Mass of Fire.

because the punishment in hell for being a "wicked" monk is far worse than any fiery torture one might experience in this life. This sutta ends by stating that upon hearing the Buddha voice these harsh words, sixty monks vomited hot blood, and sixty other monks immediately quit the monastic life. Yet, there were also sixty monks who were liberated by the Buddha's speech. This sutta attests to the harshness of some of the Buddha's truths and the strong responses they provoke, all of which are significant facets of the Buddhist concept of *saṃvega*.

Another reason to consider *saṃvega* as a *concept* of emotion is for the sake of acknowledging that expressions such as "Buddhist emotions," or what Jonathan Gold calls "distinctly Buddhist emotional registers,"[33] are largely associated with textual representations of the emotive states of buddhas, bodhisattvas, and famous Buddhist disciples. Thus, by referring to *saṃvega* as a concept of emotion we are more likely to remain mindful of the fact that early Buddhist texts do not grant us unmediated access to the emotions Buddhists felt, nor do they provide us with careful historical accounts of past emotional experiences.[34] Instead, these canonical sources primarily reflect how Buddhists conceptualized emotions, and the pivotal role *saṃvega* played in this intellectual endeavor. This dissertation, therefore, is best regarded as a study of Buddhist intellectual history, and more specifically, an inquiry into the early conceptual history of *saṃvega*.

Emotions and *saṃvega* in early Buddhist thought

For several decades, scholars have been studying "the emotions" in early Buddhist canonical literature. While summarizing the entire scholarship on this topic is too tall of a task for this introduction, I would like to highlight a number of key discussions and themes that are particularly germane to the study of *saṃvega*. One such discussion is concerned with the role of emotions in early Buddhist doctrine. To begin with, it is safe to say that early Buddhist texts often characterize emotions in a negative way. Emotions are frequently regarded as factors that contribute to the arising of disturbance, attachment, ignorance, and suffering.[35] Paul Griffiths, for example, explains that the prevalent early Buddhist practice of cultivating calmness (*śamatha-bhāvanā*) centers on manipulating the "emotional attitude" of the practitioner. The doctrinal objective of this manipulation is the attainment of a "complete affective disentanglement" from the world.[36] This explanation is representative of a predominant strand in early Buddhist thought that views the cessation of all emotional engagement with the world as a main goal of the Buddhist path.

Nevertheless, early Buddhist texts also view certain emotions in positive ways. Some emotions are considered vital for the pursuit of the Path, and others are associated with advanced meditative states. Richard Gombrich contends that for certain traditions of Indian asceticism, severing one's emotional ties to the world was the ultimate soteriological goal; however, this was not the case in early Buddhist doctrine. Striving for complete affective disentanglement is "associated more with another strand in Indian religious thought, the tradition that the root of all

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[33] Gold 2008: 124.

[34] This ties, of course, to the point I made earlier about my concern with construing accounts of saṃvegic experiences as descriptive.

[35] For an example of a work of scholarship that traces this predominant early Buddhist characterization of emotions, see Vetter 1988.

[36] Griffiths 1986: 15-16. For Griffiths, the notion of "affective disentanglement" is encapsulated by the technical term *nirodha-samāpatti* (attainment of cessation).

evil is passion, or even just emotion, so that salvation lies in eradicating all passion and no longer having any likes or dislikes."[37] Gombrich further explains that while in early Buddhist scripture, the root cause of human suffering consists of both emotional (*rāga* and *dveṣa*) and intellectual (*avidyā* or *moha*) components, the Buddha's awakened state also includes these two aspects. Along with the Buddha's penetrating insight into the nature of reality, we find the four divine emotions (*brahma-vihāras*) associated with the Buddha's awakened state of mind, one of which is compassion (*karuṇā*).[38] Buddhist doctrine, in this sense, acknowledges that emotions are not only part of "the problem" but also part of "the solution" to the human existential predicament.

There is also a way of viewing the role of emotions in Buddhist doctrine that evades the negative-positive binary altogether. This view involves considering emotions as a driving force that can either confine sentient beings to a life of suffering or propel them to the ultimate form of liberation.[39] In other words, emotions are not good or evil in and of themselves, but merely a power that can be harnessed and used for different purposes.

Regardless of how one conceives of the role emotions play in early Buddhist doctrine, the study of *saṃvega* in the canonical literature can shed new light on this discussion. *Saṃvega* is presented in early scriptures both in positive and negative terms. It is a terribly distressing experience; and yet, it may benefit one tremendously. The role and meaning of this emotion varies depending on whether it is considered in a soteriological, ethical, aesthetic, or therapeutic framework. Although, undeniably, *saṃvega* is a powerful force that can be used to make progress on the Path, it is often depicted as an overpowering and overwhelming experience of shock. The possibility of utilizing the saṃvegic force and harnessing the energy it engenders, was a topic of great interest to the traditional Buddhist exegetes.[40]

Another central topic of discussion in the study of emotions in early Buddhist thought is the procedural aspect or "mechanics" of the emotional experience. Causality is a predominant analytical lens through which Buddhist thinkers examine almost any type of phenomena, and emotions are no exception, as they are typically broken down and explained in causal terms. Heim traces a common causal analysis of emotion in early Buddhist texts, according to which, contact between the senses and the world gives rise to feelings, which then result in actions that are categorized as meritorious or demeritorious.[41] More specifically, scholars of South Asian Buddhist literature highlight a "formal causal sequence" of emotion that consists of three phases: "seeing,

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[37] Gombrich 2006: 44.
[38] Gombrich 2006: 66. The paring of intellectual and emotional aspects in the characterization of both the miserable saṃsaric existence and the coveted nirvāṇic state raises the question of whether these two aspects are inherently linked in early Buddhist thought. Even if one believes these aspects are inseparable, this still does not necessarily debunk Griffiths' (1986) argument, for *nirodha-samāpatti* represents the cessation of all emotional and intellectual activity.
[39] Faure (1998), for instance, refrains from thinking of emotions in either positive or negative terms. He explains that in Buddhist thought, affectivity is primarily considered to be a driving force. In his own words, "the concept of 'pivoting' or 'overturning' (Skt. *paravṛtti*) seems to lie behind the view that rather than negating passion, desire, and sexuality, one can transmute them" (Faure 1998: 4). Although Faure bases his discussion of this matter mainly on Mahāyāna texts, Webster, in direct reference to Faure, traces a similar Buddhist notion of "overturning" one's passions and desires in the Pāli canon (Webster 2005: 132-133).
[40] This is a topic I address in Chapter Five.
[41] Heim 2003: 534. Feelings may also generate intentions (*cetanā*) and different forms of reflection (Heim 2003: 533).

feeling, doing." This causal sequence typically includes a visual encounter with a being or a material representation, which immediately elicits a strong emotional response that is then expressed in the form of a physical gesture.[42]

The Buddhist causal model of emotion is undoubtedly relevant to the study of *saṃvega*. The canonical depictions of this emotion are as focused on the conditions and effects of *saṃvega* as they are on the sheer intensity of the saṃvegic feeling itself. The Theravāda exegetical tradition, in particular, is invested in analyzing and explaining *saṃvega* in causal terms. A good example of this is the list of eight standard objects that give rise to *saṃvega*, which begins with birth, old age, sickness, and death.[43] This list shows that from a scholastic Buddhist perspective, analyzing *saṃvega* begins with a demarcation of what triggers this emotional response. As I show in this dissertation, the Theravāda exegetes and scholiasts also examine the immediate effects of the *saṃvegic* encounter, as well as the long-term implications of undergoing this transformative emotional experience.

However, *saṃvega* also presents many challenges to the causal model of emotion, and more broadly, to the notion of an all-encompassing analytical structure of the emotional process in early Buddhist thought. For example, while the responsive character of *saṃvega* is undisputed, once one enters *saṃvega*, this emotion determines how one sees the world, and in some cases, it works as a kind of pre-perceptual scheme that narrows or rearranges one's field of experience so that only certain things stand out.[44] In this regard, one may also think of *saṃvega* as a "reactive mood."[45] The capacity of *saṃvega* to impact how one sees the world problematizes the causal model of emotion that points to the manner in which external stimuli affect the subject, who then acts based on his or her affective response. *Saṃvega* paints a different picture of emotion, where even our most basic engagement with the world is already affected by how we feel. Furthermore, the depiction of some saṃvegic encounters in early Buddhist scripture raises questions as to what exactly gives rise to this emotion. Apparently, there are two main factors at play in the arising of *saṃvega*. One is the shocking or distressing object and the other is the saṃvegic sensibility of the

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[42] Trainor 2003: 326. Trainor grounds his presentation of this South Asian Buddhist model of emotion on the scholarly works of Berkwitz 2001; Rotman 2003; and Heim 2003. Of note, Heim questions whether this Buddhist causal model of emotion corresponds to early Buddhist accounts of the phenomenal experience of emotion. She explains, for instance, that in the Milindapañha, the monk Nāgasena acknowledges that while it is possible to deconstruct the sequence of events that include contact with the world followed by feelings and subsequently actions or intentions, in reality, we experience these events all at once. Nāgasena goes on to compare the emotional experience to a sauce or a soup in which the different ingredients are mixed together in a way that prevents one from telling them apart (Heim 2003: 534). Following Heim, one might ponder whether early Buddhist texts provide a theoretical or scholastic analysis of the structure of emotion, as well as a distinct phenomenological exploration of the saṃvegic experience. Whether one believes this distinction holds water or not, in the canonical treatments of *saṃvega* such an analytical distinction is never clearly invoked.

[43] The Aṭṭhakathā commentary on the Mahāsatipaṭṭhāna Sutta (MN 10) makes the following observation: "At the time when the mind is insipid due to [its] slowness in applying knowledge, or because of [its] non-attainment of the bliss of calmness, [one] causes [it] to be distressed (*saṃvejeti*) by concentrating on the eight objects of distress (*saṃvega*). The eight objects of distress are birth, old age, sickness and death – that makes four. The suffering of hell is the fifth. [The next three are] the suffering rooted in saṃsāric past, the suffering rooted in saṃsāric future, [and] with respect to the present, there is the suffering rooted in the search for nutriment. Serene confidence (*pasāda*), [on the other hand,] is generated through the recollection of the three jewels" (mūlapaṇṇāsa-aṭṭhakathā 118). This list is also found in the Visuddhimagga and is (perhaps rightfully) associated with Buddhaghosa.

[44] On Kierkegaard's understanding of emotion as a type of pre-perceptual scheme see Carron 2018: 327.

[45] On the "reactive mood" in a contemporary philosophical context, see Kenaan 2020: 12

subject. This duality defies, for instance, any attempt to simply analyze this emotion as a sequential process that moves from the outside in or from the inside out. In contrast, certain canonical accounts of *saṃvega* seem to favor a co-arising model, in which the event of experiencing this state of existential distress comes into being due to the combination of causes and conditions that can neither be categorized as solely subjective or objective.[46]

The last area of research I would like to address concerning the study of emotions in early Buddhist texts focuses on specific words, terms, and concepts. This research area has a lexicographic aspect, delineating the Buddhist vocabulary of emotion terms, as well as a philosophical aspect, as it aims to map and explore the conceptual terrain of emotions in Buddhist thought. This study of *saṃvega*, to a large extent, belongs to this field of scholarship. While the volume of work in this field is substantial and I seriously engage with much of it throughout this dissertation, I will only highlight here a number of studies dedicated to concepts closely tied to *saṃvega*.

The work on the concept of fear in the Pāli canon stands out in this scholarly field due to its richness and relevance to the study of *saṃvega*. Torkel Brekke, for starters, underscores the "paradox of fear" or its "double role" in early Buddhist scripture.[47] Fear (*bhaya*), he shows, is considered both a detrimental force one seeks to eradicate completely, as well as a source of motivation one strongly relies on in pursuit of the Buddhist path. Giuliano Giustarini and Bronwyn Finnigan[48] present a more detailed account of fear in the Pāli canon, revealing the different roles this emotion plays in early Buddhist ethics[49] and epistemology. *Saṃvega* is prominently featured in the scholarship on the early Buddhist concept of fear, which is not surprising, for *saṃvega* is a form of fear. However, *saṃvega* is also more than fear. While it has a certain semantic overlap with some of the Pāli terms for fear, like *bhaya*, *santāsa*, and *ottappa*, the term *saṃvega* is not encapsulated or subsumed by the concept of fear. There is an entire range of emotions such as dejection, melancholy, sorrow, and dissatisfaction that are encompassed in the concept of *saṃvega*, which are clearly beyond the purview of fear.

Significant strides were also made in the study of other terms that describe specific emotions that share a certain semantic field with *saṃvega*. This includes terms like *nirveda* (revulsion), *vairāgya* (dispassion), *viveka* (isolation), and *prasāda* (serene confidence).[50] The scholarly work on some of these terms is not strictly restricted to early canonical Buddhist texts; nonetheless, it greatly contributes to the broader understanding of the conceptual landscape to which *saṃvega* belongs.

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[46] This becomes especially apparent in the Goad Sutta's account of *saṃvega*, which I analyze in the fourth chapter.
[47] Brekke 2002. Nirveda
[48] Giustarini 2012; and Finnigan 2021. Finnigan also presents a "refined theory of fear" that attempts to resolve what Brekke refers to as "the paradox of fear." I address this theory in chapter three.
[49] Heim (2003) also addresses the role of fear in Buddhist ethics and the aesthetic aspect of this emotional experience in Pāli literature.
[50] On *saṃvega* and *nirveda* (P. *nibbidā*) in early Buddhism, see Evmeneko 2012. For a discussion of *nirveda* in classical Indian thought see Heim 2022: 211-213. On *saṃvega* and *vairagya* see Acri 2015: 208-209. For a lengthier discussion of *vairāgya* in the Pātañjala Yoga tradition, see Raveh 2012: 31-38. On *viveka* in Theravāda scholastic literature, see Collins 1982:171-172. For a lengthier discussion of *viveka* in Aśvaghoṣa's Buddhist *kāvya,* see Tzohar 2021. On *saṃvega* and *prasāda* (P. *pasāda*) in early Buddhism, see Liang and Morseth 2021. For a discussion of *saṃvega* and *pasāda* in the Theravāda tradition, see Walker 2018.

Moreover, there are at least two prevalent Pāli terms that function as meta-categories of emotion worth mentioning in this context, namely, *vedanā* (feeling) and *kilesa* (defilements). *Vedanā* is a term that has no single definition in the Pāli sutta literature, yet we can broadly say that it plays a vital role in the early Buddhist analysis of human experience. More specifically, Heim explains that the concept of *vedanā* is representative of the classical Buddhist "modal approach" to investigating experience.[51] The most common example of this approach is the threefold classification of one's contact with the world as either pleasing, painful, or neither pleasing nor painful. These three analytical categories reflect three basic modalities of experiencing the phenomenon of feeling. In a broader philosophical sense, the term *vedanā* reveals that the classical Buddhist concept of experience (*anubhava*) refers to much more than "presentation of content" (*vijñapti*). *Vedanā*, as Sonam Kachru remarks, is tied to "the disclosure of the world in terms of qualitative values that motivate and render intelligible our engagement with the world."[52] In other words, *vedanā* shows that in Buddhist thought, emotions are considered essential to our experience of the world as that which has meaning for us. *Saṃvega,* much like *vedanā*, is a concept used to reflect on the fundamental capacity of beings to affect and be affected by the world, and in this sense, it also attests to the complex nature of experience in early Buddhist thought.[53]

The technical Pāli Buddhist term *kilesa* (Skt. *kleśa*) usually appears in the plural and is commonly translated as "defilements" or "afflictions." *Kilesa* is a category that applies to a number of emotions,[54] which are considered the root cause of suffering, and more broadly, of saṃsāric existence. A cardinal principle of Buddhist thought is that the purity of one's body, mind, and action is tainted due to the operation of destructive emotions, which are therefore known as "the defilements."[55] The operation of the defilements constantly disrupts one's being, and only by removing these obstacles can one clear the mind and put an end to suffering. In Sanskrit literature, the non-technical meaning of *kleśa* is "pain," "distress," or "anguish."[56] Thus, there is a clear semantic overlap between the words *kleśa* and *saṃvega*, as well as some parallels in the basic function of these emotional phenomena in early Buddhist thought. Yet, while *kleśa* denotes a

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[51] Heim 2021: 87-88.
[52] Kachru 2021: 137.
[53] Walker (2018) shows that in the Theravāda tradition, *saṃvega* is also a key component in an analytical scheme that conceives of the aesthetic experience as either stirring (*saṃvega*) or stilling (*pasāda*). This Theravāda scheme could be considered another example of the Buddhist "modal approach" to investigating human experience. While *saṃvega* and *pasāda*, in many respects, are opposites and even seem to exclude one another, there is also the notion of the two being complementary. While this notion is never explicitly expressed in early Buddhist scripture, it undeniably becomes central in later stages of Theravāda Buddhism. On the possibility of tracing the roots of the *saṃvega-pasāda* paring to the suttas of the Pāli canon, see Walker 2018: 283-284.
[54] The translation of the *kleśas* as "emotions" is contentious. A more neutral translation would be "mental states." However, like some scholars, I believe there is good reason to characterize *kleśas* as emotions, and more specifically in the context of early Buddhism, as harmful emotions. For an example of a work of scholarship that interprets and translates *kleśa* as "emotions" in an Indian Buddhist context, see Snellgrove 1987. In the following chapters, I address some of the different lists of *kleśas* in Buddhist literature.
[55] Gethin (1998: 175) claims that the mind is considered fundamentally clear or pure in early Buddhist psychology. This position certainly clarifies how the *kleśas* contaminate the mind from without. However, the notion of the fundamental purity or luminosity of mind has been a topic of some dispute among contemporary scholars of Theravāda Buddhism. On this topic, see Anālayo 2017a; Collins 1982: 246–247; Gombrich 2006a: 43–45; Harvey 1989; Harvey 1995: 166–174. On the notion of "luminous consciousness" in a broader early Buddhist philosophical context, see Sharf 2018: 828-829.
[56] Monier-Williams 1899: 324.

constant, detrimental emotional disturbance of mind, body, and being that confines one to *saṃsāra*, *saṃvega* refers to a rare and necessary emotional disturbance that can help one break out of the cycle of suffering. One might say the Buddhist concept of *saṃvega* reflects the need for disturbing or upsetting the saṃsāric mode of existence that is inherently disturbed by the operation of the defilements.

The last classical Indian concept I will briefly address here is *rasa.* The Sanskrit term *rasa* (which literally means taste or sap) is a staple of classical Indian aesthetics. *Rasa*, according to the Nāṭyaśāstra,[57] refers to the transcendent taste or relishable juice that arises from the right mixture of ingredients in a work of art. *Rasa* is a transformed emotion that is based on a worldly (*laukika)*, stable sentiment (*sthayī-bhāva*), which through an amalgam of artistic factors[58] and transient feelings is turned into an unworldly (*alaukika*) sentiment.[59] As Arindam Chakrabarti explains, "It is this heart-melting taste of a multi-flavored transformed unworldly emotion that is the object of aesthetic relish."[60] The Nāṭyaśāstra lists eight *rasas*, namely, the erotic, comic, tragic, violent, heroic, fearful, macabre, and fantastic, to which later, the special ninth *rasa* of tranquility was added.[61] One of the main questions that occupied the tradition of Indian aesthetics was where does *rasa* reside? Is it in the actor, the work of art, the poet, the spectator, or is it perhaps a unique spiritual feeling that has no locus or owner? Sheldon Pollock shows that the rich intellectual discourse on *rasa*, which is over a millennium and a half years long, includes many theorists that provide very different answers to the question concerning the locus and nature of *rasa*.[62]

In Buddhist literature, the aesthetic concept of *rasa* first appears in medieval Tantric texts, and centuries later, the theory of nine *rasas* undergoes a process of Buddhicization in Tibetan Buddhist scholasticism.[63] While there is no obvious historical justification for linking the concept of *rasa* to the emotion of *saṃvega* in early Buddhist scripture, some modern scholars have pondered whether *saṃvega* is a type of *rasa*.[64] For the most part, these scholars are applying the category of *rasa* to the saṃvegic emotion that is part of the Theravāda aesthetic scheme of *saṃvega* and *pasāda*, which never appears in the early Buddhist scriptures.[65] That said, I think the general prospect of using *rasa* and the theory of emotions that emerges from classical Indian aesthetics to explore the meaning of *saṃvega* is appealing on philosophical grounds. In so doing, however, one should probably specify what concept of *rasa* one has in mind. Is it, for example, Abhinavagupta's philosophical interpretation of *rasa*, which is rooted in Sāṃkhya metaphysics, or is it the devotional *rasa* of Rūpa Gosvāmī.

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[57] The Treatise on Drama (Nāṭyaśāstra) is the root text of Indian dramatic theory. It was composed by the sage Bharata, and is dated to the third century AD circ. In the sixth chapter of this canonical work we find an early version of *rasa* theory, which was later developed in Kashmir into a phenomenology of *rasa* aesthetics.
[58] These factors are the excitant determinants (*vibhāva*) and expressive consequences (*anubhāva*).
[59] Chakrabarti 2016: 7.
[60] Chakrabarti 2009: 193.
[61] On the unique status of the ninth *rasa,* see Tubb 1985.
[62] Pollock 2016: 1-45.
[63] Gold 2008: 119-126.
[64] On *saṃvega* as *rasa,* see Walker 2018; Scheible 2016: 28; Collins 2003: 652n3; and Coomaraswamy 1943: 178.
[65] There are, however, examples in the Pāli canon of *saṃvega* leading to a peaceful state (see pp. 145-147). Also, as mentioned in n. 53, it is possible to trace the roots of the *saṃvega-pasāda* paring to the suttas of the Pāli canon. On this topic, see Walker 2018: 282-283.

There are also broad notions that are ubiquitous in the premodern Indian discourse on *rasa* that can prove useful when examining the early Buddhist concept of *saṃvega*. One such notion is that emotions are not only experienced privately but also shared publically. Often it is the very shift from privately experiencing a painful emotion, to publicly sympathizing and sharing that painful feeling with others that can transform the value, meaning, and even the sensation of the emotion itself.[66] The universality attributed to the *rasas* in Indian aesthetics is usually tied to the understanding that collectively relishing in the "juicy essence" of a work of art involves temporarily suspending one's personal, private feelings. This classical Indian insight into the power of collectively experiencing an emotion and the idea of a public emotional domain seems pertinent to the discourse on the early Buddhist concept of *saṃvega*. In this dissertation, I specifically discuss texts that focus on the audience that hears the Buddha's teaching and collectively experiences distress. Whether this audience consists of an assembly of monks or a pantheon of gods, these groups of sentient beings share the saṃvegic feeling of shock, terror, and dismay provoked by the Buddha's Dharma. *Saṃvega*, in this sense, is occasionally presented as a kind of collective mood or feeling that characterizes the emotional state of the Buddha's disciples.

Translating *saṃvega*

Translation is a major part of this dissertation. The following pages include various translations of premodern Asian texts and terms. In a broader sense, this research project engages in what Daniel Boyarin calls "cultural translation." For Boyarin, "The task of the cultural translator is to make our powerful modern European language submissive to the language of the past, of the other, to let English speak Hebrew, or ancient Greek, or Hindi." [67] Translating the Buddhist concept of *saṃvega*, in particular, is a cultural and intellectual endeavor that involves much more than finding an English equivalent to a premodern Sanskrit, Pāli, or Chinese word.

Throughout this dissertation, more often than not I intentionally leave the word *saṃvega* untranslated, hoping to encourage the reader to use the word *saṃvega* and apply it as a concept to different phenomena and texts. That said, in the following chapters, whenever I provide a complete translation of a text that includes "*saṃvega*" I never leave it untranslated. While there is no ideal translation for *saṃvega* (or a phrase we can use in its place), I think the process of translating this word is a crucial step towards gaining an understanding of what *saṃvega* means and how it can be used.

The task of translating classical texts often begins with trying to capture the meaning of key words by looking into their etymology. In classical Indian culture, more specifically, the intellectual practice of etymology (*nirukti*) has strong and ancient roots. Reflecting on this topic, Johannes Bronkhorst raises a useful distinction between "historical etymology" and "semantic etymology."[68] Historical etymology, which is more commonly practiced in modern academic circles, traces the history or origins of a word by showing, for example, that it derives from an older Latin root. Semantic etymology, on the other hand, investigates a word by comparing it to

[66] Heim (2003: 543-544) briefly addresses this notion and its relevance in the context of exploring the emotions in Buddhist thought.
[67] Boyarin 2017: 34
[68] Bronkhorst 2001:147.

other words that are more or less similar, as well as by breaking a word into different components and trying to deduce from this process the original meaning of the word.

The historical etymology of *saṃvega* traces it back to the un-prefixed Sanskrit root *vij*, [69] which according to Monier-Williams, relates to the English word "vigorous." Several verbal forms derived from *vij* already appear in the earliest Vedic sources, where they bear meanings such as, "to move with a quick darting motion; to start back, recoil, to flee from, to speed; to terrify, to tremble at."[70] As for the nominal stem *vega,* Monier-Williams provides the following glosses: "violent agitation, shock, jerk; rush, dash, impetus, momentum, onset; impetuosity, vehemence, haste, speed, rapidity, quickness, velocity; outbreak, outburst (of passion), excitement, agitation, emotion."[71] The prefixed root *saṃ-vij*, which I am specifically concerned with in this study, appears in Vedic sources with the meaning "to tremble or start with fear, start up, run away; to fall to pieces, burst asunder; to frighten, terrify."[72] Apte adds that *saṃ-vij* also has the sense of "to shake; to be agitated."[73] When it comes to the noun *saṃvega*, Monier-Williams provides three primary meanings for this word in three different groups of texts: (1) "violent agitation, excitement, flurry;" (Mahābhārata, etc.), (2) "vehemence, intensity, high degree;" (Uttarāmacarita, etc.), and (3) "desire of emancipation" (Hemacandra's Pariśiṣṭaparvan).[74] It is important to notice that only the first of these three meanings is based on classical Indian texts, while the latter two meanings of *saṃvega* are predicated on medieval Sanskrit literary works.[75] In Apte, we find the following list of glosses for *saṃvega*: "Agitation, flurry, excitement; violent speed, impetuosity, vehemence; haste, speed; agonising pain, poignancy."[76] As for the specific use of the word in a Buddhist context, Edgerton's Buddhist Hybrid Sanskrit Dictionary glosses *saṃvega* with "perturbation;"[77] and the PTS Pāli-English Dictionary records the following meanings of *saṃvega*: "agitation, fear, anxiety; thrill, religious emotion (caused by contemplation of the miseries of this world)."[78]

This brief account of the historical etymology of *saṃvega* as recorded in the Sanskrit and Pāli dictionaries only begins to hint at the richness and complexity of this word. In the first chapter of this dissertation, I delve deeper into the etymological and conceptual history of *saṃvega* in classical Sanskrit literature, exploring the array of meanings and functions it has in various literary genres.

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[69] Acri (2015: 200-201) addresses the historical etymology of *saṃvega*. My presentation on this topic is building on his valuable work.

[70] Monier-Williams 1899: 959.

[71] Monier-Williams 1899: 1013. Mayrhofer (1964: 204-205) also glosses *vega* with "Flut (flood), Schwall des Wassers (gush of water), Woge (wave)." The relationship between the root *vij* and water is interesting, for in European intellectual history, emotions are frequently associated with the image of water and the metaphor of being flooded or overflowing.

[72] Monier-Williams 1899: 1115.

[73] Apte 1956: 1592.

[74] Monier-Williams 1899: 1115.

[75] While it might be tempting to consider "desire of emancipation" as a translation for *saṃvega* in an early Buddhist context, one should keep in mind that this meaning of the word is predicated on a twelfth-century interpretation of *saṃvega* by a Jain scholar and philosopher.

[76] Apte 1956: 1592.

[77] Edgerton 1953: 541.

[78] Rhys-Davids and Stede1921: 658.

None of the texts I examine in the course of this study, unfortunately, address the semantic etymology of *saṃvega*. Nevertheless, it is worth keeping in mind that the word *saṃ-vega* is comprised of the prefix *saṃ*, which like the Latin prefix *con* has the primary meaning of "with, together, altogether,"[79] and the aforementioned nominal form *vega*. Interestingly, the dictionaries indicate that the word *vega* already includes all the meanings that the word *saṃvega* has. This raises the question of what exactly is the function and purpose of the prefix *saṃ* in the word *saṃvega* (or whether it even has any significance). One point that becomes clear from examining the different dictionaries, especially the Buddhist ones, is that *saṃvega* refers more specifically to a certain range of emotional phenomena, while *vega* is just as frequently used to denote speed or a quick motion. Furthermore, while I am certainly not grounding my understanding of *saṃvega* on its semantic etymology, the fact that *saṃvega* includes a prefix meaning "with" or "together" complements my interpretation of this concept. A key feature of *saṃvega,* I argue*,* is the possibility of sharing it *with* others, and more importantly, the capacity of this emotion to define one's relationship *with* the truth (Dharma) and *with* the world (*saṃsāra*).

Remarkably, in the last few decades, the phrase "a sense of urgency" has become the conventional English translation for *saṃvega* in early Buddhist suttas, despite the fact that it has little to do with the historical or semantic etymology of the word. Bhikkhu Ñāṇamoli and Bhikkhu Bodhi are the two prolific scholars who are largely responsible for establishing this translation for *saṃvega*. Before voicing my critique of this translation, I would like to first consider how Bodhi himself explains it. In the introduction to his translation of the Aṅguttara Nikāya, Bodhi writes the following about the concept of *saṃvega*, the challenge of translating it, and his decision to use the phrase "a sense of urgency."

> To steer his disciples away from their attachment to transient objects of clinging, the Buddha employs an arsenal of techniques intended to uncover the abyss that lies just beneath the apparently innocent joys of a virtuous life. These techniques are intended to instill in the aspirant a quality called *saṃvega*, a word without a precise English equivalent. To convey the sense it is necessary to resort to a makeshift phrase like "a sense of urgency." *Saṃvega* might be described as the inner commotion or shock we experience when we are jolted out of our usual complacency by a stark encounter with truths whose full gravity we normally refuse to face. *Saṃvega* arises from the recognition that our self-assumed security is illusory, that we are perpetually treading on thin ice, which at any moment may crack beneath our feet.
>
> The chief catalyst in inducing this sense of urgency is our confrontation with our inevitable mortality as revealed by old age, illness, and death. This encounter shakes us out of our habituation to mundane comforts and sets us in quest of unshakable peace and freedom. The future Buddha himself had to undergo this "shock of recognition" before he could embark on his own quest for enlightenment. His deep reflections on old age, illness, and death shattered his infatuation with youth, health, and vitality and drove him from his palace out into the forest seeking the unaging, illness-free, and deathless nibbāna (**3:39**).[80]

This passage expresses Bodhi's interpretation of the concept of *saṃvega*, which serves as the philosophical anchor for his translation. Overall, I find his interpretation quite profound and edifying, despite the fact that in later chapters of the dissertation, I challenge Bodhi's decision to

[79] Monier-Williams 1899: 1152.
[80] Bodhi 2012: 40.

characterize *saṃvega* in early Buddhist texts as a "quality," and I question the strong emphasis he places on the introspective aspect of the saṃvegic experience. The main explanation Bodhi provides for specifically using the phrase "a sense of urgency" in his translation, has to do with the fact that *saṃvega* involves a radical shift from complacency to urgency. Bodhi's translation thus discloses a key Buddhist observation, namely that people's ordinary fearful attitude towards death is usually accompanied by a sense of complacency, a feeling that one has nothing to do and no reason to dwell on the facticity of impermanence and mortality. In contrast, the shocking feeling of *saṃvega* entails a sense of urgency, a restless striving to confront the reality of suffering and turn one's life upside-down for the sake of transcending the unstable and transient saṃsāric existence. Moreover, the urgency of *saṃvega*, which Bodhi's translation underscores, ties this concept to the early Buddhist notion that one should immediately seize the opportunity to practice the Dharma. To convey this notion, the Buddha famously analogizes the human condition to the precarious saṃvegic state of being struck by a poison arrow that must be removed as soon as possible.[81] There is much more to say about the value of Bodhi and Ñāṇamoli's translation of *saṃvega*, and in the following chapters, I elaborate on the hermeneutical implications of their translation of this concept.

However, I also have several qualms with translating *saṃvega* as "a sense of urgency." Some of these qualms are a bit technical, and therefore, I will address them only in the body of the dissertation.[82] Yet at this point, I will merely focus on the single, broadest and most serious concern I have with Bodhi and Ñāṇamoli's translation, namely that it conceals a *tension* that is absolutely essential to *saṃvega* in Buddhist thought. *Saṃvega* is an extremely distressing experience, yet at the same time, early Buddhist texts insist that it is necessary, appropriate, and beneficial. There is a fundamental tension in the Buddhist use of *saṃvega* that forces the reader or listener to deal with the possibility of a momentous event in one's life that is horrifying and shocking but also favorable and invaluable. Brekke, for example, suggests we reflect on this tension inherent to *saṃvega* through the psychological theory of "cognitive dissonance." The strong discomfort that occurs when one's ordinary cognition of the average everyday life is shattered and replaced by the cognition of a world characterized by impermanence and suffering is, for Brekke, a key feature of *saṃvega*.[83] I would add that regardless of whether one tries to make sense of the inherent tension of *saṃvega* through a psychological, existential, or aesthetic framework, this Buddhist term demands of the reader to confront this tension in one way or another. Now, if one translates *saṃvega* as "a sense of urgency," the tension built into the Buddhist use of this term might easily get lost, for there is nothing baffling or peculiar in speaking positively about "acquiring a sense urgency." Who would not want a sense of urgency? For most contemporary English speakers, the phrase "a sense of urgency" carries largely positive connotations, and thus, when one uses this phrase to translate *saṃvega*, the shocking, frightening, dejecting, and agonizing aspects of this transformative emotion are mostly overlooked. It is in this sense that the conventional translation

[81] The Dharma, in this analogy, is the method for immediately removing the arrow and eventually ending the condition of suffering.

[82] I will merely mention here that my technical critique of this translation revolves around two main issues: the concealment of the emotional range of *saṃvega* and the tendency to view *saṃvega* through the functional lens of the later scholastic and exegetical traditions.

[83] Brekke 2002: 63. According to Brekke, the desire to bridge the discrepancy between these two cognitions is representative of the motivational force of *saṃvega*.

of *saṃvega* as "a sense of urgency" covers the basic tension that is so strongly associated with this term in early Buddhist literature.

A safer and more solid translation for *saṃvega*, which we find, for example, in K.R. Norman's translation of the Suttanipāta,[84] is "agitation." To begin with, the word agitation clearly highlights the tension of *saṃvega*, for at first glance, it is unclear in what sense the discomfort of agitation is valuable and essential. There are several other benefits to translating *saṃvega* as "agitation." For instance, this translation underlines the disturbing aspect of the saṃvegic experience, it carries some of the emotional connotations of *saṃvega*, and unlike the phrase "a sense of urgency," it affords grammatical flexibility when translating the various passive and active verbal forms derived from the root *saṃ-vij*. Also, the urgency associated with *saṃvega* is neatly captured by the word agitation. The single, minor concern I have with this translation is that it fails to convey the melancholic aspect of *saṃvega*.

The *saṃvegic* experience is often directly linked to feelings of sorrow (*śoka*) and despondency (*viṣāda*). In Patrick Olivelle's translation of Aśvaghoṣa's Life of the Buddha (Buddhacarita), he uses "dejection" to translate the *saṃvega* Prince Siddhārtha felt when he encountered, for the first time, the reality of impermanence and suffering. The Buddha's restless state upon learning first-hand about old age, sickness, and death clearly involved feelings of shock, fear, agitation, and anxiety; however, I think Olivelle's translation captures well the predominant and overwhelming experience of dejection that characterizes Prince Siddhārtha's saṃvegic mood in this famous episode from the life of the Buddha.

My translation for *saṃvega* in early Buddhist scripture is "distress," which is primarily the result of adding to "agitation" the melancholic aspect of *saṃvega*. In the Cambridge Dictionary, "distress" bears the meaning of extreme anxiety or danger, as well as a feeling of sadness. Also, the word distress may be associated with both body and mind, and while it is strongly linked to emotional phenomena, it is not restricted to the affective realm. Etymologically, distress is obviously related to the word "stress." I mention this to point out another benefit of translating *saṃvega* as distress, which is to highlight the prominence of a positive notion of stress in Buddhism. As Lajos Brons states, *saṃvega* is revealing of the fact that the goal of some key Buddhist practices is "stress *induction*, rather than stress reduction."[85] This fact ties to a larger theme I develop in this dissertation, which concerns the challenge the concept of *saṃvega* presents to the popular image of Buddhist practice as predominantly peaceful and stress-free.[86] As Paul Williams remarks, "the spiritual path is not one of comfortable feelings and acceptance. It is deeply uncomfortable."[87] Beyond this, I see no need to further elaborate here on my translation of *saṃvega* as "distress" since, as I have mentioned, it is quite similar to the familiar translation of *saṃvega* as "agitation." There is, however, a different issue with translating *saṃvega* that I think is worth addressing here, which touches on a more unobvious translation choice of mine. I am referring to my decision to translate the root *ā-pad,* which typically accompanies *saṃvega* in early Buddhist literature, as "to face."

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[84] Norman 2001: 122. In chapter three, I address this particular instance in which Norman uses "agitation" as a translation for *saṃvega*.
[85] Brons 2015: 85.
[86] This popular image of Buddhist practice, and meditation more specifically, has been challenged by previous scholars, see for example Webster 2005: 102-103; and Lopez 2012: 108.
[87] Williams 1995: xxv.

We find in the Pāli canon the recurring expression *saṃvegaṃ āpajjati* ("one faces distress").[88] A straightforward and easily justifiable translation for *ā-pad* in this context would be "to undergo" or "to experience" *saṃvega*. There are also other, less trivial yet recognizable options for translating *ā-pad* such as, "to enter," "to fall into," "to meet with," "to arrive at," or "to attain" (*saṃvega*).[89] My decision to translate *ā-pad* as "to face" (*saṃvega*), avoids veering too far away from these viable options, yet still aims to capture specific nuances that are reflective of my understanding of how *saṃvega* unfolds. Without belaboring this point too much, there are two main reasons I chose this translation. The first is that in English, when the verb "to face" takes as its direct object an emotion like fear or distress, it has the basic sense of having an uncomfortable emotional experience, as well as the more particular sense of confronting the source of that distressing emotion in an empowering and therapeutic manner. Facing *saṃvega* in early Buddhist literature bears these two meanings. *Saṃvega* is an uncomfortable feeling of existential distress, and also a necessary confrontation with the miseries of the world that can help one overcome all fear and despair. The second reason I chose the translation of "facing distress" is to invoke the notion of *saṃvega* as a type of encounter. As Bodhi articulates it, *saṃvega* involves an "encounter with truths whose full gravity we normally refuse to face," and I would add that in a structural sense, *saṃvega* is a mode of encountering the world. The expression "facing *saṃvega*" thus implies that this experience shifts one's entire orientation in *saṃsāra*,[90] as one becomes emotionally attuned to the reality of impermanence and suffering. When facing *saṃvega* one is struck by a feeling of *unheimlich,*[91] which accompanies the realization that the transient nature of reality affords no assurances and no stable ground on which to stand.

The textual field, methodology, and existing scholarship on *saṃvega*

This dissertation is a study of early Buddhist textual sources. The term "early Buddhism," as Anālayo has it, "stands for the development of thought and practices during roughly the first two centuries in the history of Buddhism, from about the fifth to the third century BCE."[92] Anālayo's "rough" timeframe for the composition of the earliest Buddhist scriptures is contentious,[93] yet to be fair, the task of accurately dating these texts is extremely challenging, for it involves a number of "moving targets."[94] There is agreement among scholars that a substantial portion of the early Buddhist discourses were originally composed in a Middle Indic language during the timeframe given by Anālayo, and went through a process of collection and redaction around the third century BCE.[95] Then, after centuries in which these Buddhist scriptures were transposed into different languages and spread far and wide around the Indian subcontinent, they apparently were written

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[88] I should mention that *saṃvega* is accompanied by several different verbal forms derived from *ā-pad*.
[89] See Monier-Williams 1899: 142; and Rhys-Davids and Stede1921: 102.
[90] On emotions, orientations, and phenomenology, see Ahmed 2004; and Ahmed 2006.
[91] My use of *unheimlich* is drawing on the way it is frequently used in the tradition of existentialism.
[92] Anālayo 2021: 1. In other words, Anālayo takes "early Buddhism" to mean pre-Aśokan Buddhism. On Anālayo's exploration of the historical value of the early Buddhist scriptures, see Anālayo 2012.
[93] For a study of early Buddhist scripture that presents evidence that complicates Anālayo's rough timeframe for the early Buddhist texts see Allon 2021. Some of the hard evidence Allon presents from the Gāndhārī manuscripts, for example, suggests that significant changes were occurring in certain early Buddhist scriptures even after the first century CE (Allon 2021: 120). On the Gāndhārī manuscripts and their importance to the study of early Buddhist scripture, see also Allon 2001; and Salomon 2018.
[94] Witzel 2009.
[95] Ibid, 292-293.

down in the first century BCE.[96] Since the task of defining the "early Buddhist scriptures" according to a fixed date or timeframe is extremely difficult, some scholars prefer to distinguish these texts in terms of style and content. For example, Mark Allon embraces a working definition that considers an early Buddhist *sūtra* as a text that considers itself a *sūtra*, has certain stylistic features, "is doctrinally in keeping with what we understand to be early Buddhist thought, and forms a part of the *nikāya/āgama* collections, even if the form in which we have it post-dates Aśoka."[97] Today, the early Buddhist scriptures are preserved in a number of languages, most notably, Pāli, Gāndhārī, Sanskrit, Chinese, and Tibetan.[98] These texts are included in different Buddhist canons, and may be further affiliated with specific Buddhist schools and transmission lineages.

Like most Buddhist textual scholars today, I consider each corpus of early Buddhist scriptures "to have *a priori* an equal claim to accuracy and originality."[99] That said, my study of *saṃvega* in early Buddhist scripture primarily focuses on the Pāli canon, since it is the only complete corpus of early scriptures preserved in an Indic language. In other words, from a practical standpoint, only the Pāli canon allows us to examine with certainty[100] the use of the term *saṃvega* in a large and complete body of early Buddhist scriptures. When searching through the Pāli canon for occurrences of *saṃvega* and related words, what immediately becomes clear is that *saṃvega* appears only in the suttas. This is noteworthy, since later Buddhist scholastic and exegetical literature, especially the Abhidharma, played a vital role in establishing *saṃvega* as a technical Buddhist term.[101] In the suttas, to the contrary, *saṃvega* has various meanings and applications, which are often quite distinct from one another. The early Pāli texts thus present a picture of *saṃvega* before it was systematized and molded to fit a specific rubric and function within the Buddhist path.

The Pāli canon's Suttapiṭaka (Basket of Suttas) includes thousands of discourses; however, there are less than fifty suttas in the whole canon that include a word derived from the root *saṃ-vij*, and only about thirty suttas that contain the specific noun "*saṃvega*." This rather small collection of canonical sources could be further reduced since it includes several nearly identical or largely similar suttas that simply reappear in the different Nikāyas of the canon. Moreover, most of these suttas merely mention *saṃvega* in passing, and only in a few of them can *saṃvega* be considered the major theme of the scripture. Taking all this into account, I decided to center this exploration of *saṃvega* around four suttas, which I believe come together to form a rich and complex picture of the early Buddhist concept of *saṃvega*. These four suttas are the Lion Sutta, the Attadaṇḍa Sutta, the Goad Sutta, and the Isolation Sutta.[102] I dedicate an entire chapter to each one of these Pāli discourses, in which I also examine their parallel versions in the Chinese Āgamas (I will elaborate on this shortly). In these four chapters, which make up the bulk of the dissertation,

[96] Salomon 2018: 57.
[97] Allon 2021: 5
[98] Only in Pāli and Chinese we find complete collections (Nikāyas/Āgamas) of early Buddhist scriptures, while in the other languages, the preserved collection and texts are fragmentary. The earliest existing manuscripts are in Gāndhārī, and they date from approximately the first century BCE to the fourth century CE (Allon 2021:3).
[99] Salomon 2018: 57.
[100] In the Chinese Āgamas, it is hard to know for sure whether a text is using the term *saṃvega* since it is translated into Chinese in a variety of different ways by different translators.
[101] On this matter, see pp. 56-58.
[102] Sīhasutta (AN 4.33); Attadaṇḍasutta (Sn 4.15); Patodasutta (AN 4.118); and Vivekasutta (SN 9.1).

I also discuss, or at least mention nearly all of the suttas in the Pāli canon that feature *saṃvega*, as well as many other texts that are germane to our understanding of this early Buddhist concept. Hence, despite my focus on the four aforementioned suttas, my treatment of *saṃvega* in the Pāli canon strives to be comprehensive.

Except for the Lion Sutta, all the Pāli suttas I focus on in this study have parallel versions preserved in Chinese translations from the early centuries of the Common Era.[103] In this study, I typically use the word "scripture" when generally referring to the versions of both the Pāli sutta and the Chinese *jing* (經); however, when referring to a scripture by its title, I rely on the Pāli, for example, the Isolation Sutta (Vivekasutta), because in most cases, it is the only traditional title available to us for the specific Buddhist texts with which I am concerned. In recent decades, scholarship on the early Buddhist texts has clearly demonstrated that paying attention to all the known versions of the scriptures, whether in Pāli, Chinese, Gāndhārī, or another language is conducive to a more robust understanding of early Buddhism. Nonetheless, there are different approaches to the type of comparative textual work that examines the different versions of the early Buddhist scriptures. For example, Anālayo has shown that a comparative framework can be used to highlight different phases in the compositional history of the early Buddhist texts.[104] My approach to this comparative study, on the other hand, is quite different, for broadly speaking, I am interested in what the parallel versions of an early text can contribute to our understanding of Buddhist doctrinal and philosophical notions, one of which is *saṃvega*. I am often surprised, however, at how similar the parallel versions of the early scriptures are in terms of their doctrinal and philosophical aspects. That being the case, when I examine a Pāli sutta and its parallel versions in Chinese, I am specifically concerned with what insight can the work and *imaginaire* of the Chinese translators offer us. In this dissertation, for instance, I focus on how the term *saṃvega* and the analogies used to explain it are translated into Chinese, and what one can glean from these translations. In this respect, I view the early Chinese translations of these scriptures as having hermeneutical value, for the process of translating a classical Indic text into Chinese always involves some level of interpretation. Thus, in my approach to these parallel versions, rather than shying away from their interpretive features and criticizing the Chinese translators for not reflecting accurately enough what appears in the Indic texts, I am purposefully cherishing the different elements and nuances that show up only in the early Chinese translations.

Having broached the subject of exegesis, I will briefly address here the significant role of the Pāli commentaries in this study of *saṃvega*. In my analysis of the Pāli suttas, often the first step I take is to consider what the Aṭṭhakathā, the primary Pāli commentary, has to say about a specific word, a passage, or an entire text. Dating the Aṭṭhakathā literature is complicated, for parts of it are explications of the root text that go as far back as the suttas themselves, while other parts are attributed to Buddhaghosa, who played a key role in the final composition of this commentarial corpus in the fifth century CE.[105] It is apparent that on some occasions the commentaries are intentionally introducing later analytical schemes to the early discourses, and on other occasions, they might try to force a certain exegetical agenda on the root text. Nonetheless, the value of the

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[103] To my knowledge, there are no additional parallel versions in Gāndhārī or other languages.

[104] A good example of this is found in Anālayo's Buddhapada and the Bodhisattva Path. In this book, Anālayo looks at the compositional history of certain scriptures, raising intriguing questions as to whether early developments in Buddhist art may have influenced changes in the Buddha's image in some of the early canonical Buddhist texts (Bodhi 2017).

[105] Norman 1983: 118-120. On the Aṭṭhakathā commentaries on the suttas also, see von Hinüber 1996: 112-123.

commentaries from a hermeneutical and philosophical standpoint could not be overstated. The commentaries infuse the scriptures with particular literary and philosophical overtones and situate the Buddha's words in different meaningful contexts. For these reasons, the Pāli commentators are the main interlocutors in my discussion of the early Buddhist scriptures, and they have a significant impact on how I present the notion of *saṃvega* that emerges from these texts. I should mention here that I also include the Ṭīkā, the secondary Pāli commentarial literature,[106] in my discussion of the early scriptures. Yet, it carries less weight since its primary function is to cast light on the Aṭṭhakathā rather than the scripture.[107]

To a large extent, the main methodology of this study is encapsulated in the process of gathering the multiple versions of early Buddhist scriptures, the commentaries, the relevant para-canonical texts and non-Buddhist literary works, and implementing the philological tools necessary to carefully read, translate, and analyze these textual materials. In addition, there are two methodological principles I integrate into my discussion of *saṃvega* in early Buddhist scripture. The first entails bringing some of the Buddhist ideas and views, most notably those related to *saṃvega,* into conversation with continental philosophy, and more specifically, with the work of thinkers associated with existential phenomenology. The early Buddhist concept of *saṃvega*, I claim, diverges from the prevailing view of emotions as private, internal states, and while it resonates with phenomenological theories that consider emotions as existential modes of human reality, *saṃvega* is deeply intertwined with Buddhist doctrinal principles like *anityatā* (impermanence) and karma, thus offering a uniquely Buddhist perspective on the nature of emotion. The dialogue I create between phenomenological and Buddhist ideas aims to highlight some potential contributions of early Buddhist thought to contemporary philosophical discussions on affectivity, and explore what makes the Buddhist conception of emotions unique and thought-provoking. The second methodological principle I implement has to do with extending the scope of my philological inquiry to both text and reader.[108] Auerbach's neo-Kantian view of philology considers it a discipline that does not merely focus on the text (world) or the reader (subject), but on the interaction between the two.[109] This type of philology pays special attention, among other things, to the manner in which a text affects the reader. Eviatar Shulman's recent work, for example, demonstrates and reflects on the importance of this type of affective approach to the study of early Buddhist scripture.[110] One claim I make in this dissertation is that the early canonical texts reveal that Buddhists themselves were preoccupied with the emotional impact the Buddha's teaching had on its audience. *Saṃvega*, in particular, emerged as the predominant early concept that Buddhists used to attest for the powerful phenomenon of being deeply moved by a text.

To close this introduction, I would like to briefly address the existing secondary literature on *saṃvega*. To my knowledge, there is no *extensive* study dedicated to the concept of *saṃvega* in any corpus of Buddhist literature. Therefore, exploring this concept in the earliest strata of Buddhist texts seems like a good place to start. There is a growing body of scholarship that touches on the early Buddhist concept of *saṃvega*. Although currently, there are no existing studies that dedicate more than a few paragraphs, or in some rare cases, a few pages to the concept of *saṃvega*

[106] The tradition dates the writing down of the Ṭīkā commentaries to the twelfth century, yet there is evidence of their existence much earlier. On the Ṭīkā commentaries, see Norman 1983: 148-151.
[107] In the case of the Attadaṇḍa Sutta, I also consider the Mahāniddesa commentary.
[108] Largier in preparation.
[109] I have in mind here what Largier calls the "phenomenology of rhetorical effects" (Largier 2022: 52).
[110] Shulman 2022.

in early Buddhist scripture, several scholars have explored *saṃvega* in different contexts and frameworks. Throughout this dissertation, I consistently engage with the work of other scholars on *saṃvega*, yet in this introduction, I will merely provide a brief presentation of this body of scholarship by thematically dividing it into different groups that have each substantially contributed to the study of this topic.

To begin with, Coomaraswamy and Acri have both published studies dedicated solely to *saṃvega*.[111] While their work does not focus mainly on Buddhist texts, they each present a distinctly useful overview of this concept in premodern Indian literature. Several scholars, such as Ṭhānissaro, Trainor, Evmeneko, Walker, Laing, and Morseth, have written more specifically about the paring of *saṃvega* and *pasāda*, mostly with a focus on its prominence in Theravāda Buddhism.[112] These scholars highlight a number of key texts in the Pāli canon that deal with *saṃvega* and discuss some of the philosophical aspects of this concept, especially in the context of Theravāda aesthetics. The relationship between *saṃvega* and aesthetic theory also appears in the scholarship of Katz, Heim, Strong, McClintock, and Albery. However, the work of these scholars places a stronger emphasis on what the emotion of *saṃvega* can offer the study of Buddhist ritual and ethics.[113] Recently, Brons and Nguyen have examined *saṃvega* using contemporary theories in moral psychology and philosophy of mind.[114] These scholars explore the possibility of different modern analytical methods to help us understand the machinations of the saṃvegic experience. Finally, Brekke, Giustarini, and Finnigan discuss *saṃvega* within their study of the classical Buddhist concept of fear.[115] Their work on fear in the Pāli canon, more particularly, accounts for many texts, terms, and practices that are closely associated with *saṃvega* in early Buddhist literature.

My contribution to the secondary literature on *saṃvega* can be reduced, in a sense, to presenting a body of textual sources in Pāli, Chinese, and Sanskrit that were previously not included in the academic study of this topic (and in some cases, not included in any modern work of scholarship). I would like to think, however, that this dissertation accomplishes a more substantial feat, namely, "getting behind" the scholarly discourse on *saṃvega* and showing what the early Buddhist texts were doing with this concept. The overarching task of the existing secondary literature on *saṃvega* is to explain what this concept means and how it is used in different texts. Needless to say, large parts of this dissertation are also devoted precisely to this worthy task. Nevertheless, in the following chapters, I try to provide enough edited versions, translations, and cogent analyses of Buddhist sources, so that the reader of these pages can form his or her own idea of the early Buddhist concept of *saṃvega*. I am well aware of the fact that there is more than one way to interpret these early Buddhist texts and the notion of *saṃvega* that emerges from them, and throughout this dissertation, I am not hesitant to voice my understanding of these texts and what they reveal about *saṃvega*. Yet, regardless of whether one agrees with my reading of the texts and the different claims I make, the main aim of this study is to offer the readers ample materials and context so they can feel, assess, construe, and figure out for themselves the meaning of these canonical Buddhist texts that deal with *saṃvega*.

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[111] Coomaraswamy 1943; and Acri 2015.
[112] Ṭhānissaro 1997; Trainor 1997; Evmeneko 2012; Walker 2018; and Laing and Morseth 2021.
[113] Katz 1982; Heim 2003; Kuspit 2006; Strong 2014; McClintock 2017; and Albery 2022.
[114] Brons 2016; and Nguyen 2019.
[115] Brekke 2002; Giustarini 2012; and Finnigan 2021.

Saṃvega in Classical Sanskrit Literature

1. Introduction

In many Buddhist texts, the word *saṃvega* has a technical meaning. *Saṃvega* refers to the necessary fervor or urgency a practitioner must have in order to pursue the challenging path leading to nirvāṇa. In the vast corpus of classical Sanskrit literature, however, *saṃvega* remains predominantly a non-technical term that denotes overwhelming states of distress, fear, shock, dejection, and other unpleasant emotions. Given the prevalent technical use of *saṃvega* in Buddhist texts, some might consider the non-technical and diverse meaning of this word in classical Sanskrit literature to be of little significance to the study of the Buddhist concept of *saṃvega*. On this matter, my view differs from that of other scholars,[116] for I contend that in the suttas of the Pāli canon, *saṃvega* does not yet have a fixed, technical meaning. To put it differently, in the early Buddhist scriptures, *saṃvega* is still an extremely diverse term used to denote various types of emotional phenomena. What will become clear in the following pages is that the multiplicity of meanings *saṃvega* has in classical Sanskrit literature mirrors the different facets of this concept in the earliest strata of Buddhist texts.

Although there is a strong thread that connects the meaning of *saṃvega* in the Pāli canon to the one it has in classical Sanskrit literature, there is a distinct way in which Buddhists interpret and use the term *saṃvega*. For starters, early Buddhist scriptures frequently assign positive value to *saṃvega*, while in classical Sanskrit literature, *saṃvega* is widely considered a negative phenomenon. I should mention that other śramaṇic traditions,[117] most notably Jainism,[118] also

[116] Acri (Acri 2015) addresses the distinction between a technical and non-technical use of the term *saṃvega*. I find this distinction quite useful, for it is obvious that in many texts that belong to the Buddhist and Yoga traditions, *saṃvega* becomes a specialized term that refers to the necessary fervor required to pursue the path of renunciation, and more specifically, meditation practice. Scholars like Bodhi and Ñāṇamoli, who consistently translate *saṃvega* in the Pāli canon as "a sense of urgency," seem to attribute the technical meaning of this term to its use in the early scriptures. As I have mentioned, I disagree with this attribution.

[117] In the world of Indian śramaṇic traditions, *saṃvega* is a term denoting an uncanny feeling that changes one's entire outlook on the everyday life. As Acri explains, the word *saṃvega* in these ascetic traditions, "implies a violent emotion, a charged emotional state, by means of which the *yogins* realise the pitiful condition of human birth, as well as of the entire world of reincarnated beings. This emotion prompts them to long for higher stations" (Acri 2015: 200).

[118] It is important to clarify that I do not include the early Jain scriptures under the broad category of "classical Sanskrit literature" for the simple reason the early Jain texts were not composed in Sanskrit, but in other Middle Indic languages. That being said, I would like to mention that while the early Jain concept of *saṃvega* has not received much scholarly attention, there are a few scholars who have made significant contributions to the study of this topic. Acri, for example, discusses the appearance of *saṃvega* as a doctrinal item in early Jain texts. He remarks that "an early characterisation of *saṃvega* as both spiritual craving and fear of worldly bondage is found in the *Uttarajjhāyā* in Ardha-Māgadhī (*Uttarādhyayana Sūtra* in Sanskrit). In Chapter 29 of the text, 73 stages are distinguished in the process leading to the destruction of *kamma/karma* and final liberation. *Saṃvega* or 'longing for liberation' constitutes the very first stage, followed by *nivveda/nirveda* or 'disgust'" (Acri 2015: 204). Moreover, Robert Williams addresses the categorization and conceptualization of *saṃvega* in Mediaeval Jain texts, a corpus in which this term denotes a kind of "spiritual craving." William specifically quotes the Mediaeval Jain scholar, philosopher, and poet Hemacandra, who considers *saṃvega* as "the desire for *mokṣa* arising from the realisation that the pleasures of gods and men are, in the last resort, unsatisfying" (Williams 1991: 42). Finally, in his book, Jains in the World, John Cort expounds on the meaning of *saṃvega* in Jain ideology. He states that "*samvega* is a sense of existential shock at the seemingly hopeless condition of living beings trapped in the noose of time, circling around and around in birth, suffering, and death after birth, suffering, and death. But *samvega* is simultaneously a sense of the rare opportunity one has gained to acquire a human birth in a time and place when living a Jain life is possible.

speak of *saṃvega* in positive terms. Though I try to incorporate as many views as possible on the concept of *saṃvega* in this dissertation, my focus will remain predominantly on the corpus of early Buddhist scriptures. In the Pāli canon, more specifically, what makes the use of *saṃvega* and other words derived from *saṃ-vij* intriguing is that it embraces many of the prevalent meanings these words have in classical Sanskrit literature, such as distress, shock, and fear; however, within the Buddhist framework, these emotions are rendered "spiritually productive," and thus favorable.[119] For example, in the Indian epic the Mahābhārata, *saṃvega* is used to describe the great distress of the soldiers who experience the horrors of fatal war, while in the Pāli canon, *saṃvega* is used to describe the deep distress of the Buddha's disciples when they first learn of the transient nature of things. In both cases, *saṃvega* denotes a disturbing and shocking emotional state, yet only in the Buddhist context, this experience is unequivocally considered positive because it is conducive to liberation. Early Buddhist scriptures therefore repeatedly and strategically make use of *saṃvega* to speak of beneficial forms of fear, shock, dejection, and other such distressing emotions.

The Sanskrit word *saṃvega* is derived from the root *saṃ-vij*.[120] Grammatically, *saṃvega* is a nominal form derived from *saṃ-vij*, and generally speaking, it is common practice among scholars to simply speak of "*saṃvega*" whenever addressing the meanings of the different words derived from the root *saṃ-vij*. Throughout this dissertation I also follow this practice. Yet it is worth mentioning that in classical Indian literature, which includes texts composed in Sanskrit as well as different Middle Indic languages, the specific noun "*saṃvega*" appears primarily in Buddhist and Jain texts. Hence, it is fair to say that whenever one comes across the word *saṃvega* in classical Indian literature, regardless of what it means in that particular context, it is usually used in a favorable sense. For instance, if it means fear then it is a useful form of fear; if it means distress then it marks an invaluable experience of distress. Nonetheless, one should be wary of making any strong categorical distinctions between the meaning of the nominal form derived from *saṃ-vij* (i.e., *saṃvega*) and the meaning of the verbal forms derived from this root (such as the participle *saṃvigna*). That is because in the Pāli canon, the nominal and verbal forms of *saṃ-vij* often share the same meaning, and in some cases, they are combined to formulate a stock phrase used to articulate the saṃvegic experience—*saṃvejito saṃvegam āpādi* ("stirred up, he faced distress"). To sum up this point, the root *saṃ-vij* and the forms derived from it are all germane to the study of the concept of *saṃvega*, and among the different words derived from *saṃ-vij*, the noun "*saṃvega*" is of special importance for the purposes of this study since it is used predominantly in Buddhist texts to denote an emotional experience that is both disturbing and spiritually rewarding.

In this chapter, I will survey the earliest textual occurrences of *saṃvega* and other words derived from *saṃ-vij* in Hindu and Buddhist Sanskrit literature. This conceptual history of *saṃvega* will begin with a brief discussion of the root *saṃ-vij* in Vedic texts, after which I will turn to the use of this root in classical Sanskrit literature. More specifically, my focus will be on the Indian epics, the poems of Aśvaghoṣa, the Divyāvadāna, the Jātakamālā, and finally, the Abhidharmakoṣa-bhāśya and the Yogasūtra. The reason this survey ends with the Kośa and Yogasūtra is that these texts serve as clear examples of using *saṃvega* in the technical sense it comes to hold in the Buddhist and Yoga traditions. However, the main purpose of this chapter is

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The person who is overcome with *samvega* will seize the opportunity provided by this birth to renounce a life in the world of rebirth (*saṃsāra*) and set forth upon the path of liberation" (Cort 2001: 21-22).

[119] On *saṃvega* as a "spiritually productive" emotion, see Katz 2010: 156-158.

[120] On the etymology of *saṃvega,* see pp. 13-15.

to show the variegated and complex meaning of *saṃvega* before it became a technical term. This conceptual history of *saṃvega* is particularly crucial for understanding the meaning it holds in the Pāli canon, yet this history can also prove helpful for gaining a better notion of what the technical term *saṃvega* means in Buddhism writ large as well as in other Indian traditions of renunciation.

2. *Saṃvega* in Vedic Literature

Only in classical Sanskrit literature do we begin to find a recurring use of the root *saṃ-vij*; however, there are a few rare occurrences of words derived from this root in the ancient Vedic texts.[121] One such occurrence appears in the Atharvaveda, a Hindu collection of scriptures that dates back to around 1000 BCE.[122] In the Atharvaveda, the root *saṃ-vij* is used twice in a hymn dedicated to the war drum (*dundubhi*). This hymn is part of a battle rite aimed at instilling fear and terror in the hearts of a rival army.[123] Its words of praise are mainly directed at the fearsome war drum, which is regarded in this text as an extremely powerful entity. There are two verses in this hymn that include the root *saṃ-vij*, both of which make use of similes to describe the type of fear the war drum provokes.

> As the forest animals become distressed (*saṃvijanta*)
> by a human being,
> so you, Drum, shout at [our] enemies,
> terrify [them], and confound [their] thoughts.

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> As the birds become distressed (*saṃvijanta*)
> by a falcon every day, [or] by the lion's roar,
> so you, Drum, shout at [our] enemies,
> terrify [them], and confound [their] thoughts.[124]

The use of *saṃ-vij* here is significant for a number of reasons. First, in these ancient verses, the basic meaning of *saṃvega* is distress, fear, or trembling. The word *saṃvijanta*[125] here denotes a strong visceral response provoked by something powerful and intimidating. Throughout this hymn the root *saṃ-vij* is used alongside other roots like *bhī* ("to fear") and *tras* ("to be terrified") in a manner suggesting that these roots are interchangeable or at least extremely close in meaning. In classical Sanskrit literature, and more significantly in the Pāli canon, *saṃvega* continues to bear the meaning of fear or distress. Moreover, in early Buddhist scriptures like the Lion Sutta, *saṃvega* appears alongside words like *bhaya* (fear), indicating that the link we find in Vedic literature

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[121] On dating the "classical Sanskrit literature," see n. 132.
[122] The Atharvaveda seems to be the earliest text in which the root *sam-vij* is used. Witzel (2003: 68) dates the Atharvaveda to 1200/1000 BCE.
[123] Whitney 1905: 254, 257.
[124] *yathā mṛgāḥ saṃvijanta*
āraṇyāḥ puruṣād adhi,
eva tvaṃ dundubhe 'mitrān abhi kranda
pra trāsayātho cittāni mohaya (Atharvaveda 5.21.4).

yathā śyenāt patatriṇaḥ saṃvijante
ahardivi siṃhasya stanathor yathā,
eva tvaṃ dundubhe 'mitrān abhi kranda
pra trāsayātho cittāni mohaya. (Atharvaveda 5.21.6).
[125] A past passive participle derived from the root *saṃ-vij*.

between *saṃ-vij* and *bhī* is to some extent preserved in Buddhist canonical texts. It is not at all trivial that this hymn from the Atharvaveda, which may be the earliest known textual occurrence of *saṃ-vij*, uses this root in a sense that remains prevalent in the Pāli canon, and even continues to resonate in the technical use of *saṃvega* throughout Buddhist literature.

The second crucial aspect I would like to highlight in this Vedic hymn is the association of *saṃvega* with violence. As Andrea Acri points out, *saṃvega* is a "violent emotion."[126] This way of characterizing *saṃvega* stems from the intense physicality involved in experiencing this emotion. The root *saṃ-vij* can literally mean to shake or tremble, and as Coomaraswamy shows, this meaning goes back to the early use of the un-prefixed root *vij* in the Ṛgveda to denote a "swift recoiling."[127] In this regard, violence is linked to *saṃvega* because of the vehement manner in which this emotion impacts one's body. In addition, there is another way *saṃvega* is intertwined with violence. In Sanskrit and Pāli literature, it is often the threat of violence that gives rise to *saṃvega*. For example, the saṃvegic image we find in this hymn from the Atharvaveda of a fearsome predator terrifying his prey also comes up in the Lion Sutta.[128] We find another canonical example of the violent character of eliciting this emotion in the Goad Sutta, where a horse trainer provokes his steed's *saṃvega* by threatening to strike it with a goad.[129] In the Pāli canon, these examples are used as analogies for the appropriate emotional response one should have when being confronted with the reality of impermanence and suffering. Yet, setting these analogies aside for the moment, what I would like to emphasize here is that *saṃvega* repeatedly appears in both Hindu and Buddhist literature as a response to violence and chaos.[130]

In this Vedic hymn, the third aspect worth noticing is the relationship between the feeling of *saṃvega* and the image of the lion's roar. The beating of the war drum is likened here to the roaring of the lion. The intimidating character of these two powerful sounds is made apparent through this ancient simile. In Buddhist literature, the Buddha's word is also likened to the lion's roar, and much like in this Vedic hymn, both the Buddha's word and the lion's roar are said to provoke *saṃvega*. In the Pāli canon, there are a number of key images associated with the experience of *saṃvega*, one of which is the fear of the animals that hear the lion's roar. It is worth at least acknowledging that this relationship between the lion's roar and the terrifying feeling of *saṃvega* dates back to the Vedas.

The fourth and last aspect I will highlight in this hymn is the use of *saṃvega* as part of a human-animal comparison. *Saṃvega* comes up in different early scriptures that compare the Buddhist disciple to a horse, a bird, or an elephant. There is a primal feature to the experience of *saṃvega* that comes to the forefront in these human-animal comparisons. There is also a broader emphasis in these analogies on the fact that all living beings are touched or affected by the world in some shape or form. Animals and humans alike are motivated, galvanized, triggered, or simply moved by certain external conditions and circumstances. This view is ubiquitous in classical Indian thought, yet specifically in Buddhism, *saṃvega* emerges as the predominant term used to underscore the positive value of having a transformative emotional response to the truth about the nature of reality. In short, what most of these Buddhist comparisons between animals and humans

[126] Acri 2015: 200.
[127] Coomaraswamy 1943: 174.
[128] For an extended discussion of the Lion Sutta, see chapter two.
[129] For an extended discussion of the Goad Sutta, see chapter four
[130] The Attadaṇḍa Sutta also exemplifies this point. For a discussion of this sutta, see chapter three.

show is that for animals, a saṃvegic response can be crucial for their survival. Such is the case, for instance, for those animals that flee in terror when spotting a fearsome predator. On the other hand, for humans, a saṃvegic response can be necessary for realizing the vicissitudes of *saṃsāra* and taking refuge in the Dharma. In this regard, the human experience of *saṃvega* is often considered crucial for liberation rather than survival.

The only other application of the root *saṃ-vij* in Vedic literature is found in the recurring injunction "do not tremble" (*mā saṃvikthāḥ*). This injunction appears in several different *saṃhitās* and in the Śatapathabrāhmaṇa.[131] There is not much to glean from these occurrences of *saṃ-vij* that I have not already addressed in my discussion of the verses from the Atharvaveda. Yet, it is worth briefly mentioning that *saṃ-vij* is used in these Vedic texts in the sense of "trembling out of fear," and that the injunction "do not tremble" appears in these scriptures alongside the injunction "do not fear" (*mā bher*). Thus, we find here more ancient examples of using *saṃ-vij* in the sense of a distressing emotion, as well as further textual evidence of the similarity between *saṃ-vij* and the root *bhī*.

3. *Saṃvega* in Classical Sanskrit Literature

One working assumption underlining this study of the Buddhist concept of *saṃvega* is that there is value in examining how this term is used and understood across Indian religious traditions. Regardless of whether a text belongs to a Hindu, Buddhist or Jain literary corpus, I think the fact that most of the texts I am concerned with in this chapter were composed and compiled in the Indian subcontinent roughly between the fifth century BCE and the fifth century CE, justifies thinking of them in relation to one another. Several scholars have already addressed at length the interactions and cross-fertilization that have taken place during this time period between Buddhists, Brahmins, and Jains. In my survey of *saṃvega* in the Sanskrit literature of this period,[132] my focus will be less on questions such as who influenced whom, or who borrowed from whom. Instead I am concerned with the task of providing a multifaceted account of the ways the root *saṃ-vij* was used in various literary genres across different traditions. Such an account is especially useful for exploring *saṃvega* in the Pāli canon, which was composed, compiled, edited, and explicated during the same time period in which the majority of the texts I discuss in this chapter were produced.

3.1 *Saṃvega* in the epics

The largest number of textual occurrences of the root *saṃ-vij* in classical Sanskrit literature are in the Mahābhārata and the Rāmāyaṇa. In the following pages, I will focus on a selection of examples from the epics that represent the way *saṃvega* is used in these prominent texts. The meaning of the root *saṃ-vij* in the epics changes slightly according to context, yet broadly speaking, it is used consistently to denote a distressing emotional state that has overwhelmingly negative connotations. From a grammatical standpoint, we find in the epics the use of one predominant verbal form

[131] See Maitrāyaṇīsaṃhitā 1, 3, 3, 5.4, Taittirīyasaṃhitā 1, 3, 13, 1.4, Vājasaneyisaṃhitā 1, 23.1, and Śatapathabrāhmaṇa 1, 2, 2, 15.2.
[132] Throughout this dissertation I am referring to the Sanskrit literature of this period as "classical Sanskrit literature." I am using the term "classical" rather loosely here, referring to literature that roughly starts after Paṇiṇi's formalization of the Sanskrit grammar (fifth century BCE circ.) and stretches up to the end of the Gupta period (sixth century CE circ.).

derived from *saṃ-vij*, namely, the past passive participle *saṃvigna* ("distressed"). This is noteworthy for two reasons. First, it allows us to acknowledge that this specific word derived from *saṃ-vij* is used in the epics mainly to form an adjective that modifies an individual or a group of living beings. Second, among the different forms derived from *saṃ-vij*, the word *saṃvigna* (P. *saṃvigga*) is also the one used most frequently in the Pāli canon.

Before I begin exploring the meaning of *saṃvega* in the Mahābhārata and the Rāmāyaṇa, I should also mention that these texts are made of narratives that are extremely long and complex. Thus, one challenge that I will face here involves choosing how to introduce the context in which *saṃvega* is used in a specific part of the epic for the sake of understanding its meaning, while avoiding diving too deep into the vast epic narrative and losing sight of the task at hand. The extraordinary length of these epic texts also makes it extremely difficult to accurately date them. Most scholars consider the composition of the Mahābhārata and the Rāmāyaṇa to have taken place across a period of time that spans from the middle of the first millennium BCE to the early centuries of the Common Era.

3.1.1 Mahābhārata

The intricate and mythic elements of the Mahābhārata's narrative have a unique way of charging the term *saṃvega* with meaning. An example of this is seen in the first occurrence of the root *saṃ-vij* I will discuss in the epics, which appears in the third book of the Mahābhārata (i.e., the Vanaparvan). This specific part of the epic is dedicated to the tale of Prince Arjuna's journey to heaven, where he became a disciple of Indra, the king of the gods. Under the tutelage of Indra, Arjuna turned into a master of arms and acquired the most powerful weapons in the universe. When Arjuna's training was completed, Indra reminded the prince that he still owed him a guru's fee. After Arjuna vowed to do whatever he could to please his master, Indra sent him to kill the Dānavas, an army of thirty million *asuras* who had long been enemies of the gods. In the following verse, Arjuna describes the saṃvegic response of the Dānavas as they first noticed him approaching their city mounted on Indra's celestial chariot.

> Having heard the sound of the chariot,
> like a thunderbolt in the sky,
> the Dānavas were terrified (*saṃvigna*),
> believing I was the king of the gods.[133]

The use of *saṃ-vij* in this epic verse shares many of the characteristics I highlighted in my analysis of the verses from the Atharvaveda. Like in the Vedic context, *saṃvega* denotes here a strong feeling of terror or distress provoked by the threat of violence.[134] That said, there are a few additional features of *saṃvega* that this epic verse brings to light. First, the shocking experience of *saṃvega* here is associated with the image of reacting to a thunderclap. This particular saṃvegic

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[133] *rathaghoṣaṃ tu taṃ śrutvā,*
stanayitnor ivāmbare,
manvānā devarājaṃ māṃ
saṃvignā dānavābhavan (Mahābharata 3.166.8).

[134] The Dānavas' feeling of *saṃvega* is provoked by the invasion of a powerful enemy. Heim (2022:76) mentions that this form of fear or panic is often associated in classical Indian literature with *āvega*, a word that is etymologically related to *saṃvega*.

image is recurrent in classical Indian literature. When the Buddha, for example, experienced *saṃvega* for the first time after learning about the reality of old age, he is compared to an ox that hears the sound of thunder.[135]

The second feature of *saṃvega* worth underscoring here is the role it plays in describing the fear of the *asuras*. In this episode from the Mahābhārata, Arjuna's valor is reflected in his ability to terrify the mighty *asuras*. The depiction of divine beings trembling with fear at the sight of certain individuals is another trope linked to *saṃvega* in classical Indian literature. In the Pāli canon, for instance, the term *saṃvega* is used to describe the fear of the powerful and long-living gods who hear the Buddha deliver his teaching on impermanence. This trope reveals that provoking *saṃvega* is often meant to inspire awe, reverence, and even devotion. The unique status of figures like Arjuna and the Buddha is illustrated by their capacity to deeply affect both humans and gods.

The last comment I will make about this epic verse has to do with the Dānavas' perception of Arjuna as the "king of the gods" (*deva-rājā*). Typically, the experience of *saṃvega* involves an act of perception. This is a point I develop later in this dissertation, as I contemplate the characterization of *saṃvega* as a way of apprehending the world.[136] In this verse from the Mahābhārata, it is noteworthy that the saṃvegic terror of the *asuras* is interwoven with their "misperception" of Arjuna as Indra. I place the word misperception in quotation marks since there is an intended ambivalence built into the fourth leg of this verse. When Arjuna describes how he approached the city of the *asuras* mounted on Indra's chariot, he points to the fact that the *asuras* mistakenly believed he was the king of the gods. From Arjuna's perspective, the Dānavas mistook him for Indra mainly because he was riding on Indra's chariot. However, as John Brockington explains, this entire episode from the Mahābhārata underscores Arjuna's true identity as Indra's son. More specifically, Arjuna's triumph over the Dānavas fulfills Brhamā's prophecy that Indra will destroy these *asuras* in another body.[137] Therefore, Brockington argues that this moment in the epic underlines "the virtual identity of Arjuna and Indra."[138] In other words, the Mahābhārata provides the audience with a second, broader perspective, which is unavailable to Arjuna, from which the prince is an embodiment of the king of the gods. Thus it turns out that in their saṃvegic terror, the Dānavas accurately perceived Arjuna as Indra. In the Buddhist context, *saṃvega* is also characterized often as a state that reveals some underlying truth. While this example from the Mahābhārata differs in many ways from the Buddhist canonical instances of the revelatory aspect of *saṃvega*, I find it telling that the fear of the Dānavas is paired with the unveiling of Arjuna's true identity.

The next occurrence of *saṃ-vij* in the Mahābhārata I will analyze appears in one of the most famous episodes in classical Indian literature, namely, Arjuna's monologue in the opening chapter of the Bhagavadgītā. In this episode, Arjuna, the ultimate warrior, decides to question the morality of warfare right on the cusp of the great battle between the Pāṇḍavas and the Kauravas. With his chariot positioned between the two massive armies, Arjuna sorrowfully voiced his deep reservations about fighting and killing his kinsmen, echoing the śramaṇic value of non-violence

[135] Buddhacarita 3.34 (I will discuss this verse later in this chapter).
[136] See pp. 116-120.
[137] Mahābhārata 3.169.31.
[138] Brockington 2001: 75.

(*ahiṃsā*). In the closing verse of the Gītā's first chapter, the word *saṃvigna* is used to characterize Arjuna's dejected state of mind after he voiced his heartfelt monologue.

> Having thus spoken, Arjuna collapsed
> into the seat of his chariot on the battlefield,
> shedding his bow and arrows
> with a mind distressed (*saṃvigna*) by sorrow.[139]

In the fourth leg of this verse, the root *saṃ-vij* is used in a way we have not encountered so far in this chapter. *Saṃvigna* does not have here the meaning of being afraid or terrified. Instead, it is paired with another emotion, i.e., sorrow (*śoka*), to form a compound that describes Arjuna's mental disposition (*śoka-saṃvigna-mānasaḥ*— "one whose mind is distressed by sorrow"). Rather than denoting a specific type of feeling, *saṃvega* bears here the meaning of being moved or stirred by an emotion. Nevertheless, the context in which this episode appears strongly suggests that this manner of being moved is deeply upsetting, and thus, I translate it: "distressed by sorrow."[140] In classical Indian literature, the more common compound that includes the participle *saṃvigna*, pairs it with fear (*bhaya*) rather than sorrow. This is worth bringing up because while *bhaya-saṃvigna* ("trembling with fear") typically alludes to the physical dimension of one's emotive state, *śoka-saṃvigna* ("distressed by sorrow") is repeatedly used to describe one's state of mind. The habit of distinguishing between the *saṃvega* of the body and that of the mind becomes even more pronounced in the Pāli canon, where in certain texts we find the compound *saṃvigga-mānasa*[141] ("a distressed mind") and in others, we have *saṃvigga-rūpa*[142] ("a trembling body"). Later in this dissertation, I will argue that if one regards *saṃvega* as a kind of state, it is best understood as an existential state that includes both body and mind. Yet, the point I wish to stress here is that *saṃvega* can function as a fairly broad term that articulates the way both body and mind are affected by external conditions.

Interestingly, the same pairing of *saṃvigna* and sorrow we find in the Gītā, also appears in a later episode of the Mahābhārata, where it characterizes the devastating condition of those who retired from the battlefield after experiencing the horrors of war.[143] The dejection that Arjuna experienced prior to the great battle foreshadows the feeling of those who survived the epic war. The paring of *saṃvigna* and sorrow in these episodes from the Mahābhārata introduces us to the extended meaning of *saṃvega* as a feeling of melancholy or depression. It is important to note that

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[139] *evamuktvārjunaḥ saṃkhye*
rathopastha upāviśat,
visṛjya saśaraṃ cāpaṃ
śokasaṃvignamānasaḥ (Bhagavadgītā 1.47).

[140] The term *saṃvigna* can also mean "afflicted," such as in the following example, "Living beings are always afflicted (*saṃvigna*) by birth and death" (Mahābhārata 14.17.18a). However, in the case of the aforementioned verse from the Gītā, I think translating *saṃvigna* as "afflicted" is less effective. In cases such as the example I provided from book fourteen of the Mahābhārata, *saṃvigna* is used in the sense of being afflicted by the condition of birth and death. On the other hand, in the verse from the Gītā, sorrow is not highlighted as a condition of existence, but as an emotional state that overwhelms Arjuna.

[141] See KN 11.8 and KN 12.2.

[142] See SN 2.9 and SN 2.10.

[143] Mahābhārata 9.64.49.

in classical Indian literature, the word *saṃvigna* often retains the meaning of a sorrowful or distraught state, even when it is not paired with *śoka*.[144]

Another aspect of *saṃvega* that is illuminated in this verse from the Gītā is the association of this emotion with the experience of an existential crisis. It is hard to overstate the magnitude of Arjuna's meltdown in this famous episode from the great epic. When Arjuna collapsed in his chariot, he cast aside his divine bow (Gāṇḍīva), which to a large extent, defines who he is and what he is about. It is remarkable that in this momentous event from the Mahābhārata, the root *saṃ-vij* makes an appearance, much like it does in the crucial episode from the Life of the Buddha, in which Prince Siddhārtha underwent his existential crisis after encountering old age, sickness, and death for the first time.

Of course, there are significant differences between the saṃvegic experiences of the two princes, Siddhārtha and Arjuna. In the Buddha's case, his existential crisis propelled him to retire from the household life and become a mendicant, while for Arjuna it did no such thing. Kṛṣṇa's role in reminding Arjuna of his dharmic duty and inspiring the prince's devotion to him is another major factor that distinguishes the impact the saṃvegic experience had on Arjuna's life trajectory in comparison to the Buddha's. Nevertheless, I think it is worth raising the question of whether, from a Buddhist prism, Arjuna's saṃvegic crisis can be considered a "missed opportunity," so to speak. While according to the philosophy of the Gītā, there is no room for Arjuna's moral dilemma on the battlefield, perhaps from the yogic perspective of a *mokṣa*-seeking mendicant, the sorrow Arjuna felt over the prospect of killing his kinsmen may be seen in a more favorable light.

Fortunately, the Advaita philosopher Śaṅkarācārya addresses some version of this question in his commentary on the Gītā. Despite the fact that Śaṅkara's philosophy is deeply rooted in the Upaniṣadic worldview and the practice of renunciation, he remains highly critical of Arjuna's sorrowful disposition and his nonviolent stance. Śaṅkara begins his Gītā commentary by stating that sorrow (*śoka*) is one of the root causes that confines living beings to the cycle of *saṃsāra*. According to Śaṅkara, there is nothing commendable about the distress Arjuna experienced with respect to the prospect of killing his kinsmen since the melancholy he felt is grounded in attachment. To phrase this critique differently, Arjuna wished to refrain from harming his relatives, teachers, and friends, primarily out of affection for them. This form of attachment is the main reason Śaṅkara does not consider Arjuna's emotional state to be aligned with the dispassionate and equanimous attitude of a nonviolent mendicant. Therefore, the Advaita philosopher elects to depict Arjuna's behavior as that of a deluded individual who is driven by egoism.[145]

There are two main points I wish to underscore in Śaṅkara's commentary on Arjuna's saṃvegic crisis. The first is the notion that sorrow, generally speaking, is a detriment (*doṣa*) to the one seeking liberation, for it tends to bind one to the phenomenal world. This conception of sorrow corresponds with the prevalent Buddhist view of this emotion. The second point I wish to highlight elaborates on why sorrow confines one to *saṃsāra*. According to Śaṅkara, Arjuna's sorrow is fundamentally egotistical for it is rooted in his confusion regarding the true nature of reality. Perhaps this characterization can help clarify what, from a Buddhist perspective, makes the type

[144] In the following pages, I will elaborate on this by looking closely at examples of *saṃvega* as "sorrow" from both Hindu and Buddhist sources.
[145] Śaṅkara lays out other lines of critique of Arjuna's behavior, yet tending to them goes beyond the scope of this study.

of sorrow the Buddha felt in his saṃvegic crisis exceptional. When the Buddha first learned about old age, his initial shock came from understanding that he, too, will become old one day; nevertheless, what eventually steered the Buddha into a deep state of *saṃvega* is the realization that old age, sickness, and death are inherent to the human condition. The Buddha's dejection, in other words, is rooted in a novel insight and a deep concern for the fate of all living beings. Thus from a Buddhist standpoint, Prince Siddhārtha's existential crisis can be deemed a "less egotistical" or even selfless form of sorrow.

Malcolm Eckle points out several contrasts between the Gītā and Aśvaghoṣa's Buddhacarita.[146] One contrast Eckle addresses that is especially germane to this discussion of *saṃvega*, compares the compassion (*kṛpā*) Prince Siddhārtha felt for even the smallest creatures shortly after his experience of existential distress, and the pity (*kṛpā*) Arjuna felt in his saṃvegic crisis on the battlefield.

> Clumps of grass dug up by the plow littered the earth,
> covered with tiny dead creatures, insects and worms;
> as he (i.e., Siddhārtha) beheld the earth with all these strewn about,
> he grieved greatly, as if a kinsman had been killed.
>
> Seeing the men plowing the fields, their bodies discolored
> by the wind, the dust, and the scorching rays of the sun,
> oxen wearied by the toil of pulling the plows,
> great compassion (*kṛpā*) overwhelmed the great noble man.[147]
>
> ---
> As he (i.e., Arjuna) sat dejected, his eyes filled with pity (*kṛpā*)
> and blurred by tears, Krishna spoke to him.[148]

Eckle claims,

> Both passages ring changes on the experience of vision and both involve a feeling of pity (*kṛpā*), but they evaluate the sense of pity differently. For Siddhārtha, the feeling of pity for the tiny creatures who have been wounded by the plow is the beginning of an aspiration to relieve not only his own suffering, but the suffering of others. (The word *kṛpā* often appears in this text as a synonym of *karuṇā* or compassion, as it does also in later Mahāyāna accounts of the bodhisattva path.) For Krishna the feeling of pity is a shameful weakness that blights Arjuna's vision and blinds him to his duty.[149]

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[146] Perhaps we can add to Eckle's list of contrasts the one between the Buddha's *saṃvega*, which set him on the dharmic path to liberation, and Arjuna's distressed (*saṃvigna*) state of mind, which nearly prevented him from performing his dharmic duty in the war of Kurukṣetra.
[147] Buddhacarita 3.3 (tr. Olivelle 2008: 61).
[148] Bhagavadgītā 2.1 (tr. Eckle 2015:67)
[149] Eckle 2015: 67.

Embedded in this juxtaposition of the pity (*kṛpā*) of the two princes is the complicated relationship between *saṃvega* and compassion, which I address later in this dissertation.[150] More broadly, however, it becomes clear that the contrast between the *saṃvega* of Arjuna and Siddhārtha belongs within a larger geometry of emotions that is turned upside down. The saṃvegic upheaval marking one of the high points in the life story of the Buddha is parallel to one of the most devastating emotional breakdowns of Arjuna's character in the Mahābhārata. The comparison of Arjuna and Siddhārtha's *saṃvega* is representative of the strong distinction between the negative connotations of this term in classical Hindu literature and the positive connotations it has in classical Buddhist texts.

Before moving onward from the Gītā, I would like to highlight another feature of the root *saṃ-vij* in classical Sanskrit literature that is apparent in this text. In both Hindu and Buddhist sources, the root *ud-vij* is often used in a similar if not identical way to *saṃ-vij*. Having said that, it is important to clarify that the reason I focus on *saṃvega* throughout this dissertation, instead of *udvega*, is that *saṃ-vij* is the root that is used exclusively in the Pāli canon, and *saṃvega* is the form that eventually becomes a technical term in Buddhist literature. One example from the Gītā that exhibits the use of *udvega* in a way that aligns with the typical use of *saṃvega* in Sanskrit literature is verse 12.15. In this verse, Kṛṣṇa lauds the one who manages to avoid or overcome *udvega*: "He who neither perturbs (*udvijate*) the world nor is perturbed (*udvijate*) by it, and who is free of excitement, indignation, fear and agitation (*udvega*), is dear to me."[151]

The final occurrence of *saṃvega* in the Mahābhārata I will address appears in the twelfth book of the epic (i.e., the Śāntiparvan). Among the different questions Yudhiṣṭhira poses to Bhīṣma in this book, he asks to hear about the tales of the celestial sage Uśanas and his interactions with the gods. Bhīṣma then tells Yudhiṣṭhira about the time Uśanas used his yogic powers to rob Kubera, the god of wealth, of all his positions. The verse in which *saṃvigna* appears describes how Kubera responded when he first realized his wealth was taken from him.

> When his wealth was stolen,
> Dhanada did not find peace. [152]
> Agitated (*saṃvigna*) and filled with rage, [153]
> He approached the best of the gods.[154]

In this verse, *saṃvega* is paired with rage (*manyu*), as it comes to denote a state of being agitated or disturbed. The meaning of *saṃvega* as agitation is important to counterbalance with the previously mentioned meaning of *saṃvega* as sorrow. While *saṃvega* can denote a dejected state of mind, it usually refers to a feeling that urges one to take action. This is illustrated, for instance, by the image of the frightened animals whose saṃvegic terror prompts them to flee from a looming

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[150] See pp. 143-144.
[151] Bhagavadgītā 12.5 (tr. Cherniak 2008: 265).
[152] Dhanada is a name of Kubera, which literally means "one who gives wealth."
[153] The word *āpanna* is used here along with *manyu*. On the combination of the verb *ā-pad* with *saṃvega,* see pp.17-18.
[154] *hṛte dhane tataḥ śarma*
na lebhe dhanadastathā.
āpannamanyuḥ saṃvignaḥ
so 'bhyagāt surasattamam (Mahābhārata 12.278.10).

predator. The feeling of *saṃvega,* thus, typically functions as a catalyst to act with urgency, as opposed, for example, to a paralyzing form of fear or shock.

In this episode from the Mahābhārata, Kubera is extremely upset after being robbed of his possessions, therefore, he told Śiva[155] of his misfortune, hoping the mighty god would unleash his famous wrath on Uśanas. Upon learning that Kubera was robbed, Śiva was furious and driven by that fury he swallowed Uśanas. The characterization of Kubera's saṃvegic agitation as a distressing state that prompts him to take drastic measures is noteworthy. In Buddhist literature, *saṃvega* is often depicted as a disturbing experience that motivates one to take on the Buddhist path as soon as possible. *Saṃvega* can thus be translated as "agitation" or simply "motivation," for functionally, it drives one to immediately take action for the sake of dramatically changing one's current state of affairs.

3.1.2 Rāmāyaṇa

The Rāmāyaṇa of Vālmīki, being a work of epic poetry (*kāvya*), includes numerous instances where emotions are articulated with depth and nuance. The first occurrence of the root *saṃ-vij* in the Rāmāyaṇa is a good example of this. In the second book of the epic (i.e., the Ayodhyakāṇḍa), there is a dramatic episode in which Rāma shares with his wife Sītā the devastating news about his unexpected exile into the wilderness. After he broke the terrible news to Sītā, Rāma delivered his wife an even harder blow, insisting she must stay in Ayodhya while he goes on to live in the forest. Upon hearing this, Sītā was furious. Hoping to persuade Rāma to take her to the wilderness, Sītā argued that as his wife she must always remain by his side and share his fate. In response, Rāma tried to dissuade Sītā from asking to join him in exile by explaining how painful and hard life in the forest can be. Having heard Rāma's words, Sītā was overwhelmed by grief, yet she explained to Rāma that there is no greater hardship than living apart from him. Despite her passionate plea, Rāma would not consent to taking Sītā to the forest. In that moment, Sītā was consumed by both sorrow and anger, and interestingly, the epic poet chooses to use the root *saṃ-vij* to articulate the great distress she was experiencing.

> Sītā was deeply distraught (*saṃvigna*) and out of love and indignation she began to revile broad-chested Rāghava.
>
> What could my father Vaideha, the lord of Mithilā, have had in mind when he took you for a son-in-law, Rāma, a woman with the body of a man.
>
> How the people lie in their ignorance. Rāma's 'great power' is not at all like the power of the blazing sun that brings the day.
>
> On what grounds are you so reluctant, what are you afraid of that you are ready to desert me, who has no other refuge?[156]

I have quoted the description of Sītā's *saṃvega* along with the three verses that follow it, for the harsh words Sītā directed at Rāma are reflective of her emotive state. To begin with, the first verse here is a testament to the poet's investment in depicting Sītā's distinct mood at this critical juncture

[155] Referred to in this verse as "the best of the gods."
[156] Rāmāyaṇa 2.27.2-5 (tr. Pollock 1986: 139-140).

of the text. Sītā's saṃvegic state involves a mixture of both sorrow and anger, and it stems from her strong affection for Rāma and her frustration with his reluctance to take her with him to the forest. In the previous sections of the epic (*sargas* 23-26), the poet depicts the emotional upheaval Sītā experienced in a way that gradually intensifies and leads to the tipping point she reaches in this section of the epic (*sarga* 27). Before her saṃvegic outburst, Sītā cordially tried persuading Rāma to take her to the forest by pointing out her duties as a faithful wife and expressing her unconditional love and devotion to her husband. She even mentioned an old prophecy that must be fulfilled, according to which, one day she will live in the forest. Up to this point, although Sītā was overcome by feelings of sorrow and anger, her petition to join Rāma in the wilderness remained amiable in spirit. Yet in the quoted verses that follow the description of Sītā as "deeply distraught" (*uttama-saṃvigna*), she reverted to more extreme methods of persuasion. In her *saṃvega*, Sītā began to revile Rāma by questioning his masculinity and doubting his legendary strength. She then proceeded to challenge Rāma's valor, claiming that it is crippling fear that prevents him from taking her to the forest and offering her protection. After Sītā's harsh words, in the following verses, she once again declared her love and commitment to Rāma. When she finished addressing her husband in this manner, Rāma finally embraced and comforted her with these words:

> If its price were your sorrow, my lady, I would refuse heaven itself. No, I am not afraid of anything, any more than is the Self-existent Brahmā.
>
> But without knowing your true feelings, my lovely, I could not consent to your living in the wilderness, though I am perfectly capable of protecting you.[157]

I find it telling that only after Sītā's saṃvegic outburst, Rāma gave her consent to join him in exile. Rāma explicitly tells Sītā here that he could not approve her request without knowing her "true feelings."[158] This seems to indicate that Sītā's *saṃvega* is the moment where her true feelings were exposed, which marks the tipping point in this episode from the great epic. Moreover, it is notable that Sītā's revile of Rāma, in particular, had a strong effect on him. Out of everything Sītā said in the hope of persuading Rāma, he chose to respond specifically to the allegations that he is afraid and incapable of protecting her. In other words, what Sītā uttered in her deeply distraught state seems to have had the strongest impact on Rāma. One aspect of *saṃvega* that is made apparent here is the extreme nature of this emotion. In the Buddhist context, the experience of *saṃvega* often involves being pushed to the edge. The idea behind this is that only an extremely intense emotional experience has the capacity to empower and encourage one to renounce the everyday life and enter the wilderness (both literally and metaphorically).

This episode from the Rāmāyaṇa gives a taste of how *saṃvega* works in a poetic framework. The *kāvya* genre affords various possibilities for articulating emotions in a manner that is distinctive of this literary form. The poet's investment in carefully describing the mood of a character produces a representation of *saṃvega* that has several different layers to it. This is a trend that appears first in the Rāmāyaṇa and later in Aśvaghoṣa's Buddhacarita and Saundarananda. I believe Aśvaghoṣa's description of the Buddha and Nanda's *saṃvega* in his *mahākāvya*s, which I

[157] Rāmāyaṇa 2.27.25-26 (tr. Pollock 1986: 141).
[158] The Sanskrit here reads: *tava sarvam abhiprāyam avijñāya*, which can be translated more literally as "before fully knowing your intention." Having said that, I think Pollock's translation captures more accurately what the text is saying here.

will address shortly, owes as much to the *kāvya* tradition, and the Rāmāyaṇa more specifically, as it does to Buddhist scripture.

The last occurrence of *saṃ-vij* I will address in this section dedicated to the epics, appears in the sixth book of the Rāmāyaṇa (i.e., the Yuddhakāṇḍa). It comes up in an episode that precedes the great battle between Rāma and Rāvaṇa. Shortly after he reiterated his unwillingness to give up Sītā, Rāvaṇa gazed at the vast army of monkeys eager to fight for Rāma. He then asked Sāraṇa to point to him the troop leaders of that massive army. Sāraṇa went on to describe one by one the powerful leaders of the forest-dwelling monkeys, one of which was a fearless monkey by the name of Śarabha:

> And that one, pricking up his ears and showing his fangs again and again, is the fearless and immensely powerful troop leader Śarabha. He has no fear (*na saṃvijata*) of death and never flees an opposing host. He, your majesty, haunts the charming Salveya mountains.[159]

This occurrence of *saṃ-vij* is important for two reasons. First, *saṃvega* alludes here to the type of fear one has of death (*mṛtyu*). In the Buddhist context, *saṃvega* denotes the distress one feels about one's own mortality. The Buddha, for example, steers his disciples into a state of *saṃvega* by confronting them with the reality of impermanence and the certainty of death. This is a topic I will address in later chapters of the dissertation, yet for now, suffice it to say that *saṃvega* often comes with a prescription to keep death in mind and learn to see death as that which threatens everything one holds dear. That being said, notice that in this verse from the Rāmāyaṇa, there is a negation of the saṃvegic attitude towards death. Śarabha is presented as one who has no fear (*na saṃvijita*) of death, a point which leads directly to the second reason I decided to quote this particular verse. In the Rāmāyaṇa, we have more than one occasion where *saṃ-vij* or a form derived from it is negated for the sake of depicting one as fearless.[160] In the Pāli canon, to the contrary, the ideal of fearlessness is never expressed with the root *saṃ-vij*. While the Buddha and the arhats are frequently described as fearless (*abhaya* or *abhīta*), they are never referred to as devoid of *saṃvega*. In this regard, the Buddhist use of *saṃ-vij* marks a deviation from the way this root is used in the Vedas[161] and the epics. In the Pāli canon, it becomes evident that certain spiritually advanced beings no longer have or need *saṃvega*; nevertheless, there is an overall positive connotation that comes with this emotion, and thus, its negation is seldom held in high regard. On this note, I will proceed now to discuss the way *saṃvega* is used in classical Sanskrit Buddhist literature.

3.2 *Saṃvega* in Buddhist sources

So far, this survey of *saṃvega* in classical Sanskrit literature has progressed according to two primary principles. One is the chronology of the sources and the second is the linear sequence of events that occurs within the sources themselves. Therefore, I started with the Vedas and then moved on to the epics, within which, I have arranged my discussion of the different occurrences

[159] Rāmāyaṇa 6.17.28-29 (Goldman, Goldman, and Nooten 2009: 161).
[160] See Rāmāyaṇa 6.28.13. On the different possibilities of reading this verse, see Goldman, Goldman, and Nooten 2009: 719-720.
[161] Previously, I mentioned that in the Vedas we find the injunction *mā saṃvikthāḥ* ("do not tremble").

of *saṃ-vij* based on their sequential appearance in the epic narratives.[162] The Buddhist texts I will discuss in this section, were all composed roughly during the early centuries of the Common Era. Yet in the following pages, I will not be addressing the occurrences of the root *saṃ-vij* in these texts according to the chronological order in which the texts were composed. Instead, I will examine these occurrences of *saṃ-vij* according to their phase in the development of *saṃvega* into a technical term. In so doing, I will first discuss cases where *saṃ-vij* is not used in a highly specialized sense, and finish with cases in which *saṃvega* is a fixed, technical term the reader is expected to know. This way of surveying the Buddhist sources will also transition more smoothly from examples where *saṃ-vij* is used in a manner that closely resembles what we saw in the Vedas and the epics, to examples that are glaringly different from everything I have discussed up to this point.

3.2.1 Divyāvadāna

The narratives that make up the Divyāvadāna (Divine Stories) compendium all exemplify what Andy Rotman calls the "inexorability of karma."[163] *Saṃvega*, like everything else, is viewed in these Buddhist stories through the lens of the causal mechanism that governs the order of things. From both a grammatical and semantic standpoint, the use of the root *saṃ-vij* in the Divyāvadāna closely resembles what we already saw in the epics.[164] Nonetheless, one main element that begins to separate these stories from the texts I have discussed so far is the strong relationship they develop between *saṃvega* and conversion. In the Divyāvadāna, the distressing experience of *saṃvega* always serves as an incentive to take refuge in the Buddha, the Dharma, and the *saṅgha*.

The first occurrence of *saṃ-vij* in the Divyāvadāna appears in the Story of Pūrṇa (Pūrṇāvadāna). The premise of the entire story, in this case, is less relevant to the discussion of what *saṃvega* means in this text. Thus I will focus directly on a specific episode from this *avadāna*, where a group of sea merchants are told that a powerful hurricane is about to hit them. Upon hearing the troubling news, "the merchants were frightened, terrified, distressed (*saṃvigna*), and with their hair bristling, they started praying to the gods."[165] Desperately seeking protection, the merchants first prayed to gods like Brahmā, Śiva, and Viṣṇu. However, on the brink of death, they managed to survive only by placing their faith in Pūrṇa, a noble disciple of the Buddha who was fortunate to learn the Dharma from the Tathāgata himself. There is a clear causal connection drawn here between the saṃvegic terror the merchants experience and their subsequent act of taking refuge in the Buddha, the Dharma, and the noble disciples. This episode conveys the message that when one finds oneself in a bind, it is not the Hindu gods one should turn to, but the Buddha and his community of monks.

The relationship between *saṃvega* and conversion is even more pronounced in a different narrative from the Divyāvadāna, namely, the Story of Aśokavarṇa (Aśokavarṇāvadāna). According to this Buddhist tale, once the Buddha was staying in the city Vaiśālī. At that time, the

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[162] I separate these two aspects because there is agreement among scholars that the narrative sequence of the different books that each one of the epics consists of does not align with the chronological order of their composition from a historical standpoint.
[163] Rotman 2008: 1.
[164] Like the epics, these Buddhist stories predominantly make use of the verbal form *saṃvigna*, typically, to describe someone who is "distressed" or "shocked."
[165] *tataste vaṇijo bhītāstrastāḥ saṃvignā āhṛṣṭaromakūpā devatāyācanaṃ kartumārabdhāḥ* (Divyāvadāna 2.434).

people of the city were craving meat, and so a certain butcher who lived nearby was preparing to slaughter a large bull for the sake of preparing a feast. Growing impatient, the people were urging that butcher to just kill the bull quickly and ruthlessly. Noticing the people's impatience, the butcher promised to slaughter the bull as soon as possible. The bull, understanding what was about to happen, grew anxious and deeply distressed.

> When the bull heard such cruelly uttered ignoble words, he was frightened, terrified, agitated (*saṃvigna*), and his hair stood on end. Pacing back and forth, he looked about and thought, "I'm in trouble, difficulty, and danger. I have no protection and no refuge. Who can give me the precious gift of life?" And so in this way, looking distressed, he stood there, in search of protection.[166]

As the bull was caught in this precarious situation, he all of a sudden saw the Buddha entering the city for alms. Immediately upon seeing the marvelous appearance of the Buddha, the bull was filled with faith (*prasāda*), thinking, "This is my refuge." At that very moment, the bull ran to the Buddha, kneeled at the feet of the Tathāgata, and started licking the Buddha's feet. Recognizing the bull's faith in him, the Buddha saved the poor creature's life. Then, the Tathāgata told Ānanda that because this bull took refuge in the Buddha, in the next life, this beast will be reborn among the gods, and several lifetimes later, he will be reborn as a wheel-turning monarch by the name of Aśokavarṇa. As a king, he will conquer the earth without violence and rule it justly. And in the final years of his life, Aśokavarṇa will renounce his kingdom, become a Buddhist monk, and attain nirvāṇa.

The moment of experiencing *saṃvega* appears in this narrative in a manner that is emblematic of classical Buddhist literature. Staying true to the *avadāna* genre, this story as a whole focuses on the Buddhist understanding of how *saṃsāra* and karma operate; nevertheless, the Story of Aśokavarṇa reserves a special role for the relationship between *saṃvega* and faith. The basic idea that experiencing *saṃvega* inspires one to seek refuge in a powerful being is not exclusively Buddhist. In the Bhagavadgītā, for example, Arjuna's saṃvegic crisis is immediately followed by a plea to seek refuge in Kṛṣṇa and the wisdom he imparts. That said, in Buddhism, the relationship between *saṃvega* and *prasāda* ("faith" or "serene confidence") takes on a life of its own, particularly in South Asia where it becomes a staple of the Theravāda Buddhist tradition.

3.2.1.1 *Saṃvega* and *prasāda*

The paring of *saṃvega* and *prasāda* in the Story of Aśokavarṇa presents an opportunity to briefly address the significance of the *saṃvega-prasāda* scheme in Buddhism more broadly. Before doing so, I would like to first clarify that the main reason this scheme does not play a larger role in this dissertation is that in early Buddhist scripture, which is my main focus in this study, the paring of *saṃvega* and *prasāda* does not appear.[167] Texts like the Story of Aśokavarṇa, nonetheless, indicate that historically some paring of *saṃvega* and *prasāda* dates back at least to the early centuries of

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[166] Divyāvadāna 11.7 (tr. Rotman 2008: 243).

[167] There is not even one sutta in the entire Pāli canon in which *saṃvega* is followed by or transitions into *pasāda*. The loaded term *pasāda*, which bears many different meanings that I will shortly address, is never explicitly combined with *saṃvega* in the early scriptures. However, the basic idea of *saṃvega* leading to a peaceful state is invoked in the canon, primarily in the Khuddaka Nikāya. I discuss one such example in Chapter Four (pp.146-148). For more on this topic, see Walker 2018: 282-283.

the Common Era. The question I would like to address now is how precisely the paring of *saṃvega* and *prasāda* in the Aśokavarṇāvadāna compares to the *saṃvega-pasāda*[168] scheme that is developed in the Theravāda Buddhist tradition.

To begin with, it is important to acknowledge that in the Story of Aśokavarṇa, the link between *saṃvega* and *prasāda* is not strongly underscored as it is in other Buddhist texts. In fact, the bull in the story who realizes that he is about to be killed is described as "frightened (*bhīta*) terrified (*trāsta*) and agitated (*saṃvigna*)." In other words, there is no exclusive emphasis in this *avadāna* on *saṃvega* as an emotion that is clearly distinguishable from fear and terror. The use of *saṃvega* alongside similar words is indicative of the fact that *saṃvega* does not have here the fixed, technical meaning it holds in other, mainly later Buddhist texts. Thus, I would argue that since the Story of Aśokavarṇa pairs *saṃvega* and *prasāda* without using these terms exclusively, what the text actually sets out to illuminate is the broader relationship between fear and faith. Kristin Scheible uses a similar kind of logic when comparing the *saṃvega-pasāda* pairing in the Dīpavaṃsa to the one in the Mahāvaṃsa. Scheible explains that in the Dīpavaṃsa, *pasāda* appears alongside synonymous words, all of which can be paired with *saṃvega*, while in the Mahāvaṃsa, the term *pasāda* is used almost exclusively in conjunction with *saṃvega*. This leads Scheible to claim that the *saṃvega-pasāda* pairing is more explicit in the Mahāvaṃsa.[169]

Moreover, in the Story of Aśokavarṇa, it seems clear that *prasāda*, much like *saṃvega*, does not yet have the technical meaning it holds in other, mainly later Buddhist texts. To explain what I mean by this, let us first look at how the root *pra-sād* is used in the episode from the Aśokavarṇāvadāna that describes the moment in which the frightened bull saw the Buddha.

> As soon as he saw him, being in the presence of the Blessed One, his mind was filled with faith (*abhiprasanna*). Then, with his mind filled with faith (*prasanna-citta*), he reflected, "This special being instills faith (*prāsādika*)! He will be able to save my life. I really should approach him."[170]

The bull's *prasāda* in this episode expresses his faith in the Buddha's ability to save his life. The *saṃvega-prasāda* dynamic here, can be broken down into two steps: the bull's fear (*saṃvega*) of being killed and his faith (*prasāda*) in the Buddha's ability to save him. While this is certainly related to the prevalent way of understanding the *saṃvega-prasāda* pairing in Buddhist thought writ large, it seems significantly less developed than what we find, for example, in the world of Theravāda Buddhist literature. To further this argument, let us consider how Kevin Trainor characterizes the *saṃvega-pasāda* scheme in Theravāda Buddhism:

> These two emotions taken together represent two significant aspects of the Theravāda tradition's understanding of what it means to take refuge in the Triple Gem. It is the experience of fear and agitation (*saṃvega*) that arises when one recognizes the contingent and transient nature of all phenomena, as manifested in old age, sickness, death, etc., that provides the impetus for the taking of refuge in the path that leads to complete liberation from these ills. It is, in turn, contemplation on the nature of the Buddha, Dharma, and

[168] I use the Pāli, *pasāda,* instead of the Sanskrit, *prasāda,* whenever I refer specifically to the use of this term in Theravāda Buddhism.
[169] Scheible 2016: 33-34.
[170] Ibid.

Saṅgha that gives rise to the feeling of serene joy (*pasāda*) as one takes refuge in them and sets out on the path that leads to *nibbāna*.[171]

Trainor also explains that "the meaning of the word *pasāda* closely parallels that of the word *saddhā*, often translated as 'faith,' but perhaps better rendered as 'confidence' or 'trust.' The broad semantic range of the verb *pasīdati*, as indicated by the *PED*, is noteworthy. The mental state of the one who is *pasanna* cannot be reduced to either a quality of emotion or an intellectual state; it embraces both cognitive and affective dimensions of consciousness. As the above definition suggests, the word connotes both a calming and clearing of consciousness, combined with the quality of joy or elation."[172] It seems obvious to me that this way of defining the term *prasāda* and explaining its relationship to *saṃvega* does not exactly fit the description of the bull from the Story of Aśokavarṇa. While the Buddha's mere appearance gives rise to the bull's faith and perhaps even a feeling of confidence, it does not quite make sense to consider the bull's *prasāda* in the aforementioned episode as a form of "serene joy" or a "clearing of consciousness" that comes from the contemplation of the three jewels. In this regard, I think it is unwarranted to project the prevalent Theravāda meaning of *pasāda* onto the way the term is used in the Aśokavarṇāvadāna

Moreover, the *saṃvega-pasāda* scheme has other applications in Theravāda Buddhism that are even further removed from the way it is used in the Story of Aśokavarṇa. For example, Trent Walker contends that in the Theravāda tradition, *saṃvega* and *pasāda* come to define the aesthetic experience many Buddhist texts and works of art set out to elicit. Walker considers the *saṃvega-pasāda* paring to be one that conceptualizes two main aspects of the emotional response a Buddhist work of art wishes to evoke. In his study of the tradition of Cambodian Dharma songs, Walker underlines the intention of these songs to stir or excite (*saṃvega*) the audience on the one hand, and still or calm (*pasāda*) it on the other. The capacity to deeply move the audience by using these two primary affective modes not only justifies the production and consumption of art in a Buddhist framework, it also serves a soteriological purpose. This is a point Walker makes as he specifically addresses the development of the *saṃvega-pasāda* pairing into a scheme that is starkly different from what we find in texts like the Divyāvadāna.[173]

The last point I will touch on concerns the application of the *saṃvega-prasāda* pairing in a Buddhist modernist framework. Reflecting on this pairing, Ṭhānissaro Bhikkhu claims that the power of aspiring for happiness "depends on two emotions, called in Pali *saṃvega* and *pasada.* Very few of us have heard of them, but they're the emotions most basic to the Buddhist tradition. Not only did they inspire the young prince in his quest for Awakening, but even after he became the Buddha he advised his followers to cultivate them on a daily basis. In fact, the way he handled these emotions is so distinctive that it may be one of the most important contributions his teachings have to offer to American culture today."[174]

3.2.1.2 *Saṃvega* in the Story of Dharmaruci

Returning to the Divyāvadāna, the most intriguing case of *saṃvega* in this compendium appears in the Story of Dharmaruci (Dharmārucyavadāna). This Buddhist tale begins with a boatload of

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[171] Trainor 1997: 83.
[172] Trainor 1997: 167.
[173] Walker 2018.
[174] Ṭhānissaro Bhikkhu 1997.

merchants who were about to be swallowed by a giant sea creature. Facing death, the merchants experienced great terror (*saṃvega*), and out of desperation, they invoked the Buddha's name. Upon hearing this invocation, the sea creature decided to spare the merchants' lives. On account of this one act of kindness, after the giant sea creature died it was reborn as a Brahmin called Dharmaruci. From birth, this Brahmin suffered from an insatiable appetite. No matter how much he ate and drank, Dharmaruci was never satisfied. Reflecting on his measurable existence, the young Dharmaruci wondered what he could have possibly done in the past to deserve such a life of discontent. He desperately searched for someone who could help him overcome his wretched condition. Eventually, Dharmaruci became a Buddhist monk and followed the path of the Tathāgata. Yet even as a monastic he could not quell his hunger. Finally, the Buddha, out of compassion for the miserable monk, decided to intervene. He took Dharmaruci to the great ocean and asked him to concentrate on an enormous object that was left deserted on the seashore. Dharmaruci tried to mentally grasp the large object, but he could not fathom this phenomenon that was lying in front of him. The Buddha then told him, "Dharmaruci, this is your skeleton." When he heard those words, Dharmaruci was "shocked" (*saṃvigna*).[175] Recognizing Dharmaruci's utter dismay, the Buddha instructed him to concentrate solely on this giant skeleton. Dharmaruci proceeded to practice concentration in this fashion, while also contemplating the Buddha's words and cultivating the path. By doing so, Dharmaruci was finally able to quell his hunger and eventually attain nirvāṇa.[176]

This story reveals a great deal about the Buddhist concept of *saṃvega*. The pivotal scene of Dharmaruci's encounter with his skeleton from a past life culminates in a strong feeling of existential distress. In the story, the shock Dharmaruci experiences when the Buddha tells him "this is your skeleton" is vital to the process of coming to terms with his mortality. Yet, the question of what precisely about this event provoked Dharmaruci's *saṃvega* could be settled on several different levels. For starters, the arc of the narrative suggests that it is the realization of his saṃsāric past that elicited this powerful emotion. After he was confronted with the reality that he was once an enormous sea monster, Dharmaruci became horrified and deeply disturbed. Sara McClintock claims this moment in the story illustrates the saṃvegic shock of being reminded of what one has forgotten.[177] This is a specific type of *saṃvega* that pertains to the shock of forgetfulness, which could arise either with respect to one's saṃsāric past or simply with regard to one's past experiences in the present life. In the Dharmaruci story, more particularly, there is a redeeming aspect to the realization of the forgotten past, for Dharmaruci finally understands the karmic reasoning behind his insatiable appetite. Dharmaruci's feeling of *saṃvega* in this narrative permeates through the shocking, horrifying, and illuminating encounter with his primordial past. On a different level, it seems that what gives rise to Dharmaruci's saṃvegic shock is the act of seeing his skeleton and facing mortality in a forceful manner. In the Pāli canon, there is a reference to the ascetic practice of cultivating the perception of a skeleton in order to induce *saṃvega*.[178] Perhaps the aforementioned scene from the Story of Dharmaruci is a kind of dramatization of this ascetic practice. The skeleton of the sea creature serves here as a dreadful image associated with death, and given Dharmaruci's karmic link to it, he has no other option but to directly contemplate his own mortality through this disturbing image. As he stands in front of his own skeleton, it is the

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[175] Divyāvadāna 18.245.
[176] In the last part of this story, the Buddha relates three of his encounters with Dharmaruci in previous lifetimes.
[177] McClintock 2017: 196.
[178] SN 46.57.

cycle of birth and death itself that strikes Dharmaruci and jolts him into a state of *saṃvega*. Lastly, on another level, this scene is a classic example of the Buddha's habit of performing a "saṃvegic intervention." In general, the Buddha's preaching of the Dharma is meant to elicit *saṃvega*; yet, in certain cases, the Buddha recognizes that a more complicated and invasive intervention is necessary in order to steer a person into a state of *saṃvega*.[179] Dharmaruci's story is an example of that, and among other things, it shows the Buddha's capacity to adjust his methods for the sake of helping his disciples break through whatever barrier they are facing.

The last remark I will make about the Story of Dharmaruci concerns the way it illustrates the function of *saṃvega*. In this *avadāna*, *saṃvega* is the emotion that facilitates Dharmaruci's successful practice and allows him to eventually attain liberation. *Saṃvega* is clearly not the moment of conversion for Dharmaruci since, according to the narrative, he was already a Buddhist monk when he experienced *saṃvega*. Instead, *saṃvega* here is the essential emotional disposition that allows Dharmaruci to finally set himself on the right path that leads to nirvāṇa. This function of *saṃvega* brings us closer to the technical meaning this term eventually acquires in Buddhism and other traditions of renunciation.

3.2.2 Buddhacarita

The most famous literary example of experiencing *saṃvega* appears in Aśvaghoṣa's *mahākāvya*,[180] the Buddhacarita (Life of the Buddha).[181] In the third chapter of the text, titled the Arising of Distress (*Saṃvega-utpatti*), Aśvaghoṣa describes Prince Siddhārtha's first encounter with old age, sickness, and death, which set him on the path to becoming the Buddha. To a large extent, this episode from Aśvaghoṣa's classic version of the Buddha's life story epitomizes the Buddhist notion of experiencing *saṃvega*.

In the Buddhacarita, the two main textual traditions Aśvaghoṣa draws on are the Sanskrit epics and the early Buddhist scriptures. The account of the Buddha's *saṃvega*, in particular, illustrates the interplay between these two literary traditions. Many of the poetic and mythic elements Aśvaghoṣa introduces into the Buddha's saṃvegic crisis are largely influenced by the epics, while the philosophical worldview that hovers over this entire episode from the Buddha's life story is deeply steeped in Buddhist doctrine.

From a grammatical standpoint, the Buddhacarita exhibits the first occurrence in this survey of a text that uses the specific noun "*saṃvega*" in a deliberate way. In this text, the root *saṃ-vij* does not merely describe a person's emotive state, it is presented as a phenomenon that holds its own ground. The significance of this will become clear when I discuss the moment in the Buddhacarita where Prince Siddhārtha wonders how come *saṃvega* is not the prevalent attitude that all people have towards the reality of impermanence and suffering. Yet before I examine the verses from the Buddhacarita that depict the Buddha's *saṃvega*, I would like to first briefly address the context in which this transformative emotion arises.

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[179] On the Buddhist notion of a saṃvegic intervention, see Chapter Five.

[180] The term *mahākāvya* refers to a genre of epic court poetry. On the importance of Aśvaghoṣa's work to the early development of this literary genre, see Tubb 2014.

[181] The Buddhist poet and philosopher Aśvaghoṣa was most likely active in the first century of the Common Era (Johnston 2007: xiii-xcviii).

The account of the Buddha's *saṃvega* occurs midway through the third chapter of the Buddhacarita. Prior to that, in the first chapter, Aśvaghoṣa depicts the miraculous birth of the prince who is destined to become the Buddha. Shortly after the prince's birth, the king received a prophecy that his son will either be an awakened mendicant or a universal monarch. Upon learning of this, the king made his priorities clear:

> May he become a king as predicted,
> And go to the forest when he is old.[182]

Wishing to steer the prince away from renunciation and towards monarchy, the king did all he could to keep his son preoccupied with sensual pleasures and the various joys of life. All the while, the prince was not allowed to leave the confines of the palace. Within the royal abode, which Aśvaghoṣa compares to heaven, the boy remained unaware of the existence of misery and suffering. These events are all laid out in the second chapter of the Buddhacarita, which focuses on the upbringing of Prince Siddhārtha.

The years went by blissfully, and the prince turned from a boy to a young man. In due time, the Siddhārtha himself became a father, and the king grew confident that once his son saw the face of his newborn child, he would remain entrenched in the household life. At this point, we arrive at the third chapter, which deals with the "arising of *saṃvega*" (*saṃvega-utpatti*). This chapter begins with the prince's wish to visit the outdoors, after he heard about some of the city's most enchanting parks. The king, who wanted nothing more than to see his son enjoy himself in places such as these delightful parks, felt obligated to accommodate the prince's wish. Therefore, he prepared a special "pleasure excursion" (*vihāra-yātra*) for his son. However, the king was deeply worried the prince might see something disturbing on his way to the pleasure groves, and thus, he decided to take certain precautionary measures.

> He prevented the common folks with afflictions
> from gathering on the royal highway, thinking:
> Lest the tender mind of the prince
> Thereby become perturbed (*saṃvigna*).[183]

This is the first occurrence of the root *saṃ-vij* in the Buddhacarita. In this scene, the king is acting out of fear that his son will become perturbed, a fear that will, of course, prove to be justified. Nonetheless, I wonder whether the king's use of the word *saṃvigna* in this instance, has the same meaning or weight it carries later in this chapter when Aśvaghoṣa uses it to describe the prince's deep distress. Obviously, the king knows that his son's psyche is extremely delicate, and because of that, he worries about the possibility that the hardships of the world will motivate the prince to seek the path of renunciation. And yet, how could the king possibly fathom the magnitude of experiencing *saṃvega* at this point, for only after Prince Siddhārtha underwent his saṃvegic crisis, the concept *saṃvega* came to bear the meaning of a life-altering event.

When the prince took off on his pleasure excursion, at first everything went according to his father's plan. Yet then, the gods of the pure realm[184] decide to intervene for the sake of

[182] Buddhacarita 1.48b (tr. Olivelle 2008: 19).
[183] Buddhacarita 3.4 (tr. Olivelle 2008: 61).
[184] They are the highest class of gods in Buddhist mythology, charged with announcing the imminent birth of a buddha.

propelling the prince to go forth from home to homelessness. They created an old man and placed him in the vicinity of the prince's royal chariot. Seeing that old man, the prince could not understand who this person is, what happened to him, and why is he in such a dire state. Prince Siddhārtha sought an explanation from his charioteer, and while this man knew he should not disclose the truth to the prince, the gods themselves made the charioteer tell the prince all about the phenomenon of old age. After the prince learned about old age, he asked if this hardship will affect him too. The charioteer assured him that he will also become old, for by the force of time, old age comes to destroy youth and beauty. When the prince heard these words, the world as he knew it was shattered into pieces.

> Then, the eminent one, whose mind was purified by past intentions,
> and who accumulated good karma across numerous eons,
> having heard about old age, became distressed (*saṃvivije*),
> like an ox hearing the sound of thunder.
>
> He took a deep breath and shook his head,
> then, he set his eyes on that old man.
> Noticing the joyous people [all around him],
> distressed (*saṃvigna*), he spoke these words:
>
> Thus, without distinction, old age destroys
> memory, beauty, and strength.
> Yet the people of the world are not met with distress (*saṃvega*),
> upon seeing such [a man] before their very eyes.[185]

Each one of these three verses reveals a different side of the Buddha's existential crisis. Grammatically, they each also use the root *saṃ-vij* in a slightly distinct manner. For starters, in the first verse I translated here, the verb *saṃvivije* characterizes the prince's saṃvegic distress as a kind of jolt to the system. Before the Buddha's *saṃvega* begins to gradually transition into a more complex and pervasive mood of dejection, it begins as a strong feeling of shock, much like the one an ox experiences when hearing a thunderbolt.

The reference in the first verse to the Buddha's karmic past is particularly significant, for it provides a metaphysical explanation to the question of why seeing an old man shocked the prince

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[185] *tataḥ sa pūrvāśayaśuddhabuddhir,*
vistīrṇakalpācitapuṇyakarmā,
śrutvā jarāṃ saṃvivije mahātmā
mahāśanerghoṣamivāntike gauḥ.

niḥśvasya dīrghaṃ svaśiraḥ prakampya
tasmiṃśca jīrṇe viniveśya cakṣuḥ.
tāṃ caiva dṛṣṭvā janatāṃ saharṣāṃ,
vākyaṃ sa saṃvigna idaṃ jagāda:

evaṃ jarā hanti ca nirviśeṣaṃ
smṛtiṃ ca rūpaṃ ca parākramaṃ ca.
na caiva saṃvegaṃ upaiti lokaḥ,
pratyakṣato 'pīdṛśamīkṣamāṇaḥ (Buddhacarita 3.34-36).

in such dramatic fashion. Aśvaghoṣa is invoking here the Buddhist notion that one's karmic conditioning plays a vital role in shaping every encounter one has with the world. Through countless past lives, the Buddha performed virtuous deeds out of good intentions. The merit he acquired on account of these good deeds, resulted in the extraordinary mental and physical disposition that only a great person (*mahāpuruṣa*) has earned. This unique karmic make-up is the reason why the sight of an old man shakes the young prince to his very core. In other words, the Buddha is metaphysically conditioned in a way that makes him distinctively sensitive to the misery of the world. By bringing up the Buddha's primordial past, Aśvaghoṣa is zooming out of this specific episode from the life of the Buddha in order to offer the reader a wider perspective that reveals the prince's saṃvegic shock as the result of a long causal chain of events that goes back numerous eons. This is an example of how Aśvaghoṣa implements elements of Buddhist doctrine into his elegant poetry.

The Buddhacarita provides another form of reasoning that can explain the gravity of the Buddha's saṃvegic shock. This line of reasoning stems from the logic of the Buddha's life story. According to Aśvaghoṣa's narrative, up to this point in the Buddha's life, his father has successfully prevented him from encountering suffering in any shape or form. Thus, unlike ordinary people, Prince Siddhārtha never learned that old age, as well as sickness and death, are an inevitable part of life. No one ever tried to comfort the Buddha as a child or a young man by explaining to him that people grow old and such is the natural course of things. As a result of this, the Buddha reached a mature age while remaining uniquely unprepared to face the hardships of life. Devoid of any reassuring concept to hold onto, the truth about the fleeting nature of youth and the facticity of old age ends up hitting the prince extremely hard.[186] Perhaps there is a sense of tragic irony here, for the king's great effort to shelter the prince from the reality of suffering, ends up facilitating the jarring experience of *saṃvega* that Siddhārtha undergoes when he first sees an old man. To some extent, we know the king was aware of the risk he was taking by not exposing his son to the reality of suffering. This is evident from the concern the king voiced earlier in this chapter that his son's "tender mind" might be perturbed by some of the unpleasant aspects of human existence. And yet, it seems that the king still underestimated the impact such an encounter with the miseries of the world could have on his son, otherwise he would have never let him depart the palace walls.

In the second of the three verses I presented depicting the Buddha's experience of *saṃvega*, the prince begins to sink into a deep feeling of melancholy. After he adjusted his breath and nodded his head in disbelief, the prince found himself staring at a very disturbing picture. First, he focused on the miserable old man, and then, looming in the background, he could not help but notice the elation of the people all around. Aśvaghoṣa accentuates here the contrast Siddhārtha observed between the suffering of the old man and the joy of the people around him. The prince's feeling of distress at this moment is no longer simply a reaction to the fact that he, too will become old, nor is it merely a response to the realization that old age affects all sentient beings. In this scene, the Buddha is becoming despondent because of the people's indifference towards the misery of others and their deep denial of the fact that one day they, too, will end up like that old man.

In this verse, much like the first one I addressed, there is also a sense of tragic irony. The festive gathering the king arranged for his son to divert his attention away from the suffering of

[186] This interpretation of the aforementioned episode from the Buddhacarita was presented in a lecture by Robert Sharf titled The Story of the Buddha (9/4/2019).

the world, ends up backfiring in a devastating manner. The people around Siddhārtha are all celebrating his presence since the king made sure that the prince's pleasure excursion will be a wildly entertaining and festive event. However, because the prince sees the misery of the old man juxtaposed with the joyous attitude of the people, his initial encounter with suffering has an even more substantial impact on him.

In the third verse, the prince's *saṃvega* becomes verbal, as he begins to speak out of a deep feeling of frustration. The fact that *saṃvega* is not only used to describe the Buddha but is also the word the Buddha himself uses to describe the expected emotional response to the encounter with old age is noteworthy. This verse succinctly articulates what the prince understood about the reality of old age and what he noticed about people's attitude towards that reality. When the Buddha states that old age destroys memory, beauty, and strength "without distinction," he is lamenting the fact that regardless of one's karma, everyone is affected by old age. The idea that even a person who performs countless good deeds and accumulates all the merit in world is still guaranteed to suffer from old age, causes the Buddha great distress.

The last two legs of the third verse are especially significant for the purposes of this study. In them, the prince is baffled by the fact that people do not experience *saṃvega* upon seeing an old man. The Buddha marks *saṃvega* as the appropriate disposition one should have when encountering suffering in the form of old age. *Saṃvega* is defined here as the feeling of distress or despair that all people should collectively share towards the reality of suffering. Also, it is worth keeping in mind that the charioteer already told the Buddha that people know about old age yet they still wish to grow old and are not deeply disturbed by the fleeting nature of youth. However, in this verse, the Buddha is specifically troubled by the fact that even upon seeing the misery of an old man with their very eyes, people are still not dejected and distressed. I think the emphasis here is less on the people's lack of compassion and more on how evident this inevitable form of suffering is to the people of the world, and despite that, they still manage to remain oblivious to their own fate.

Interestingly, in the Buddhacarita, Aśvaghoṣa only uses *saṃvega* to describe the Buddha's encounter with old age. He uses a different term, *viṣāda* (despondency), to characterize the prince's emotional state after his encounters with sickness and death (which I will expound on shortly). Perhaps one should not make too much of the fact that *saṃvega* is reserved only for the encounter with old age since the entire third chapter, which includes all three encounters, is called the "Arising of *Saṃvega*." Having said that, there are at least two factors that make the encounter with old age particularly poignant when it comes to the prospect of provoking *saṃvega*. First, from a sequential standpoint, it is the act of seeing an old man that marks the Buddha's initial encounter with suffering. While the other encounters occur shortly after, they certainly do not shock the young prince in the same way as the first encounter. Thus, only the encounter with old age has the shocking quality that is typical of *saṃvega*. The second factor that distinguishes this encounter with the miseries of the world concerns the notion of *saṃvega* as a response to the reality of impermanence and suffering. Out of the three sights the Buddha witnessed, old age might be the phenomenon that provides the fullest visual representation of the reality of impermanence and suffering. While sickness, for example, is a clear and intense manifestation of suffering, it does not necessarily reveal the fleeting nature of things like old age does. Death on the other hand, is of course emblematic of both impermanence and suffering, and eventually, it has the strongest impact on the Buddha; however, these two marks of existence might not be as visible in a dead body as

they are in an old person. To put it differently, the old man allows the Buddha to see here-and-now a being who is suffering because of the transient nature of things.

After the prince's distressing encounter with old age, he asked his charioteer to take him back home immediately, for fear (*bhaya*)[187] of old age has taken hold of his mind. When he returned to the palace, that safe and familiar place he knew so well seemed "empty" (*śūnya*) to him. His psyche was disturbed by old age and he found no solace anywhere. Seeking to remedy this, the prince asked permission to go out again. This time, the gods created a man who suffered from a terrible disease. The Buddha saw that sick man and once again inquired his charioteer about this disturbing image. Having learned about the phenomenon of sickness, he looked at that ailing man with pity (*anukampa*) and asked: "Is this an evil that's specific to this man? Or is sickness a danger common to all men?"[188] The charioteer explained to the prince that sickness is inherent to the human condition. "Hearing this truth, he trembled (*prāvepata*), despondent (*viṣaṇṇa*), like the moon shining in rippling waters."[189]

Following this encounter with sickness, Aśvaghoṣa describes the prince's trembling body and his despondent mind in a way emblematic of experiencing *saṃvega*; nevertheless, the poet seems to intentionally avoid using the word *saṃvigna* to describe the Buddha in this instance.[190] In addition, Aśvaghoṣa stresses the compassion (*karuṇā*) the prince felt for the sick man. The Buddha's mood appears to transition at this point into a different form of existential despair.

Shortly after he saw the sick man, the brooding prince demanded once again to return home. When he arrived at the palace, the king noticed his son's dejected state of mind. Hoping to bring him back to his old self, the king arranged for his son the finest sensual delights, but the prince seemed to have already forsaken the realm of pleasure. In a final desperate attempt to win back his son, the king sent the prince on another excursion, this time to visit the most skillful courtesans in the kingdom. However, the gods intervened again, this time by contriving a lifeless person.[191] When the prince learned about the inevitability of death, he felt even more despondent. For the Buddha, death became the epitome of what is most disturbing about the human condition. Once again, Siddhārtha asked to turn his chariot and return to the palace, yet this time, by the orders of the king, he was taken directly to see the beautiful courtesans. These women who were highly trained in the art of seduction had no effect on the prince, for he was now concerned solely with old age, sickness, and death. The people around the prince explained to him that even the most virtuous and wise men of past generations have engaged in sensual pleasures, yet Siddhārtha responded by stating: "It should indeed cause us all anxiety (*saṃvega*), that these men also have succumbed to death!"[192]

In some versions of the Buddha's life story, the prince's *saṃvega* eventually turns into *prasāda* when he sees a recluse for the first time shortly after his three initial encounters with

[187] The fact that *bhaya* is also used to characterize the Buddha's emotive state at this stage is noteworthy. It suggests that *saṃvega* is not employed here in the fixed, technical sense it has in other texts. That said, among the different emotion terms Aśvaghoṣa uses in this chapter, *saṃvega* is most strongly underscored.
[188] Buddhacarita 3.43b (tr. Olivelle 2008: 75).
[189] Buddhacarita 3.45a (tr. Olivelle 2008: 75).
[190] From a metrical perspective, I cannot see any reason why *saṃvigna* could not take the place of *viṣaṇṇa* in this verse. This leads me to believe that *viṣaṇṇa* is used here because it has a slightly different meaning, one which the poet deliberately chose in order to convey Siddhārtha's emotive state at this juncture.
[191] It is clear that for Aśvaghoṣa, fate or the will of the gods (*daiva*) plays a crucial role in the Buddha's life story.
[192] Buddhacarita 4.90b (tr. Olivelle 2008: 115).

suffering. In the Buddhacarita, however, this is not quite the case. In Aśvaghoṣa's epic poem, shortly after the prince's distressing encounters with old age, sickness, and death, a man in a mendicant's garb approached him in secret, without anyone noticing. The prince asked that man "who are you," and the man replied:

> Frightened (*bhīta*) by birth and death, bull among men,
> I have gone forth as a recluse (*śramaṇa*),
> for the sake of release (*mokṣa*).[193]

It is no coincidence that this recluse[194] tells the prince that it was fear of birth and death that motivated him to go forth and seek liberation, for the Buddha was experiencing a similar kind of saṃvegic terror at this stage of his life. The encounter with the recluse did not exactly inspire serene confidence or calmness in the prince. It did, however, make him "gain an awareness of dharma, and set his mind on the means to leave [this world]."[195]

In the Buddhacarita, the distressed prince does, nevertheless, experience one moment of tranquility before he departs from the palace to dwell in the forest. Shortly after he saw the aforementioned recluse, the prince was kindly greeted by a royal maiden who happened to use the word *nirvṛta* ("fulfilled").

> Then, as he heard this voice,
> he obtained supreme calm,
> he whose voice was like that of a great thunder cloud;
> for, as he heard the word "fulfilled" (*nirvṛta*) he set his mind
> on the means to final Nirvanic fulfillment (*parinirvāṇa*).[196]

The encounter with the recluse set the prince's mind on liberation, and the calmness he experienced after hearing a word that sounds like nirvāṇa, gave him a small taste of the fruits of renunciation. The Buddha's *saṃvega* transformed him into a "seeker of liberation" (*nirmumukṣu*), who has the necessary "resolve" (*vyavasāya*) to pursue the life of a forest ascetic. The prince tried to gain permission from his father to leave the palace and go live in the forest, yet the king emphatically denied his son's request. Therefore, the Buddha departed the palace at night while everyone was sleeping and embarked on the long journey that will lead to the attainment of nirvāṇa.

3.2.3 Saundarananda

The term *saṃvega* also appears in Aśvaghoṣa's Saundarananda ("Beautiful Nanda"). Like the Buddhacarita, the Saundarananda is a work of *mahākāvya* that revolves around the story of a character who goes through an existential transformation. The protagonist of the Saundarananda is the Buddha's half-brother, Nanda, who is known for his desirous nature (*kāma-ātamaka*). According to Aśvaghoṣa's version of this story, young and charming Nanda was deeply in love with his beautiful wife Sundarī. Despite being the Buddha's half-brother, Nanda had no interest in becoming a monk and joining the *saṅgha*. One day the Buddha showed up at Nanda's house, drew him away from his wife, and ordained Nanda against his will. The monastic life did not agree with

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[193] Olivelle 2008: 131 (Buddhacarita 5.17b).
[194] In the Buddhacarita this recluse is a deity in disguise.
[195] *upalabhya tataśca dharmasaṃjñāṃ abhiniryāṇavidhau matiṃ cakāra* (Buddhacarita 5.21b).
[196] Olivelle 2008: 133 (Buddhacarita 5.25).

Nanda at all. Consumed by thoughts of his beloved wife, Nanda wanted nothing more than to reunite with Sundarī. When the Buddha learned of Nanda's struggles with the monastic practice, he decided to intervene. He showed Nanda an ugly monkey and then took him to Indra's heaven, where he introduced Nanda to a group of beautiful *apsarases* (celestial nymphs). Nanda was thus made to see that the difference in beauty between the monkey and his wife was as great as the difference between his wife and the *apsarases*. Once his eyes were fixated on the *apsarases*, Nanda felt a burning desire to unite with these celestial nymphs. The Buddha promised Nanda that if he committed to the monastic life, the *apsarases* would be his reward. Yet the moment Nanda started properly practicing monasticism and cultivating the Dharma he was radically transformed. A changed man, Nanda approached his guru, the Buddha, and declared to him he no longer desired the *apsarases*. The Buddha, noticing the substantial change in Nanda's demeanor, gave him a teaching on the virtues of self-restraint and the four noble truths. Shortly after that, Nanda's transformation was complete, as he overcame his desirous nature and attained nirvāṇa.

Nanda's experience of *saṃvega* comes at a crucial juncture in the narrative of the Saundarananda. After Nanda started practicing the Dharma as a means to unite with the *apsarases* in heaven, he learned that even the beauty of these celestial nymphs is evanescent. Aśvaghoṣa describes this transformative moment in the following manner:

> Because his nature was not given to careful inspection, he had previously considered heaven to be permanent. So when he heard about its perishability he was profoundly disturbed (*saṃvega*). The chariot of his mind, with its horses of inclination, turned back from heaven like a great chariot is turned back from the wrong path by an attentive charioteer. When he had turned away from his thirst for heaven, he suddenly seemed to become well, like a sick man who gives up tasty but unhealthy food in his determination to live. Just as he had forgotten about his beloved wife when he gazed on the *apsarases*, so also did he forsake the *apsarases*, disturbed (*udevigna*) [197] by the fact of their impermanence. He thought about the return to earth of even the greatest beings, and though he was a passionate man, in his shocked agitation (*saṃvega*) he seemed devoid of passion.
>
> For the shock (*saṃvega*) existed for furthering the increase of Excellence in him, just as, for the grammarians, the root "to increase" is listed among the verbs [198] after "to exist."[199]

What comes through clearly in this episode from the Saundarananda is the characterization of *saṃvega* as an emotional response to the reality of impermanence. When Nanda realized that even heaven and the divine beauty of the *apsarases* are ephemeral, he felt the shock and distress of *saṃvega*. In Aśvaghoṣa's depiction of Nanda in this passage, he uses the image of a sick man who was healed. *Saṃvega*, in particular, plays a pivotal role in Nanda's healing process, for the shock he felt after learning about the transient nature of things quelled his burning desire for the *apsarases*. Throughout the Saundarananda, Aśvaghoṣa develops what Linda Covill calls the "medical metaphor," according to which, Nanda is an ailing person, the Buddha is a healer, and

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[197] Aśvaghoṣa uses *saṃvega* and *udvega* interchangeably in this passage. On the use of *udvega* in the sense of distress, see p. 33.

[198] Covill provides an explanatory note on Aśvaghoṣa's reference to the traditional list of Sanskrit roots: "in the Dhātupāṭha, Pāṇini's lexicon of Sanskrit verbal roots, the root *edh* 'to increase' occurs immediately after the root bhū,'to exist'" (Covill: 2007: 371).

[199] Saundarananda 12.4-9 (tr. Covill 2007: 231).

the Dharma is the ultimate treatment or medicine.[200] This passage specifically highlights the significance of the saṃvegic "shock treatment" Nanda received, which instantaneously (*sadyas*) improved his condition.

The last point I would like to highlight in Aśvaghoṣa's account of Nanda's saṃvegic experience has to do with the relationship the poet describes between *saṃvega* and shame (*vrīḍa*). When Nanda came to terms with the fleeting nature of beauty, he felt deeply ashamed of his past actions.[201] All of a sudden, his constant pursuit of beauty seemed futile to him, and he felt embarrassed that only after the Buddha promised him the beautiful *apsarases* was he incentivized to practice the Dharma. Thus, the first thing Nanda did after he experienced *saṃvega* was to approach the Buddha with a new sense of humility.

> With stately gait and strong in arm, like a princely elephant out of rut, he came to the guru at an appropriate time to tell him of his disposition. He bowed his head to the guru and folded his hands in reverence, and with tears filling his eyes and his face partially lowered in shame, he said:
>
> "Lord, you stood guarantor for my attainment of the *apsarases.* But now I have no need of the *apsarases,* and I relinquish your guarantee."

Once the Buddha saw Nanda's demonstration of reverence and heard him speak about the vicissitudes of *saṃsāra*, he was able to place his finger on what precisely changed in Nanda, namely, his faith (*śraddhā*). In the Divyāvadāna, we have already encountered the relationship between *saṃvega* and faith, which as I have mentioned, is especially prominent in the Theravāda tradition through the pairing of *saṃvega* and *pasāda*. Nonetheless, in the Saundarananda, there is a monologue given by the Buddha that elaborates on the type of faith which is considered fruitful and how it relates to the experience of *saṃvega*.

> As faith (*śraddhā*) is the primary factor in the arising of *dharma,* I have called it different names on various occasions due to its effects. Therefore you should nurture this shoot of faith; when it grows, *dharma* grows, just as a tree grows when its roots grow. When a man's vision is blurred and he is weak in resolve, his faith wavers, for it is not operating towards its proper outcome.
>
> As long as reality is not seen or heard, faith is not firm or strongly fixed. But when a man's senses are governed by the rules of restraint and he sees reality, then the tree of faith is fruitful and supportive.[202]

The point made here about the Buddhist concept of faith is not at all trivial. The Buddha tells Nanda in this passage that faith is not about blindly believing in something because one cannot perceive things as they truly are. In fact, the opposite is closer to the truth, for faith is most fruitful for the one who sees reality (*tattva*) for what it is. This point is important to stress for the purposes of this study since the faith of which the Buddha speaks here, follows the saṃvegic encounter in which one is confronted with reality. Faith, here, assumes its most crucial role only after one is hit hard by the truth about impermanence and suffering. Interestingly, this concept of faith is paired

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[200] On the use of the medical metaphor in the Saundarananda, see Covill 2009: 99-178.

[201] In classical Sanskrit literature, the term *vrīḍa* is used specifically to capture the sense of shame that comes after the fact, as one realizes how foolishly one acted.

[202] Saundarananda 12.40-44 (tr. Covill 2007: 239).

with the understanding that the truth about the nature of things is a devastating revelation. Therefore, after learning the truth, one is expected to rely on faith in the three jewels for the sake of finding peace and attaining liberation.[203]

3.2.4 Jātakamālā

Āryaśura's Jātakamālā (Garland of the Buddha's Past Lives) is among the most widespread and influential collections of stories about the Buddha's past lives.[204] In Āryaśura's birth stories (*jātakas*), like in many other Buddhist narratives, *saṃvega* often serves as a trigger for the protagonist to take on the path of renunciation.[205] What makes the Jātakamālā especially fascinating is that some of its stories include descriptions of the Buddha's experiences of *saṃvega* from his previous lives. A good example of this is found in the Birth Story of Ayogṛha (Ayogṛhajātaka). This *jātaka* resembles the story of the Buddha's final birth as Prince Siddhārtha, only with a few significant differences.

According to the Ayogṛhajātaka, once the Buddha took birth in a royal family, as the son of a wealthy king. Prior to the Bodhisattva's[206] birth, whenever this king fathered a child, the child died shortly after. Therefore, when the Bodhisattva was born, the worrisome king had a nursery made of iron built to protect his precious son.[207] At first, the king was extremely protective of the newly born prince, but as the years went by, the king felt less anxious and more confident, as he saw the Bodhisattva enjoy his life and blossom into a bright young man. One day, the prince asked permission to visit the outdoors during the Kaumudī festival. The Bodhisattva was eager to witness the beauty and splendor of this celebratory event. The king granted him permission to go out and arranged for the prince a luxurious chariot with a skillful charioteer to drive him around. The Bodhisattva then wandered through the capital city, hearing the delightful sounds of musical instruments and observing the beautiful people who gathered to celebrate this auspicious occasion. The people of the city were all enchanted with the prince and everything was going as well as could be expected. Despite all that, the Bodhisattva still experienced the distressing feeling of *saṃvega*.

> Dressed in delightful festive clothes, they (i.e. the people of the city) praised and honored him (i.e., the Bodhisattva) enthusiastically, cupping their hands in respect, while making prostrations and uttering blessings. But despite the opportunity that this occasion afforded for joy, the Bodhi·sattva was so accustomed to spiritual alarm (*saṃvega*) that he instead remembered his past lives.
>
> How pitiful is the state of this
> distastefully changeable world!
> This splendid Kaumudī Festival
> will soon be but a memory!

---

[203] This concept of faith also seems to build on the notion that after one sees reality, one's faith grows stronger due to the ability of the empirical experience to confirm the veracity of the Buddha's teaching.
[204] Most scholars agree on dating Āryaśura to the fourth century CE (Meiland 2009, Vol. 1: xviii-xix).
[205] Meiland 2009, Vol. 2: 452.
[206] This term is used in Buddhist literature to refer to a feature Buddha.
[207] The name of this *jātaka* is "Ayo-gṛha," which means "the one with an iron house."

> But though this is the nature of the world,
> the people still display such lack of fear,
> wandering after pleasures without anxiety,
> though Death rules over every path![208]

Āryaśura depicts here a fascinating turn of events. Unlike in the Buddha's life story, the prince in the Ayogṛhajātaka narrative has no shocking encounter with old age, sickness, and death. Not only that, according to this *jātaka*, all the Bodhisattva perceived when he visited the outdoors was the beauty and splendor of the Kaumudī festival. Nevertheless, he still experienced *saṃvega*. The text provides an explanation for what elicited the prince's distress, stating that because he was already "accustomed to spiritual alarm" (*kṛta-saṃvega-paricayatvāt*), instead of enjoying the beauty and splendor of the festival, he recollected his past lives. Unfortunately, the text does not make it entirely clear whether the Bodhisattva was already accustomed to *saṃvega* because he experienced this emotion earlier in this lifetime, or, whether he was familiar with *saṃvega* because he experienced it many times in his past lives. It seems more likely that the latter is the case for two reasons. First, the Ayogṛhajātaka never mentions that the prince had some saṃvegic experience prior to the one he had at the Kaumudī festival. Second, in other birth stories of the Jātakamālā, such as the Śreṣṭhijātaka, it is made clear that the Buddha had experienced *saṃvega* more than once in his saṃsāric past.

The idea that the Buddha's experiences of *saṃvega* in his past lives karmically conditioned his *saṃvega* in a present lifetime relates to a point I touched on previously when discussing the Buddhacarita. To recall, I explained that one's primordial past plays a role in shaping one's encounter with the world in the present. The difference, here, is that Āryaśura illustrates this idea by using the image of a chain of saṃvegic experiences that occur throughout the many lives of the Buddha. On account of these primordial experiences, the Bodhisattva is already accustomed to *saṃvega*, and thus, it does not take much to provoke from him this transformative emotional response.

The Bodhisattva's familiarity with *saṃvega*, or what we might call his "saṃvegic sensibility," is tied to another element of the Ayogṛhajātaka that I would like to highlight, namely, the fact that in this instance, beauty is what elicits the Bodhisattva's existential distress. In the Buddha's life story, it is the encounter with the most obvious expressions of suffering that provokes the prince's *saṃvega*. Old age, sickness, and death are considered in Buddhist thought a form of self-evident suffering (*duḥkha-duḥkha*), for there is no denying the existence of these ubiquitous manifestations of *duḥkha* as physical pain. In the Birth Story of Ayogṛha, however, the Bodhisattva encounters a different form of suffering, that is, suffering due to change (*vipariṇāma-duḥkha*).[209] The logic behind this form of suffering is that whatever one experiences in a present moment as beautiful and pleasant will soon perish, and the loss that one is destined to endure because of that is considered suffering in the form of change. This kind of suffering is frequently presented in Buddhist thought as inherent to the feeling of joy or happiness (*sukha-duḥkha*). When the Bodhisattva witnesses the joyfulness of the Kaumudī festival, in his saṃvegic state, he cannot help but think that this "will soon be but a memory." When he saw everyone around him chasing

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[208] Jātakamālā 32.7-8 (tr. Meiland 2009, Vol. 2: 393).
[209] Gethin 1998: 61.

after sensual pleasures, the Bodhisattva was perplexed by the people's lack of fear (*bhaya*) and anxiety (*saṃbhrama*), given that "Death rules over every path."

After he experienced *saṃvega* at the festival, the Bodhisattva set his mind on discarding the luster of kingship for the sake of practicing asceticism in the forest. He managed to persuade his father to grant him permission to pursue the life of a recluse. Then, while he was dwelling in the wilderness, the Bodhisattva practiced meditation and reached a dhyānic state that resulted in his ascension to the Brahmā Realm.

The Ayogṛhajātaka as a whole can be read as a kind of toned-down or less extreme version of the Buddha's life story, and I believe the fact that this *jātaka* ends with the Bodhisattva ascending to the Brahmā Realm instead of attaining nirvāṇa is only fitting. One crucial element that distinguishes the prince in this *jātaka* from the one in the Buddhacarita is that this prince never had the intense, confrontational experience of *saṃvega* that Prince Siddhārtha had when he first encountered old age, sickness, and death. While the Bodhisattva's saṃvegic experience was significant enough to propel him to give up the household life and retire to the forest, it did not provide him with the same type of drive for liberation that the Buddha possessed in his final birth.

The final remark I will make about the Ayogṛhajātaka concerns the role of *saṃvega* in the way this narrative is framed. This *jātaka* begins and ends with the following words:

> Even the luster of kingship does not conceal the path of the good for those whose mind was distressed (*saṃvigna*). Thus, one should be intimately acquainted with distress (*samvega*).[210]

This short passage tells us that the Ayogṛhajātaka is a text that aims to illustrate the significance of experiencing *saṃvega*. I would argue that this passage contains the first occurrence in this historical survey of using the term *saṃvega* in a highly specialized way. *Saṃvega* is understood here as a concept denoting a monumental event in the life of a Buddhist practitioner, a restless feeling with which any person aspiring to attain nirvāṇa should be familiar. Āryaśura is explicit about his intention to exemplify how *saṃvega* functions as the moment of transformation or conversion that sets one on "the path of the good." The significance of this is that Āryaśura sees *saṃvega* as a central Buddhist term worthy of being the focal point of a *jātaka* tale.

Another example of a story in the Jātakamālā where Āryaśura uses the term *saṃvega* in a noteworthy manner is the Birth Story of Brahmā (Brahmajātaka). This *jātaka*, much like the Ayogṛhajātaka, is framed as a story that illustrates the importance of *saṃvega*.

> And one should narrate this story when discussing the topic of spiritual alarm (*saṃvega*), saying: "In this way, the experience of spiritual alarm (*saṃvega*) quickly makes a person intent on the good."[211]

The function of *saṃvega*, according to this passage, is to straighten out those who have veered away from "the good" (*śreyas*). In this regard, the feeling of *saṃvega* in the Brahmajātaka is not exactly about motivating one to pursue liberation. Instead, it is a type of appropriate fear that

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[210] *rājalakṣmīrapi śreyomārgaṃ nāvṛṇoti saṃvignamānasānāmiti saṃvegaparicayaḥ kāryaḥ* (Jātakamālā 32.1).
[211] Jātakamālā 29.58 (tr. Meiland 2009, Vol 2: 297).

reorients one in the direction of the Dharma. To clarify the difference between these two ways of using *saṃvega*, I will briefly address the plot of the Birth Story of Brahmā. According to this *jātaka*, once there was a king called Aṅgadinna, who did not believe in the existence of karma and rebirth. At the time of his reign, the Bodhisattva, who was born in the Brahmā Realm, descended down to earth out of compassion and spoke to that king. He told Aṅgadinna that the existence of the next world is a fact, and that one can examine for oneself the workings of karma and the cycle of life and death. The Bodhisattva's elaborate explanations had no effect on Aṅgadinna. The king even mocked the Bodhisattva, telling him that karma and rebirth are simply stories meant for children. The Bodhisattva then provided a long and detailed account of the many horrible forms of suffering that beings are enduring in hell in each and every moment. This account brought about a sudden change in Aṅgadinna.

> The king felt alarmed (*saṃvega*) when he heard this terrifying account of hell. Abandoning his attachment to wrong views and acquiring faith in the next world, he bowed before the eminent seer and said:
>
> "My mind almost runs wild with fear
> at learning of the punishments in hell.
> It particularly burns with blazing thoughts
> regarding my plight on meeting that fate.
>
> Shortsightedly I trod the wrong path,
> my mind destroyed by evil views.
> Be then my path, recourse of the good!
> Be my resort and refuge, sage!"[212]

The king's fear of hell is what eventually enabled him to abandon his wrong views. According to this *jātaka*, all of the Bodhisattva's attempts to use reasoning to inspire change in the king were ineffective. Only by terrifying Aṅgadinna with descriptions of hell, the Bodhisattva was able to break through and finally reach the king on a more visceral level. Prior to his experience of *saṃvega*, the king remained closed and indifferent to the Bodhisattva's teaching. Yet after his saṃvegic experience the king did not only acquire faith, but a readiness to learn.

> The Bodhi·sattva saw that the king was deeply moved (*saṃvigna*), that his views had been corrected and that he had become a suitable vessel for learning the Teaching, so he compassionately instructed him as follows, like a father instructs a son or a teacher a pupil.[213]

In the Brahmajātaka, the Bodhisattva's saṃvegic intervention brought about a change in the king, yet it did not set him on the path of renunciation. At the end of this story, Aṅgadinna does not forsake his kingdom to become a mendicant. He simply realizes that his doings have consequences both in this life and in the next. *Saṃvega*, here, has more of a correctional function, as it positively reforms the king's views and actions. Perhaps one might say that this type of distressing experience works on a karmic register rather than a nirvāṇic one.

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[212] Jātakamālā 29.46-47 (tr. Meiland 2009, Vol 2: 289).
[213] Jātakamālā 29.49 (tr. Meiland 2009, Vol 2: 291).

2.3.5 Early Mahāyāna sources

The early Mahāyāna scriptures, which belong to the same time period as the rest of the Buddhist texts I have discussed so far, also make use of the term *saṃvega*. The Aṣṭasāhasrikā Prajñāpāramitā Sūtra (Perfection of Wisdom in Eight Thousand Lines), for example, employs the aforementioned trope of describing the suffering of those in hell as a means for provoking *saṃvega*. Yet what makes the Aṣṭasāhasrikā significant to this survey of saṃvegic occurrences is that it connects the practice of eliciting *saṃvega* to the mission of propagating the Mahāyāna movement and its innovative scriptures.

In the seventh chapter of Aṣṭasāhasrikā, the Buddha explains to his noble disciple Śariputra that those who reject the Perfection of Wisdom defame the Dharma, for lack of faith in the Mahāyāna scriptures is conducive to the decline of the Dharma. The Buddha then adds that people who claim that the Perfection of Wisdom is not the Buddha's word are destroying the welfare of sentient beings and are thus destined to be reborn in the terrible hell realms. When hearing of this, Śariputra asks the Buddha about the length of time a person who rejects the Perfection of Wisdom must spend in hell. Initially, the Buddha refuses to answer this question, yet after Śariputra poses it a second and third time, the Buddha says the following:

> The mere announcement of the measurelessness and magnitude of his pain will be a sufficient source of anxiety (*saṃvega*) to virtuous sons and daughters of good family. It will turn them away from activities conducive to the ruin of dharma, they will cause the formation of merit, and they will not reject the good dharma, even to save their lives, for they do not wish to meet with such pains.[214]

The feeling of saṃvegic anxiety in this scripture is a response to the possibility of enduring horrible suffering in hell as a result of accumulating bad karma. Yet in a more general sense, *saṃvega* is tied here to the threat of bringing about the demise of the Dharma by disregarding the teachings of the Mahāyāna. In this way, the Aṣṭasāhasrikā seems to interpret *saṃvega* as operating both on an individual and a collective level. The feeling of saṃvegic anxiety is crucial both for saving one from going to hell, as well as for saving the Dharma from total ruin.

Wrapping up this section on *saṃvega* in Buddhist sources, I would like to mention one more example of a Mahāyāna Buddhist text that speaks about the necessity of experiencing existential distress. Āryadeva's Catuḥśataka (Four Hundred Verses) is an important work of Mādhyamika philosophy that encapsulates the Buddhist concept of *saṃvega* nicely in one short verse.

> How can someone who has no fear (*udvega*) of this world have respect for tranquility?
> To leave this [cycle of] existence is as difficult as leaving one's own home.[215]

In the next section, I will discuss the technical meaning of *saṃvega* that we find, for example, in the Yogasūtra and the Abhidharma literature. Yet what is already apparent at this stage is that one main feature of the Buddhist concept of *saṃvega* is the view of this emotional experience as life-altering. The different examples of saṃvegic experiences I provided in this section, from the

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[214] Aṣṭasāhasrikā 7, 12.5-6 (tr. Conze 1975: 141).
[215] Catuḥśataka 8.12 (tr. Lang 1986: 83).

frightened bull to the pompous king, all regard *saṃvega* as a dramatic event that changes the trajectory of one's life for the better. The exemplary case of *saṃvega* remains, of course, the Buddha's initial encounter with suffering that set him on the path to liberation. Yet, what emerges from the large corpus of Sanskrit Buddhist literature is the concept of *saṃvega* as a turning point in one's life. This way of conceptualizing *saṃvega*, I would argue, is emblematic of Buddhist thought writ large.

3.3 Saṃvega in the Yogasūtra of Patañjali and the Abhidharmakośa-bhāṣya

The term *saṃvega* comes up in the first chapter of Patañjali's Yogasūtra,[216] in a segment that deals with the conditions and means for attaining an advanced stage of meditative trance (*saṃādhi*).[217] I will first provide a bit of context on what leads Patañjali to address *saṃvega* in this philosophical treatise. In aphorism 1.19, Patañjali states that "it (i.e., the meditative trance) is inborn for the disembodied beings (=gods) and those merged in their original nature."[218] That is to say, some special beings are simply born in the coveted state of *samādhi*. In the next aphorism (1.20), Patañjali immediately explains that "for others it is preceded by faith (*śraddhā*), energy (*vīrya*), mindfulness (*smṛti*), concentration (*saṃādhi*) and insight (*prajñā*)."[219] In other words, for those who attain this meditative trance through practice, these are the five-fold means (*upāyas*) that must be applied. With respect to this aphorism, Acri points out that Patañjali is making use here of technical Buddhist terms,[220] and Pradeep Gokhale takes this a step further, claiming that even the sequence in which Patañjali arranges these terms "is a reflection of what Asaṅga says in the Abhidharmasamuccaya."[221] It is quite apparent that this segment of the Yogasūtra is in dialogue with Buddhist doctrine, and this is relevant because the following verse (1.21) is where the term *saṃvega* appears.

> [This meditative trance] is near for those with intense fervor (*tīvra-saṃvega*).[222]

The question of what precisely the term *saṃvega* means here is difficult to explain. As Brekke remarks, neither Patañjali nor his commentators provide a positive definition of *saṃvega*.[223] However, given the strong presence of Buddhist terminology in this segment of the Yogasūtra, Gokhale makes the following comments about the use of *saṃvega* in aphorism 1.21 and the similar use of it in the Abhidharmakośa-bhāṣya:

> This idea has background in Buddhist meditative theory. Vasubandhu, for instance, says "One who produces the stages of fundamental meditation (*mauladhyāna*) with penetrative

[216] James Woods presents a lengthy argument for dating the Yogasūtra to the fourth century CE (Woods: 2003). His argument is widely accepted by contemporary scholars (Gokhale 2020: 17 n. 20). According to this dating, the Yogasūtra is contemporaneous with the works of the Buddhist philosopher Vasubandhu (Gokhale 2020: 8).
[217] There is ambiguity as to what type of *samādhi* Patañjali is referring to in aphorism 18 and the proceeding aphorisms that are directly linked to it. In his commentary on the Yogasūtra, Vyāsa calls this type of *samādhi* "contentless" (*asamprajñāta*), yet as Gokhale points out, "such a word is not used by Patañjali." Therefore, Gokhale suggests that "a better nomenclature of this type of *samādhi* would be *arūpasamādhi* rather than *asamprajñāta-samādhi*" (Gokhale 2020: 36).
[218] Yogasūtra 1.19 (tr. Gokhale 2020: 36).
[219] Yogasūtra 1.20 (tr. Gokhale 2020: 37).
[220] Acri 2015: 205-206.
[221] Gokhale 2020: 37.
[222] *tīvra-saṃvegānām āsannaḥ* (Yogasūtra 1.21)
[223] Brekke 2002: 82.

> aspect (*nirvedha*) invariably sees the noble truth in this very life, because he has intense fervor."[224] Vasubandhu uses the word *tīvrasaṁvegatvāt*, which is worth noting.[225]

According to Gokhale, Patañjali's emphasis on the practitioner's intense fervor (*saṃvega*) as a prerequisite for reaching advanced stages of meditation is most likely drawn from Buddhist lore. This claim by Gokhale regarding *saṃvega* in the Yogasūtra is part of his broader argument concerning the influence of Buddhist thought on Pātañjala Yoga, and more specifically, the necessity of reading the Yogasūtra in conjunction with Buddhist Abhidharma literature.

Yet, regardless of the question concerning the extent of Buddhist influence on Patañjali's Yogasūtra, what I wish to stress is the technical use of the term *saṃvega* in the texts of Patañjali and Vasubandhu. For starters, it is noteworthy that both philosophers qualify *saṃvega* as intense (*tīvra*). In aphorism 1.22, Patañjali further elaborates on this qualification of *saṃvega*, stating: "It is further differentiated on account of being mild, middling and intense."[226] If we interpret this aphorism according to Vyāsa's Yogasūtra-bhāṣya, then both the means (*upāya*) and the fervor (*saṃvega*) of the yogi can be classified as mild, middling, or intense. This produces a nine-fold classification which, as Gokhale highlights, is also found in Asaṅga and Vasubandhu.[227] The important point to glean from this is that *saṃvega* has different levels of intensity, and these levels typically determine how close or far one is from the coveted stage of meditative trance.

Brekke and Acri claim that for Patañjali, and I would add for Vasubandhu as well, *saṃvega* is a "quality."[228] The question is, what exactly does the term quality denote in this context? It does not seem appropriate, for example, to use the Aristotelian notion of quality when speaking of *saṃvega*. It is also worth noting that *saṃvega* does not appear on any of the scholastic Buddhist lists of mental factors (*caitasikas*), which include many of the good and bad qualities that one may possess. To get a better sense of why the term quality is relevant here, we should keep in mind that in the Pātañjala Yoga tradition, *saṃvega* is specifically understood as a quality rather than a means (*upāya*).[229] In texts like those of Patañjali and Vasubandhu, there is a variety of different terms that address the contemplative practices one should perform. These different terms all fall under the category of "the means" for attaining *samādhi*. However, the term *saṃvega* is different, for it aims to capture the quality of one's practice, which determines how fast one reaches the coveted state of meditative trance. Thus, *saṃvega* refers here to the degree of resolve, motivation, and drive that determines the effectiveness of one's practice.

So far in this survey, we saw that *saṃvega* has many different meanings and functions, yet none of them clearly indicated that we should understand *saṃvega* as a quality that one must possess in order to succeed in the practice of meditation. This specific interpretation of the term is what I would call the "technical meaning" of *saṃvega*. I believe this meaning is the direct result of a philosophical and scholastic endeavor to define, systematize, and clarify the complicated and

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224 Gokhale is translating here the following passage: "*yo mauladhyānabhūmikāni nirvedhabhāgīyāni utpādayati sa tatraiva janmani satyāni avaśyaṁ paśyati. tīvrasaṁvegatvāt*" (Abhidharmakośa-bhāṣya 5.22).
225 Gokhale 2020: 38.
226 Yogasūtra 1.20 (tr. Gokhale 2020: 38).
227 Gokhale 2020: 39.
228 Brekke states that in the Yogasūtra, *saṃvega* "is a quality that makes *samādhi* easier to attain" (Brekke 2002: 82). Acri 2015: 208-209.
229 Acri 2015: 208.

multifaceted use of the word *saṃvega* in early Buddhist texts. It is undeniable that the technical meaning of *saṃvega* is prevalent in the vast corpus of Buddhist literature. Having said that, one should avoid projecting this technical meaning on the occurrences of the word *saṃvega* in the Pāli canon and some of the early paracanonical Buddhist texts.[230] This is an issue I will be revisiting in the later chapters of this dissertation, as I explore the meaning of *saṃvega* in early Buddhist scripture.

Returning to the Yogasūtra, I strongly agree with Acri that even the technical use of *saṃvega* as a quality necessary to succeed in meditation still echoes the meaning of this term in early Buddhist literature, where it mostly refers to a distressing feeling provoked by the vicissitudes of *saṃsāra*.[231] Acri also mentions that in Vācaspati Miśra's commentary on the Yogasūtra, the term *saṃvega* is glossed with *vairāgya*. This is particularly interesting since *vairāgya* is a key term in the Yogasūtra that is used in a technical sense which does not seem interchangeable with the way *saṃvega* is used in this text. Therefore, I believe what Vācaspati Miśra wishes to convey with this gloss is that, in a broader sense, *saṃvega* resembles the general meaning that *vairāgya* has in classical Sanskrit literature. This, of course, begs the question: what exactly does *vairāgya* mean? Arindam Chakrabarti offers the following explanation of this elusive Sanskrit term:

> *Vairāgya*, has been defined as the state of feeling "*No more of all that*" about worldly joys. Now, this *vairāgya* is a very special feeling or cognitive emotive state which is absolutely central to the Indian religious/spiritual attitude towards life, a state which, perhaps, is intended to be brought about in the reader of the great epic *Mahābhārata* as a whole. It is the quiet and profound recognition of the valuelessness or emptiness of the transient goods of this finite physical world. It is this state which is supposed to flow from a true awareness of the exact nature of things. It does not consist in any *hatred* towards this world, or any *yearning* for a heavenly or beatific hereafter. It is a state beyond hatred and yearning, a state of "colourlessness" – loss of concern – for everything transitory. It is extremely difficult to discursively convey the idea of *vairāgya* in terms of any Western psychological concept.[232]

4. Conclusion

There is no singular answer to the question: what is the meaning of *saṃvega*. The reason for that, as I have shown in this chapter, is the wide variety of meanings the root *saṃ-vij* has in classical Sanskrit literature. In some cases, *saṃvega* denotes a specific emotion such as fear, sorrow, anger, or shame. In other cases, it refers to the capacity one has to be affected, stirred, agitated, afflicted, or distressed. Even with regard to each one of these distinct meanings of the word, it is apparent that *saṃvega* covers a fairly broad semantic range. From a historical perspective, we can safely say that the interpretation of the word *saṃvega* changed significantly from the Vedic period to the time of Patañjali's Yogasūtra. And yet, I recognize a thread that connects even the most distinct applications of the root *saṃ-vij* in classical Sanskrit literature. Thus, part of the challenge of

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[230] Bodhi (2012: 40) for example, states in the introduction of his translation to the AN, that *saṃvega* is a "quality." I think this way of understanding *saṃvega* is partly the result of applying the technical meaning of *saṃvega*, found in the later Abhidharma literature, to the occurrences of this term in the Pāli suttas.

[231] Acri 2015: 209.

[232] Chakrabarti 1988: 332-322.

grasping what *saṃvega* means involves holding onto all that is weaved together in this complex concept.

There is also no simple answer to the question: what is the nature of *saṃvega*. That is to say, in classical Sanskrit literature, the term *saṃvega* refers to various types of phenomena. *Saṃvega* is a visceral response and an intellectual realization. It denotes different types of emotional phenomena, from a sudden feeling of shock to a pervasive mood that changes one's entire outlook. It is an existential crisis and a moment of conversion. It is a state one enters and a quality one possesses. It is an overwhelming experience as well as an empowering rite of passage. It is a mode of apprehending the world and a manner in which the world reveals itself. There is no shortage of ways to characterize or categorize what *saṃvega* is, and I believe the task of conceptualizing *saṃvega* is both necessary and, to some extent, impossible.

This survey of *saṃ-vij* also revealed that *saṃvega* can be good or bad, and in certain cases, something that is both good and bad at once. When *saṃvega* is presented as a terrifying feeling that causes one great distress it is a negative phenomenon. When it is considered to be the intense fervor that enables one to succeed in contemplative practices it is positive. When it is described as a deep feeling of despair that follows one's encounter with the reality of impermanence and suffering, it is rendered a negative experience that is beneficial in the grand scheme of things. Perhaps one might regard the Buddhist concept of *saṃvega* as beyond the duality of good and bad, yet I personally prefer to think of it as both good and bad.

In the following chapters, I will analyze a selection of early Buddhist scriptures in order to explore the notion of *saṃvega* that emerges from these canonical texts. In so doing, I will be thinking of *saṃvega* as an open-ended concept that can reveal different facets of early Buddhist thought. In particular, my focus will be on what *saṃvega* can tell us about the Buddhist conception of emotions.

The Lion Sutta: *Saṃvega* as the Ideal Emotional Response

1. Introduction

Most Buddhist scriptures focus on what the Buddha taught. The Lion Sutta (Sīhasutta)[233] is an exception, for it centers on the proper response to the Buddha's Dharma. The teaching of this sutta is encapsulated in the concept of *saṃvega*–an emotional response that foreshadows a profound transformation of one's being. In the Lion Sutta, the Buddha's word is compared to the lion's roar, a common analogy in Buddhist literature that stresses the power of the Buddha and his teaching. Yet in this text, a spotlight is cast on the different beings that hear the lion and the Buddha. Trembling out of fear, these beings seem helpless in their frantic response. Nevertheless, it is precisely in this anxious and fragile state, also known as *saṃvega*, that the Buddha and the lion make the most substantial impact on those who hear them roar.

According to the Lion Sutta, the Buddha's principle realization about the impermanent nature of reality is shocking and even terrifying. This scripture wishes to establish a dramatic view of the Buddha's insight, inviting the reader or listener to respond to the Buddha's teaching with the proper emotional intensity and existential dread. The prospect of inviting a person to experience an emotional upheaval might strike some as odd. Nonetheless, I believe this is precisely what the Lion Sutta sets out to accomplish. I use here the rhetoric of extending an invitation because the text employs a subtle and complex strategy to provoke this type of response from its audience. As I will explain in the following pages, this strategy involves a mimetic relationship between the audience that is embedded in the scripture itself and the potential audience that might hear or read this text. In the Lion Sutta, the mighty gods serve as an "embedded audience" that reacts strongly to the Buddha's word, which in turn, invites any listener or the reader of this scripture, i.e., the "potential audience," to respond to the Buddha's teaching in a similar manner.

The Lion Sutta also briefly touches on the matter of what makes the Buddha's teaching on the reality of impermanence so evocative and potentially transformative. Beyond the psychological difficulty of coming to terms with one's mortality and the transient nature of things, the sutta points to an existential predicament that makes human beings especially vulnerable to the Buddha's uncompromising truth. Situated between the animals that run for shelter when hearing the lion's roar and the long-living gods who tremble in their heavenly palaces when hearing the Buddha's word, human beings find themselves particularly exposed with no place to hide when the Tathāgata-lion delivers his discourse on impermanence. As I will show in this chapter, this is only one of the philosophical themes that the Lion Sutta invokes. The minimalistic style of this scripture makes it hard at times to appreciate the variety of Buddhist tropes and notions the text encompasses. Fortunately, the Pāli commentary on this sutta discloses the scripture's many layers of meaning and expands the discussion on this text with its illuminating exegetical interventions.

The Aṭṭhakathā commentary on the Lion Sutta is a remarkable work of Pāli Buddhist literature.[234] It combines keen exegetical observations with narrative segments and beautiful

[233] AN 4.33 and SN 22.78. There are two versions of the Lion Sutta in the Pāli canon that are nearly identical. For a complete translation of these versions see Appendix A.

[234] The first layer of Pāli commentary on the Lion Sutta is the Sīhasutta-vaṇṇanā, which is located in the AN's Catukkanipāta-aṭṭhakathā. This commentary is also found in the SN's Khandhavagga-aṭṭhakathā. There are a couple of passages in the AN version of this commentary that do not appear in the SN version. Aside from that, these two

similes. Regardless of whether one finds the Aṭṭhakathā's reading of the Lion Sutta compelling or not, this Pāli commentary is an extremely insightful Buddhist text. In particular, the Aṭṭhakathā has much to offer to the study of *saṃvega* and the Buddhist conception of emotions. There is also a second layer of Pāli commentary on the Lion Sutta, i.e., the Ṭīkā,[235] which primarily expounds on the Aṭṭhakathā. In my analysis of the Lion Sutta and its notion of *saṃvega*, the Pāli commentarial literature comes to play a crucial role. From a methodological standpoint, the extensive attention I dedicate to the Pāli commentaries is the main factor that separates my work on the Lion Sutta from the work of other scholars who explored this scripture.

The Lion Sutta is the most widely referenced text in the contemporary scholarship on the Buddhist concept of *saṃvega*.[236] This sutta is a testament to the great value early Buddhist doctrine assigns to certain experiences of fear and terror. I believe the main reason the Lion Sutta gained popularity among scholars interested in *saṃvega* is twofold. First, this scripture consistently uses the term *saṃvega* along with two other Pāli terms—*bhaya* (fear) and *santāsa* (trembling). In so doing, this text positions *saṃvega* within a matrix of related terms that grants the reader a better understanding of what *saṃvega* actually means. Usually, the traditional commentary takes on the task of glossing an important term with other words that give the reader a better sense of what the glossed term means. In the case of the Lion Sutta, the scripture itself already has this exegetical feature built into it. The second and more significant reason this scripture is so valuable to the study of *saṃvega* has to do with the way the text uses the broad semantic range of this term. In the first part of the Lion Sutta, *saṃvega* describes how the different animals respond to the lion's intimidating roar. This use of *saṃvega* reaches back to one of the earliest applications of this term in Vedic literature,[237] where *saṃvega* depicts the terrified state of a small animal that spots a fearsome predator.[238] In the second part of the sutta, however, *saṃvega* describes the shock and distress of the gods when they hear the Buddha's teaching and realize they are impermanent. The gods' *saṃvega* shares a fundamental element with the animals' primal fear, yet it also expands the semantic range of this term, infusing the concept of *saṃvega* with a strong cognitive dimension. The Lion Sutta's ability to artfully tie together these different meanings of *saṃvega* is one major factor that makes this text intriguing.

The study of the Lion Sutta in contemporary scholarship has laid down the groundwork for exploring the notion of *saṃvega* that emerges from this text. Having said that, in this chapter, I raise a variety of questions about this text and its understanding of *saṃvega* that have yet to receive careful attention. Some of these questions focus on the nuances of the Lion Sutta, such as what should one make of the various saṃvegic responses of the different animals that hear the lion's roar? What do we know about the gods who find the Buddha's teaching absolutely shocking? And what specific formulation of the Buddha's teaching appears in this scripture? Fortunately, the Pāli commentary directly addresses all of these questions. Thus, my discussion of these types of issues

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versions of the commentary on the Lion Sutta are nearly identical. For my complete translation of the AN version of the Lion Sutta's first layer of commentary, see Appendix B. Henceforth, I refer to this commentary as the Aṭṭhakathā.

[235] The second layer of Pāli commentary is located in the Catukkanipāta-ṭīkā. Moving forward, I refer to this commentary as the Tīkā. The second layer of commentary (i.e., the Tīkā) is intended to illuminate the first layer (i.e., the Aṭṭhakathā), much like the first layer of commentary aims to illuminate the root text (i.e., the sutta).

[236] Brekke 2002; Heim 2003; Giustarini 2012: Acri 2015; Walker 2018; and Liang and Morseth 2021.

[237] Acri 2015: 203.

[238] See Atharvaveda 5.21.6. For my analysis of this verse from the Atharvaveda, see pp. 25-27.

will lean heavily on the traditional Buddhist exegesis. On the other hand, there are broader philosophical questions that I will tackle in my reading of the Lion Sutta, which the commentary only brushes up against, such as what can the responsive character of *saṃvega* tell us about the Buddhist conception of emotions? What is the relationship between the feeling of *saṃvega* and the quest to understand the nature of things? And how does the saṃvegic experience shape one's attitude towards death?

My analysis of the Lion Sutta in this chapter is divided according to the structure of this canonical text. The sutta can be easily broken down into five segments. The first four are composed in prose and the fifth segment is in verse. In terms of its content, the first segment of the text focuses on the lion, and the second segment on how the lion affects the animals that hear his mighty roar. As I will show in my treatment of these two segments, the Pāli commentary sheds an interesting light on each one of the lion's actions, as well as on the different animals that react to the lion's roar. The third and fourth segments of the text focus on the Buddha's teaching and the gods' response to his teaching respectively. According to the commentary, this is the most significant part of the scripture, and unsurprisingly, it also has the most to say about the concept of *saṃvega* in Buddhist thought. The fifth and final segment of the Lion Sutta summarizes the contents of this scripture in a few short verses. From an exegetical and philosophical standpoint, this is the least substantial part of the text; nevertheless, it raises questions about the compositional history of this scripture and other issues that are pertinent to the study of *saṃvega*.

2. Translation[239]

The lion, monks, the king of beasts, comes out of his den in the evening time. He starches out, surveys the four directions all around him, and roars his lion's roar three times. [Then] he sets out [in search] of food.

Now, monks, whatever animals hear the roar of the lion, the king of beasts, for the most part, are faced with fear, distress (*saṃvega*), and trembling. The hole dwellers enter their holes; the water dwellers enter the water; the forest dwellers enter the forest; and the birds take to the sky. Even, monks, those royal elephants bound by firm straps and binds in the villages, towns, and royal cities, burst and tear apart these binds. Frightened, they urinate and defecate, then flee in every direction. So powerful among the animals, monks, is the lion, the king of beasts, so majestic and mighty.

In the same way, monks, when the Tathāgata arises in the world, an *arahant*, perfectly awakened, accomplished in true knowledge and conduct, a *sugata*, knower of worlds, unsurpassed trainer of persons to be tamed, instructor of gods and humans, a buddha, the Blessed One, he teaches the Dharma: (1) Such is individual existence, (2) such is the origin of individual existence, (3) such is the cessation of individual existence, (4) such is the method leading to the cessation of individual existence.

When the gods, monks, who are long-living, beautiful, abundantly happy, and [accustomed to staying] for long periods of time in heavenly palaces hear the Tathāgata's teaching of the Dharma, for the most part, they are faced with fear, distress (*saṃvega*), and trembling. [These gods proclaim:] "It appears that truly we are impermanent, yet we considered ourselves permanent; it appears that truly we are unstable, yet we considered ourselves stable; it appears that truly we are non-eternal, yet we considered ourselves eternal. Truly we are impermanent, unstable, and non-

[239] Following is a translation of the AN version of the Lion Sutta (AN 4.33).

eternal, taking part in individual existence." So powerful, monks, is the Tathāgata in the world along with its gods, so majestic and mighty.

When the Buddha, through higher knowledge, set in motion the wheel of Dharma,
the teacher, the incomparable person in this world along with its gods,
[preached] individual existence, cessation, the origin of individual existence,
and the noble eightfold path leading to the alleviation of suffering.

Then, even those gods who are long-living, beautiful and glorious,
became fearful and trembled, just like the animals [when they hear the roar] of the lion.
"We do not transcend individual existence, truly we are impermanent,"
[the gods proclaimed] after hearing the speech of the *arahant*, the steadfast one who is liberated.

3. Framing the Lion Sutta

The Lion Sutta and its notion of *saṃvega* revolve around a comparison between the Buddha and the lion. Before I elaborate on this comparison, the Aṭṭhakathā draws our attention to the fact that in the Pāli canon we find a number of instances where the Buddha likens himself to a certain figure or being. According to the commentary, these are all different designations (*adhivacana*) for the Buddha. In addition to the lion, the Aṭṭhakathā mentions canonical examples where the Buddha speaks of himself as a physician, a Brahmin, a king, and one who shows the way. Each one of these designations aims to underline certain characteristics of the Buddha. In the case of the lion designation, the commentary specifically mentions two additional suttas, AN, 5.99 and AN 10.21, in which the Buddha likens himself to a lion. I believe the main reason the Aṭṭhakathā mentions these suttas is that they explicitly state that "the lion, monks, is a designation for the Tathāgata."[240] Furthermore, like the scripture on which I focus in this chapter (AN 4.33), the two aforementioned suttas are also called "Lion Sutta." Nonetheless, when comparing these two suttas to the main scripture I am concerned with here, it becomes apparent that they highlight different aspects of the Buddha-lion simile.

In AN 5.99, the text draws a comparison between the manner in which the lion strikes the different animals in the wilderness and how the Buddha teaches the different people of the world. The basic premise of this comparison sheds light on the idea that the Buddha's teaching intends to provoke shock and fear. The logic of this analogy is that hearing the Buddha preach the Dharma is like receiving a blow from a lion. This is a powerful image conveying the notion that the Buddha's word warrants a saṃvegic response.

Looking more closely at the Buddha-lion comparison made in AN 5.99, the text places an emphasis on two specific characteristics that the Buddha and the lion share in common. The first one is the respectful manner in which these two majestic beings conduct themselves. When the lion strikes the different animals he does so with respect, much like the Buddha respectfully teaches the different people of the world. The Pāli commentary on this sutta explains that in this context, acting "respectfully" (*sakkaccaṃ*) means with no contempt and no transgression. In saying so, the commentary first clarifies that even if the lion causes another animal distress when he strikes, or, if the Buddha causes someone anguish when he teaches, both do so with no contempt whatsoever

[240] *sīhoti kho, bhikkhave, tathāgatassetaṃ adhivacanaṃ.*

for any sentient being. Furthermore, when the commentary states that both the Buddha and the lion refrain from transgressing, it sets out to make another intriguing point, which is that according to this sutta, the lion delivers his blows respectfully, not necessarily out of respect for other animals, but out of respect for his own training. Similarly, the Buddha teaches other people respectfully, not necessarily out of respect for all sentient beings, but out of respect for the Dharma itself. In this sense, both the lion and the Buddha adhere first and foremost to their respective codes of conduct.

The second characteristic AN 5.99 highlights is the lack of discrimination both the Buddha and the lion demonstrate with regard to those with whom they make contact. The sutta states that the lion strikes the different animals with respect, regardless of whether they are big or small, strong or weak. Similarly, the Buddha respectfully teaches different people, regardless of whether they are male or female, monks or lay followers. The sutta states that the Buddha remains equally respectful even when teaching hunters and other such persons who carry out professions that involve what Buddhists traditionally considered to be transgressive behavior. In short, AN 5.99 is a good example of a sutta that uses the Buddha-lion simile to highlight more than the obvious majestic and powerful nature of these two beings.

AN 10.21 is an example of a sutta that states repeatedly that when the Buddha teaches the Dharma in the assembly, "this is his lion's roar" (*idaṃ assa hoti sīhanādasmiṃ*). This raises the question of what it means, in this context, to qualify someone's teaching or statement as "his lion's roar." In classical Indian literature, "the lion's roar" is a prevalent expression that refers to a declaration or utterance that the speaker is willing to defend in public. This prevalent expression has its roots in the ancient Brahmanical tradition of challenging another person's claims in a debate.[241] Anālayo explains that in early Buddhist texts, the content of the lion's roar is the Buddha's teaching on the impermanent nature of things. Like the lion's roar, the Buddha's truth claim about impermanence is considered a fearless assertion. Moreover, the Buddha's philosophical teaching instills fear in the hearts of others, just like the lion's roar deeply frightens the different animals in the forest. For the Buddhist practitioner, the saṃvegic fear elicited by the Buddha's teaching can and should have a motivating function. It propels one to pursue the Buddhist path with vigor and urgency. Thus, Anālayo claims that in the Buddhist tradition, the lion's roar becomes much more than an utterance one makes in a polemical discussion. Perhaps it is better characterized as a teaching strategy aimed at "stirring up" others for the sake of leading them to liberation.[242]

There are two nearly identical versions of the Lion Sutta with which I am concerned in this chapter. One version appears in the AN (4.33) and the other in the SN (22.78). So far, I have considered a couple of suttas from the AN, which the commentary highlights for the sake of contextualizing the Buddha-lion comparison and placing it in a broader early Buddhist exegetical framework. I would like now to briefly discuss how the SN can also help contextualize this scripture. While the Pāli commentary does not link this sutta directly to any other scripture in the SN, the Dutiyārhant Sutta,[243] which directly precedes the Lion Sutta in this compilation of

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[241] Manné 1996: 32.
[242] Anālayo 2009: 7.
[243] SN 22.77. The title of this text can be translated as "The Second Arahants Sutta." The sutta is called thus because it celebrates the figure of the arhat. It is named "the second" because this sutta actually appears in its entirety as part of the preceding sutta, which is called "The Arahants Sutta."

scriptures, has a strong thematic connection to it. Like the Lion Sutta, this scripture deals with the Buddha's teaching on impermanence. More crucially, this scripture elaborates on the relationship this teaching has with the emotions that condition one's attainment of nirvāṇa. Here is Bodhi's translation of this short sutta:

> At Sāvatthi. "Bhikkhus, form is impermanent. What is impermanent is suffering. What is suffering is nonself. What is nonself should be seen as it really is with correct wisdom thus: 'This is not mine, this I am not, this is not my self.'
>
> "Feeling is impermanent…. Perception is impermanent….Volitional formations are impermanent…. Consciousness is impermanent. What is impermanent is suffering. What is suffering is nonself. What is nonself should be seen as it really is with correct wisdom thus: 'This is not mine, this I am not, this is not my self.'
>
> "Seeing thus, bhikkhus, the instructed noble disciple experiences revulsion towards form, revulsion towards feeling, revulsion towards perception, revulsion towards volitional formations, revulsion towards consciousness. Experiencing revulsion, he becomes dispassionate. Through dispassion [his mind] is liberated. When it is liberated there comes the knowledge: 'It's liberated.' He understands: 'Destroyed is birth, the holy life has been lived, what had to be done has been done, there is no more for this state of being.'
>
> "To whatever extent, bhikkhus, there are abodes of beings, even up to the pinnacle of existence, these are the foremost in the world, these are the best, that is, the arahants."[244]

There are four Buddhist doctrinal elements that come up in this sutta that I would like to address briefly, for they will prove useful for my discussion of the Lion Sutta in the following pages. The first element is the five aggregates (*skandhas*), namely, form, feeling, recognition, volitional formations, and consciousness. In early Buddhist thought, the five aggregates are a prevalent scheme that divides the psychophysical make-up of an individual person or being into five heaps of phenomena. This scheme is an integral part of the early Buddhist critique of the self. The five aggregates present a dynamic and nuanced picture of the different processes that constitute a human being, while refraining from assuming the existence of an enduring self. In this sutta, it is worth noting that impermanence is not simply presented as a characteristic of every existing thing. Instead, the Buddha's teaching on impermanence is applied specifically to the individual person through the focus on the five aggregates. As I will show later in this chapter, a similar move occurs in the Lion Sutta.

The second significant doctrinal element in the sutta quoted above is the placement of impermanence within the scheme of the three marks (*tri-lakṣaṇa*) of existence. According to this Buddhist scheme, the phenomenal world or better yet *saṃsāra* is characterized by three marks – impermanence, suffering, and no-self. In this sutta, the three marks are applied to each of the five aggregates for the sake of showing that none of the psychophysical heaps of phenomena that make up a person should be seen as an enduring self.[245]

The third element I would like to emphasize in this sutta is the most pertinent one considering my interest in *saṃvega* and the Buddhist conception of emotions. In this scripture, the

[244] Bodhi 2000: 912-913.

[245] In the case of the individual person, change in the form of aging, sickness, and death is identified with suffering. In the Dutiyārhant Sutta, suffering itself is considered an impersonal phenomenon that has no enduring self or permanent essence.

ideal Buddhist disciple who realizes that the aggregates are impermanent and devoid of a self is expected to experience "revulsion" (*nibbidā*) towards these heaps of phenomena that constitute his being. This revulsion is then transformed into "dispassion" (*virāga*), which in turn, leads to liberation.[246] Like *saṃvega*, revulsion and dispassion also play a significant role in facilitating one's progress on the path to nirvāṇa. According to the causal sequence we find in this sutta, these emotions actually condition one's attainment of liberation. However, unlike *saṃvega*, revulsion and dispassion seem to belong to more advanced stages on the Path. Notice that these emotions appear in this sutta only after the disciple sees things as they truly are and realizes there is no self to be found in the five aggregates. This differs from *saṃvega*, which typically appears as an initial response to the Buddha's word or to the reality of impermanence and suffering. *Saṃvega* is often portrayed in the Pāli canon as that which precedes or accompanies one's understanding of the transient nature of things, unlike revulsion and dispassion which are presented here as emotional states that follow this act of understanding. Having stressed the distinction between these emotions, it is worth acknowledging that in a broader sense, regardless of the specific role the tradition assigns to distress, revulsion, and dispassion, it is clear that in early Buddhist doctrine, understanding the truth and attaining liberation requires experiencing these intense emotions.

The last doctrinal element I will highlight in the sutta quoted above is the preeminent status of the arhat. In this text, the Buddha ends by asserting that in the entire cosmos, no being should be deemed better than his awakened disciples who are known as arhats. Even the gods who belong to the highest sphere of sentient existence[247] are regarded as inferior to the arhats. This theme is further developed in the Lion Sutta, as the gods' frightened response to the Dharma reveals the vulnerability of these powerful beings and their inferiority in comparison to the Buddha.

4. The lion of the Lion Sutta

The Lion Sutta begins with a step-by-step account of the lion's evening routine. This account starts with the lion coming out of his den at night and ends with him roaring before setting out in search of prey.

> The lion, monks, the king of beasts, comes out of his den in the evening time. He starches out, surveys the four directions all around him, and roars his lion's roar three times. [Then] he sets out [in search] of food.[248]

An identical description of this sequence of events is found in several other Buddhist scriptures that revolve around the Buddha-lion comparison.[249] On the face of it, there is nothing particularly remarkable about this mundane description of the lion's nocturnal activities. However, the Pāli commentary on the Lion Sutta infuses each of the lion's movements with special meaning and expounds on the nuances of the lion's behavior and the intentions behind some of his actions.[250]

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[246] On *nirveda* and *vairāgya* in classical Indian thought, see Heim 2022: 212.
[247] Bodhi 2000: 1068, n. 99.
[248] *sīho, bhikkhave, migarājā sāyaṇhasamayaṃ āsayā nikkhamati. āsayā nikkhamitvā vijambhati. vijambhitvā samantā catuddisā anuviloketi. samantā catuddisā anuviloketvā tikkhattuṃ sīhanādaṃ nadati. tikkhattuṃ sīhanādaṃ naditvā gocarāya pakkamati*.
[249] See for example the opening of AN 5.99 and AN 10.21.
[250] Another interesting feature of the Aṭṭhakathā is its use of fourfold explanations. I believe that since the Lion Sutta appears in the AN's Book of Fours, which is a collection of Buddhist scriptures that includes fourfold teachings, the commentary attempts to provide various fourfold explanations of different elements in the sutta.

In so doing, the commentary breathes new life into this segment of the text, and more specifically, it begins to illuminate the concept of *saṃvega*.

The first element the Aṭṭhakathā comments on is the species to which the lion of the Lion Sutta belongs. The scripture begins by modifying the lion as the "king of beasts" (*miga-rājā*), and the commentary explains that this modification is necessary because there are different animals that fall under the "lion" (*sīha*) classification. For example, the Aṭṭhakathā mentions the "grass lion" (*tiṇa-sīha*), which is a gray-colored animal that resembles a cow and subsists on grass. The commentary then goes on to mention other such types of lions, only to stress that in this sutta, the Buddha likens himself to a "maned lion" (*kesara-sīha*), the king of all species of animals.

Next, the sutta states that the lion comes out of his den in the evening time. According to the commentary, the lion steps out of his luxurious cave[251] only when he is bothered (*pīḷita*) by something. In this case, for instance, he is said to be hungry. After exiting the cave, the lion stretches his body. The Aṭṭhakathā addresses the specific bodily posture the lion assumes, and adds that as the lion stretches, he "shakes of the dust that clings to his body" (*sarīralaggaṃ rajaṃ vidhunanto*). This is noteworthy, for the dust imagery in general and the phrasing we find here in particular come up in some of the early Buddhist representations of *saṃvega*. As I show in Chapter Five, for example, the Isolation Sutta poetically articulates the experience of *saṃvega* as one that allows the monk to shake off the "dust of desire" like a flick of the wings enables the bird to shake off the dust from its body. Thus, the Aṭṭhakathā's description of the lion stretching and shaking off the dust subtly invokes a canonical image associated with *saṃvega*.

After stretching out and just before he roars his roar, the lion takes a moment to look around and survey the four directions. The commentary interjects here to raise the question of "why the lion surveys the four directions," to which it provides this surprising answer:

> Out of kindness for others. For when he roars the lion's roar, elephants, antelopes and other non-violent creatures that walk on steep rocks, pits, and other such uneven surfaces, fall down these steep rocks and pits. [Therefore, the lion] surveys [the four directions] out of kindness for those non-violent animals. [Should one] use the term "kindness" with respect to this fierce eater of the flesh of other [animals]? Indeed [one should].[252]

The commentary then proceeds to discuss how the lion displays kindness even in his practice of killing living beings. For example, the lion refrains from killing and feasting on small animals, thus showing mercy towards those that are clearly no match for him physically. The emphasis here on the lion's display of kindness despite his fierceness, reflects a certain Buddhist ideal that also pertains to the Buddha himself. The Buddha's teaching of the Dharma is the ultimate act of kindness; nonetheless, the Buddha is considered fierce as a lion and the truth he speaks elicits saṃvegic terror from even the most powerful of gods. The combination of fierceness and kindness is an aspect of the Buddha's figure that is articulated here through the comparison to the lion.

[251] The Aṭṭhakathā explains that the lion dwells in a "golden cave or a red stone cave with silver gems and crystals" (*suvaṇṇaguhato vā rajatamaṇiphalikamanosilāguhato vā*).
[252] *tasmiṃ kira sīhanādaṃ nadante papātāvāṭādīsu visamaṭṭhānesu carantā hatthigokaṇṇamahiṃsādayo pāṇā papātepi āvāṭepi patanti, tesaṃ anuddayāya anuviloketi. kiṃ panassa luddassa paramaṃsakhādino anuddayā nāma atthīti? āma atthi* (Catukkanipāta-aṭṭhakathā 33).

This opening segment of the Lion Sutta ends with the lion roaring his roar three times and then setting out in search of food. The Aṭṭhakathā qualifies the lion's roar as "fearless" (*abhīta*), and states that all species of bipeds and quadrupeds within a distance of three *yojanas* of the lion are incapable of standing still when they hear his mighty roar. This involuntary bodily reaction to the lion's roar is a primal aspect of these animals' saṃvegic shock. As I will highlight shortly, this visceral feature of *saṃvega* is apparent in the sutta as well. The commentary further adds that the lion displays his kindness once again in the very act of roaring. While the lion's roar is both fearless and fearsome, it serves as a warning to the many animals that wish to hide from the king of beasts.[253]

5. **The saṃvegic response to the lion's roar**

The second segment of the Lion Sutta is where the term *saṃvega* makes its first appearance. This segment begins with the Buddha stating that "whatever animals hear the roar of the lion, the king of beasts, for the most part, are faced with fear, distress (*saṃvega*), and trembling." The Aṭṭhakathā comments on this statement, focusing primarily on the expression "for the most part" (*yebhuyyena*).

> "**For the most part**," i.e., mostly. "**Fear**, **trembling**, **and distress** (***saṃvega***)." [In the following lines, the sutta mentions] in particular all of those who [experience] mental terror, for having heard the sound of the lion, many are afraid and few are not afraid. [But] who are those [few]? The lion has as its equal the thoroughbred elephant, the thoroughbred horse, the thoroughbred bull, the thoroughbred person, and the one whose influxes are destroyed.[254]

The first thing to notice here is that the commentary practically glosses the emotional trio of fear (*bhaya*), trembling (*santāsa*), and *saṃvega* with the term "mental terror" (*citta-utrāsa*). Simply put, these three terms are taken together to express a strong feeling of terror that most beings experience when they hear the lion's roar. Moreover, the commentary's use of the term "mental terror," suggests that *saṃvega* and the other emotions mentioned here are first and foremost regarded as mental (*citta*) states.[255] This is not trivial, for in other Buddhist and non-Buddhist texts, *saṃvega* is distinctly associated with the body (*rūpa*) rather than the mind (*mānasa*). Even in the Lion Sutta itself, the distressed royal elephants soil themselves after hearing the lion's roar, indicating that their *saṃvega* clearly has a dominant physical component.[256]

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[253] Having made himself apparent to those around him, the lion, according to the Aṭṭhakathā, begins to move swiftly through his terrain, then, he stops for a moment to listen to the echo of his roar.

[254] ***yebhuyyenā****ti pāyena.* ***bhayaṃ santāsaṃ saṃvega****nti sabbaṃ cittutrāsasseva nāmaṃ. sīhassa hi saddaṃ sutvā bahū bhāyanti, appakā na bhāyanti. ke pana teti? samasīho hatthājānīyo assājānīyo usabhājānīyo purisājānīyo khīṇāsavoti* (Catukkanipāta-aṭṭhakathā 33).

[255] There is also the possibility of translating the Pāli compound *citta-utrāsa* as "having terror in one's heart," which would be a way of softening the emphasis on the "mental" as opposed to the "physical" nature of this state. However, considering the way *citta-utrāsa* is used in other parts of this commentary, I believe the translation of "mental terror" makes the most sense.

[256] In the next chapter, as I discuss the Attadaṇḍa Sutta, I will contend that the Buddhist concept of *saṃvega* is best understood in existential terms since it is a state that not only transforms one's mind but also one's body and the entire world one inhabits.

The bulk of this quoted passage from the Aṭṭhakathā focuses on the few beings that are not afraid of the lion's roar. The commentary expounds here on *saṃvega* by addressing the exceptional beings who do not experience this emotion. The Aṭṭhakathā considers the sutta's use of the expression "for the most part" as an opportunity to mention five types of powerful beings that are equal to the lion. It is worth noting that there is a significant distinction made here between those five types of fearless beings. While the commentary qualifies the first four as "thoroughbreds" (*ājānīya*), the fifth fearless being is described as one "whose influxes were destroyed" (*khīṇa-āsava*), which is a technical Buddhist term referring to a liberated being (i.e., an arhat). In the following lines, the commentary digs deeper into the distinction between the thoroughbred beings that do not fear the lion, and the special fearlessness of the one whose influxes are destroyed.

> Why are they not afraid? As long as one is equal to the lion, [thinking,] "I am equal in terms of genus, clan, family, and valor," one does not fear [the lion]. The [thoroughbreds] beginning with the thoroughbred elephant are not afraid because of the strength [rooted] in the view of their individual existence. [However,] the person whose influxes were destroyed is unafraid because he has abandoned the view of individual existence [itself].[257]

The argument here is that the thoroughbred beings do not fear the lion because they consider themselves to be strong individuals who are equal to the lion in power. The precise phrasing of the commentary in this instance is noteworthy. Instead of alluding to the physical dimensions and capacities of these thoroughbreds as the source of their strength, the Aṭṭhakathā states that the power of these beings is rooted in a certain view of their individual existence (*sakkāya-diṭṭhi*). The Ṭīkā takes this point further claiming that the fearlessness of these thoroughbreds results from a sense of self marked by the arrogance of strength. To put it simply, the first four powerful beings, beginning with the thoroughbred elephant, do not fear the lion because of their perception of themselves. This perception presupposes a belief in the existence of an enduring self, and in contrast to this belief, the commentary then explains that the fearlessness of the one whose influxes are destroyed, stems from his abandonment of the view that there is a self. In this passage, the Aṭṭhakathā intentionally uses the technical Buddhist term *sakkāya-diṭṭhi* ("the view of individual existence" or "the belief in a self"),[258] both with respect to the fearlessness of the thoroughbreds and the arhat. However, while the thoroughbreds' fearlessness is rooted in the (false) perception that they exist as individuals possessing great strength, the arhat's fearlessness is predicated on the philosophical understanding of the Buddhist doctrine of no-self.[259]

The Pāli commentary's typology of fearlessness, which singles out the arhat, is notable for two reasons. First, it points out that the liberated one has no fear or distress of any kind. Even *saṃvega*, which marks an appropriate and motivating form of fear, is of no use to the arhat.[260] Second, the notion that knowledge of the absence of an enduring self eradicates all fear touches on the complex relationship in Buddhist thought between fear and knowledge. As I will show later in this chapter, the Buddhist concept of *saṃvega* reveals that fear is an emotion that accompanies

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[257] *kasmā panete na bhāyantīti? samasīho tāva jātigottakulasūrabhāvehi samānosmīti na bhāyati, hatthājānīyādayo attano sakkāyadiṭṭhibalavatāya na bhāyanti, khīṇāsavo sakkāyadiṭṭhiyā pahīnattā na bhāyati* (Catukkanipāta-aṭṭhakathā 33).
[258] Rhys-Davids and Stede 1921: 661.
[259] It is not spelled out here how exactly the thoroughbred person's fearlessness stems from his abandonment of the view of individual existence. Perhaps this person realizes that due to the absence of an enduring self, in actuality, there is no individual left for whom to fear.
[260] This is a subject I elaborate on in the following chapters (see for example pp. 171-172).

the understanding of impermanence, and in some cases, saṃvegic fear may even be considered a form of knowledge.

The next part of this segment of the Lion Sutta describes the different animals that flee in their saṃvegic terror after hearing the lion's roar.

> The hole dwellers enter their holes; the water dwellers enter the water; the forest dwellers enter the forest; and the birds take to the sky. Even, monks, those royal elephants bound by firm straps and binds in the villages, towns, and royal cities, burst and tear apart these binds. Frightened, they urinate and defecate, then flee in every direction.[261]

The Aṭṭhakathā elaborates on the identity of the different animals and their reactions to the lion's roar. For example, those that are called "hole dwellers" include the snake and the mongoose, the "water dwellers" include the fish and the tortoise, and the "forest dwellers" include the elephant and the deer. The commentary then explains that after hearing the lion's roar, these different animals are terrified that the lion will hunt them down, and thus, they carefully inspect their paths before entering their respective dwelling places. The bird, which is also mentioned in this passage, is an exception, for technically speaking it does not dwell in the sky. Nonetheless, the commentary's overall point here is clear–having heard the lion's roar, most animals take off and find shelter in the places where they feel safe.

In this passage, the royal elephants that hear the lion's roar are described as the most frightened and helpless animals, despite being large and powerful beasts. Generally, the notion that an elephant should fear a lion is widespread in classical Indian literature. In fact, the dominance of the lion over the elephant is a convention of Sanskrit poetry.[262] In the Lion Sutta, more specifically, the text juxtaposes the great terror of the "royal elephants" (*rañño nāga*) with the mighty power of the lion, "the king of beasts" (*miga-rājā*). I wonder whether the sutta here intentionally alludes to the notion that the lion's majestic dominance over the animal realm poses a challenge to the royal authority of the human king. Perhaps the lion's roar reminds the royal elephant that the lion is the one true king all animals should fear and cower to above all else.[263]

The description of the terrified elephants in the Lion Sutta is reminiscent of a battlefield scene from the Mahābhārata, where the powerful Bhīmasena brutally attacks the elephant division of the Kaurava army.

> The Pándava Bhima-sena plunged into the elephant division and rampaged about the battlefield, crushing the elephants like Indra crushes mountains. In that combat we saw Bhima-sena destroy elephants with a single blow, like a thunderbolt striking the mountains. Many mountainous elephants were struck down and lay with their tusks, trunks, bones, backs or temples broken. Some had sunk down groaning, others rushed about the battlefield, turned round and fled in terror (*bhaya-saṃvignām*), or soiled themselves with feces.[264]

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[261] *bilaṃ bilāsayā pavisanti, dakaṃ dakāsayā pavisanti, vanaṃ vanāsayā pavisanti, ākāsaṃ pakkhino bhajanti. yepi te, bhikkhave, rañño nāgā gāmanigamarājadhānīsu daḷhehi varattehi bandhanehi baddhā, tepi tāni bandhanāni sañchinditvā sampadāletvā bhītā muttakarīsaṃ cajamānā yena vā tena vā palāyanti*.
[262] Trautmann 2016: 25.
[263] This reading was suggested to me by Alexander von Rospatt and Jackson Macor (personal communication, 1/20/2023).
[264] Mahābhārata 6.62.49-54 (tr. Cherniak 2008: 549).

In this passage, the elephants' terror is described using an adjective derived from the root *saṃ-vij*, and exactly like the royal elephants of the Lion Sutta, these frightened war elephants flee in different directions and soil themselves. I find it remarkable that, on the one hand, the image of the frightened elephants soiling themselves appears in the Mahābhārata in the horrifying accounts of the battlefield, and on the other hand, it comes up in the Pāli canon, where it is used to create an analogy between the reaction of the animals that hear the lion's roar and the proper emotional response to the Buddha's teaching.[265] The image of the terrified elephants clearly aims to stress the power of Bhimasena, the lion, and the Buddha (by metaphorical extension). In addition, I believe this image can offer further insight into the concept of *saṃvega*, if we consider it within the commentary's comparative framework dealing with the fear of humans and elephants.

5.1 The *saṃvega* of humans and elephants

Bringing the discussion back to the Pāli commentary on the Lion Sutta, we can acknowledge now how different kinds of elephants respond to the lion's roar in drastically different ways. To recapitulate, first the Aṭṭhakathā mentions the thoroughbred elephant that does not experience fear when hearing the lion's roar, for it considers itself equal to the lion. Second, there is the common forest-dwelling elephant that hears the lion's roar and fearfully runs to the forest for shelter. Finally, there is the royal elephant that is absolutely terrified when it hears the lion's roar, soiling itself and fleeing in every direction. What I find interesting about these three kinds of elephants is the variance in what they can rely on when they hear the lion's roar. The first elephant is unafraid of the lion, for it is able to rely on its perception of itself as equal to the lion. The second elephant is terrified of the lion, yet it relies on the forest for shelter. The third elephant, being a domesticated beast that lives in villages or cities, finds itself completely helpless in this situation. Lacking both a strong notion of itself or a natural habitat where it can seek refuge, this elephant experiences the deepest and most intense form of distress when hearing the lion's roar. Reflecting on this, I am reminded of the fact that the Aṭṭhakathā also groups together the thoroughbred elephant and the thoroughbred person, comparing the fearlessness of these two types of beings. If I may further stretch this human-elephant comparison, perhaps there is also room to consider aspects that bind together the fear of elephants and humans.

Looking at the analogy made here between the lion's roar and the Buddha's teaching, it appears the Lion Sutta encourages the reader to think about the similar existential predicament that most humans share with the terrified royal elephants. The idea is that just as those elephants vehemently dread the lion's roar, most humans should be deeply frightened when they hear the Buddha's teaching on impermanence. From a Buddhist standpoint, what binds most humans to the royal elephants is the lack of refuge or shelter in the world. Unlike the other wild animals mentioned in the sutta, the royal elephants do not have a natural habitat in which they can seek shelter when they hear the lion's roar, and similarly, most people have no "place" to hide when they hear the Buddha voice the truth about the transient nature of things.

The feeling of having no shelter or refuge in the world is a key feature of *saṃvega*. In the Attadaṇḍa Sutta, the Buddha describes his initial experience of *saṃvega* precisely in these terms. When the future Buddha was still trapped in *saṃsāra*, he looked at the world and saw chaos

[265] To be clear, I am not claiming that the Lion Sutta is "borrowing" the image of the terrified elephants from the Mahābhārata, or vice-versa. It seems more reasonable that both texts are invoking an image that is part of the classical Indian cultural repertoire.

everywhere with no place to hide. The Pāli commentary on the Attadaṇḍa Sutta explains that prior to his awakening, the Buddha realized there is no "place" in the world that truly offers refuge from the reality of impermanence and suffering. This realization is understood in more than just spacial terms. In his *saṃvega*, the Buddha realized that there are no metaphysical assurances or permanent entities that one can depend on given that everything is in constant flux. In this sense, there is an existential dimension to *saṃvega* that is invoked in early Buddhist scripture, which I will continue to develop in the later chapters of this dissertation. Yet for now, I am merely stressing the parallels suggested in the Lion Sutta between the deep fear and sense of displacement that both royal elephants and humans experience in their *saṃvega*.

Before moving forward, I would like to offer an additional reading of the passage from the Lion Sutta that focuses on the animals' terrified response to the lion's roar. This reading will accentuate a different dimension of this Buddhist image of *saṃvega*. Clearly, both the sutta and the commentary wish to underline the saṃvegic terror that the animals experience when hearing the lion's roar. Nevertheless, as I have mentioned earlier, the commentary also considers the lion to be an ideal being that acts out of kindness for others. Thus, I think there is reason to view the fearful response of the animals that hear the lion's roar in a way that also reveals its wholesome features. When the hole dwellers enter their holes, the water dwellers enter the water, the forest dwellers enter the forest, and the birds take to the sky, they all seem to "return to their original nature." In the Buddhist *jātaka* stories, we find a motif that is widespread in classical Indian literature, according to which, animals are bound by their own nature (*svabhāva*).[266] In the Lion Sutta, the lion's roar appears to "remind" the different animals of their *svabhāva*, allowing them each to assume their natural position in the world. In this regard, the lion's fearsome roar can also be seen as an act that brings about a harmonious effect that causes different beings to fall into place. At the same time, the lion's roar may also have a dramatic impact on those beings that have become alienated from their own nature. The royal elephants are exemplary of that, for they flee in every direction particularly because they lack a habitat or an abode where they can find peace. In ancient India, there was a common belief that an elephant in captivity forever remembers its former freedom with a sense of longing and sorrow.[267] Thomas Trautmann even points out that in the Sanskrit *imaginaire*, "a person slipping the bonds of everyday life to become a hermit monk in the forest (*āraṇyaka-bhikṣu*) is likened to a freed elephant returning to its original forest habitat."[268] In this regard, no matter how frightening and distressing the lion's roar is to the royal elephants, the moment they hear it may be a galvanizing experience that can lead these elephants back to their liberated state.

What can this reading disclose of the way the Buddha's teaching should affect human beings? From a Buddhist view, humans, like the royal elephants, have no "natural" position in the world, no place where they can feel safe and find peace. Therefore, when the Buddha delivers his teaching, his lion's roar, people find themselves baffled and exposed. This disturbing experience is called *saṃvega*. One might consider this view of the Buddha's teaching to be rooted in a form of extreme pessimism since it seems to render the human condition as fundamentally tragic.[269] However, the example of the royal elephant is meant to show that the riveting experience of

[266] Maas 2013.
[267] Trautmann 2016: 57.
[268] Ibid, 59.
[269] On this issue see Bodhi 2012: 41.

saṃvega is also a reminder that freedom is possible, and that deep down one longs for liberation. From a soteriological perspective, it is precisely the vulnerability and alienation of human beings that make them uniquely susceptible to the Buddha's teaching, and subsequently, more motivated than any other type of being to pursue the Path and attain nirvāṇa. It is often this soteriological perspective that can render even a terrifying and distressing experience ultimately beneficial.

The final sentence of the segment dealing with the animal's saṃvegic response brings the attention back to the lion: "So powerful among the animals, monks, is the lion, the king of beasts, so majestic and mighty."[270] With this statement, the sutta establishes that the animals' terrified response directly reflects the power and dominance of the lion.[271] In the following segment of this scripture, the comparison between the lion and the Buddha is made explicit, and the commentary seizes this opportunity to unpack the Buddha-lion analogy in a number of different ways.

6. The Buddha and the lion

In the Lion Sutta's third segment, the opening lines shift the focus from the lion to the Buddha.

> In the same way, monks, when the Tathāgata arises in the world, an *arahant*, perfectly awakened, accomplished in true knowledge and conduct, a *sugata*, knower of worlds, unsurpassed trainer of persons to be tamed, instructor of gods and humans, a buddha, the Blessed One, he teaches the Dharma.[272]

The core of this sentence is concerned with associating the Buddha and his teaching with the lion and his roar.[273] This association might not stand out at first glance for the simple reason that most of this sentence is dedicated to the ten epithets of the Buddha. Noticing the lack of emphasis here on the similarity between the Buddha and the lion, the Aṭṭhakathā interjects in order to address some of the Buddha-lion parallels. More specifically, the commentary points to the word "arises" (*uppajjati*) in this sentence since it is the starting point from which it will begin unpacking the Buddha-lion analogy. When the sutta says the "Tathāgata arises in the world," according to the commentary, it is referring to a series of events that includes the Buddha's awakening and teaching of the Dharma.

The Aṭṭhakathā suggests three possible ways of interpreting the analogy involving the sequence of events leading to the lion's roar and the sequence of events leading to the Buddha's teaching of the Dharma. These interpretations develop the comparison between the saṃvegic response the lion provokes from the animals and the similar response the Buddha provokes from those who hear his teaching.

The commentary's first attempt at unpacking the Buddha-lion analogy aligns each one of the lion's actions with an episode from the life of the Buddha. The commentary essentially narrates

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[270] *evaṃ mahiddhiko kho, bhikkhave, sīho migarājā tiracchānagatānaṃ pāṇānaṃ, evaṃ mahesakkho evaṃ mahānubhāvo*.

[271] The Aṭṭhakathā expounds on the distinct meaning of each of the three attributes used to describe the lion in this sentence. The lion is powerful on account of his strength, he is majestic since he presides over the other animals, and he is mighty because most animals flee in terror when they hear him roar.

[272] *evaṃ eva kho, bhikkhave, yadā tathāgato loke uppajjati arahaṃ sammāsambuddho vijjācaraṇasampanno sugato lokavidū anuttaro purisadammasārathi satthā devamanussānaṃ buddho bhagavā, so dhammaṃ deseti*.

[273] This is clearly indicated by the expression "in the same way" (*evaṃ eva kho*).

the Buddha's entire life story, while elegantly weaving it with the different actions that make up the lion's evening routine. This commentarial interpolation alone is significantly longer than the entire Lion Sutta and is worthy of a study dedicated solely to it. For the sake of keeping the focus of this discussion on the Lion Sutta and its notion of *saṃvega*, I will merely lay out here the basic structure of the Aṭṭhakathā's extensive analogy between the lion's actions and the Buddha life story.

The commentary begins by aligning the period of time in which the lion dwells in his cave with the years the Buddha spends as a prince living in the palace. After being enclosed for some time, the moment when the lion comes out of his cave in the evening is likened to the Buddha's departure from the palace at night while everyone is sleeping. Next, the lion's stretching out is compared to the Buddha's eating of the milk-rice porridge offered by Sujātā. At this point, the commentary adds to the lion's routine described in the sutta, the act of shaking his body to remove the dust that has clung to it. As I have mentioned earlier, in the Pāli canon, this image of shaking off the dust is associated with *saṃvega*.[274] Interestingly, the commentary compares the lion's shaking of his body to the Buddha's awakening, i.e., the defeat of Māra, which causes the ten world systems to shake (*kampana*). This Buddha-lion parallel invokes the Buddhist notion that breaking the cycle of suffering requires an event that rattles or shakes the universe as a whole and each sentient being in particular. The Buddha's awakening is an event of such magnitude, and thus, it brings about a cosmic earthquake of sorts. *Saṃvega*, which literally means to shake or tremble, is therefore deemed the proper response to the Buddha's earthshaking insight.

Next, the commentary compares the lion's surveying of the four directions to the Buddha's search for the five ascetics to whom he will teach the Dharma first. After the lion's surveying, the commentary adds the act of walking a short distance, which it compares to the Buddha's act of approaching the five ascetics and setting in motion the Dharma Wheel. Finally, the Aṭṭhakathā compares the lion's roar to the Buddha's teaching. In so doing, it emphasizes that just as the lion's roar causes the small animals to tremble, so the Buddha's word gives rise to the gods' "trembling as knowledge" (*ñāṇa-santāsa*). Later in this chapter, when I address a subsequent part of the Pāli commentary that expounds on the gods' experience of *saṃvega*, I will discuss how the Aṭṭhakathā and Ṭīkā explain the meaning of the expression "trembling as knowledge."

The second interpretation the Aṭṭhakathā suggests for this analogy draws parallels between the lion's roaring routine and the Buddha's teaching routine. According to this interpretation, the Buddha comes out of his chamber (i.e., the Gandhakuṭi), like the lion comes out of his den. He then approaches the Dharma hall, like the lion stretches his body. Next, the Buddha surveys the assembly, like the lion surveys the four directions, and then, he teaches the Dharma, like the lion roars his roar. Finally, the Buddha sets out in search of opponents to defeat in philosophical debate, like the lion sets out in search of game.

The commentary's third and final suggestion for interpreting the Buddha-lion analogy focuses specifically on the Buddha's frame of mind when he sets out to teach the Dharma. In this version of the analogy, the Buddha emerges from his attainment of nirvāṇa, like the lion comes out of his cave. Then, the Buddha relies on the knowledge through reflection (*paccavekkhaṇa-ñāṇa*), like the lion stretches his body. Next, the Buddha searches for sentient beings capable of

[274] I address this saṃvegic image at length in Chapter Five.

being instructed, like the lion surveys the four directions. Then, the Buddha teaches those who have arrived at the assembly, like the lion roars his mighty roar. Finally, the Buddha approaches sentient beings who are worthy of instruction but have not heard the Dharma yet, just as the lion sets out in search of game.

The clear thread that runs through these different interpretations of the Buddha-lion analogy is the similarity between the Buddha's teaching and the lion's roar. However, the rest of the analogy varies from one interpretation to the other. In the first interpretation, the comparison to the lion centers on the power of the Buddha's word to shake the universe and cause the gods to tremble with fear. The second interpretation focuses on the polemical aspect of the Buddha's teaching, emphasizing that like the lion's fearless roar, the Buddha's word is a proclamation of his superiority.[275] The third interpretation hones in on the similarity between how the lion goes hunting for food and the Buddha goes searching for new disciples.

These different interpretations of the Buddha-lion analogy also reflect different facets of *saṃvega*. In the first analogy, the Buddha's earthshaking teaching aims to provoke an experience of existential dread or bewilderment. In the second analogy, the Buddha's teaching displays his intellectual preeminence and intends to elicit a strong feeling of awe. Finally, in the third analogy, the Buddha's teaching is designed to transform those who are capable of being instructed, thus appealing to the relationship between *saṃvega* and conversion.[276] These interpretations show the richness of Buddha-lion analogy in terms of its ability to unpack the concept of *saṃvega*.

7. The Buddha's teaching

The "lion's roar" of the Buddha is the Dharma, and more specifically, the teaching on the transient nature of things. The Theravāda exegetical tradition hones in on the many similarities between the lion's roar and the Buddha's Dharma; yet, there is one obvious difference between the two, namely that unlike the lion's roar, the Buddha's teaching is verbal. The saṃvegic response the lion provokes is triggered by the loud and terrifying noise emanating from his mouth; however, the response to the Buddha's teaching is elicited primarily by the illuminating content of his discourse, not the sound of his voice.[277]

The fact that *saṃvega* can be provoked by a philosophical teaching tells us something vital about the broad semantic range of this term. The Buddhist concept of *saṃvega* covers a wide spectrum of emotional responses, spanning from a visceral reaction to a frightening sight or sound up to an existential crisis brought about by an intellectual realization. The commentary on the Lion Sutta even goes as far as considering *saṃvega* to be a form of knowledge (*ñāṇa*). Yet before I delve into the epistemic dimensions of *saṃvega*, I would like to first examine the specific

[275] The Aṭṭhakathā even states that after teaching, the Buddha is intent on defeating (*nimmaddana*) his opponents in debate.
[276] On *saṃvega* and conversion, see Brekke 2002.
[277] The mere sound of the syllables coming out of the Buddha's mouth does not cause the gods, for example, to experience *saṃvega.* In fact, often one becomes immersed in *saṃvega* only after beginning to fathom the deep meaning of the Buddha's word. As I will show in the proceeding chapters, certain Pāli suttas challenge this "post-discursive" or "intellectualized" notion of *saṃvega*. For example, the Moggallāna Sutta (SN 51.14) describes a group of monks that experience *saṃvega* as a kind of visceral reaction to something extraordinary and petrifying. Having said that, in some early Buddhist scriptures, like the Lion Sutta, as well as in later phases of Buddhist literature, *saṃvega* is widely considered the proper emotional response to the Buddha's philosophical teaching.

articulation of the Buddha's teaching on impermanence in the Lion Sutta. In the AN version of this scripture, the Buddha's teaching consists of four short statements.

> (1) Such is individual existence, (2) such is the origin of individual existence, (3) such is the cessation of individual existence, (4) such is the method leading to the cessation of individual existence.[278]

What is presented here as the "Buddha's teaching of the Dharma" is actually an outline of his teaching. In this sutta, the Buddha does not thoroughly explain his doctrine as he does in many other scriptures. Instead, he merely alludes to the four truths. This fact alone indicates that the Lion Sutta is not primarily concerned with what the Buddha taught, but with the different aspects that surround his teaching, beginning with the emotional response it elicits. The Pāli commentary, nonetheless, is preoccupied with the question of what precise version of the Buddha's teaching is referenced in this sutta and what more could be said about it.

In the Aṭṭhakathā's unpacking of the sutta's Buddha-lion analogy, it compares the lion's roar to the Buddha's teachings on the "four truths" (*cattāri saccāni*) and the "three marks [of existence]" (*tīṇi lakkhaṇāni*). With respect to these two core elements of Buddhist doctrine, it is easier to see how the fourfold teaching we find in the Lion Sutta relates to the four noble truths. The sutta's teaching is essentially an outline of the four truths, in which "individual existence" (*sakkāya*) takes the place more commonly preserved for "suffering" (*dukkha*). The Aṭṭhakathā and the SN version of the Lion Sutta make it clear that in this context, the term "individual existence" simply means "the five aggregates" (*pañca-khandha*).[279] There are several other canonical instances where the Buddha preaches this version of the four noble truths, using the five aggregates as the focal point of his teaching instead of suffering.[280] The interchangeability of these terms is explained by the identification of suffering with the five aggregates of clinging, which in turn, renders the cessation of the aggregates as the ultimate goal of the Buddhist path.

According to the Aṭṭhakathā, this five-aggregate version of the four truths foregrounds the Buddhist critique on the notion of self. The commentary states that in this version of the four truths, the Buddha stresses that every being partakes in the five aggregates and nothing exists outside of these five fundamental categories of phenomena. Therefore, one should refrain from seeking an essence or self that exists beyond the aggregates, or superimposing one onto the aggregates either individually or collectively. In particular, the common error of superimposing an enduring self onto the body is tied to the failure to recognize its impermanent nature.[281] Since material form (*rūpa*) and the other aggregates are all in constant flux, any such attempt to project a self onto the

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[278] *iti sakkāyo, iti sakkāyasamudayo, iti sakkāyanirodho, iti sakkāyanirodhagāminī paṭipadāti.*

[279] In the SN version of the Lion Sutta the Buddha's teaching is articulated in the following way: "(1) Such is form, (2) such is the origin of form, (3) such the cessation of form" (*iti rūpaṃ, iti rūpassa samudayo, iti rūpassa atthaṅgamo*), and the same pertains to the remaining four aggregates. The fourth statement regarding the path leading to the cessation of the aggregates does not appear in this version of the sutta.

[280] See SN 22:104 and the subsequent sutta SN 22:105.

[281] While the Lion Sutta does not flesh this out, the Pāli commentary highlights that the impermanence of the aggregates is essential to the Buddha's teaching. Earlier in this chapter, when I discussed the Dutiyārhant Sutta, I showed that the Buddha applies the three marks of existence to each of the five aggregates. In so doing, he asserts that the aggregates are impermanent.

aggregates is fundamentally flawed. [282] The absence of a permanent self, in this sense, stems from the aggregates' transient nature. For similar reasons, suffering is also considered a product of impermanence, for it is rooted in the tendency to desperately cling to the ever-changing aggregates.

The Aṭṭhakathā thus concludes that the Lion Sutta's version of the Buddha's teaching conveys the idea that everything in the universe from a blade of grass to a mighty god is nothing more than the five aggregates characterized by impermanence, suffering, and no-self. The Buddha further expounds in this sutta on the origin of the aggregates, which as the commentary explains is the set of causes and conditions for the arising of each aggregate, as well as the cessation of the aggregates.[283] Finally, the Buddha provides the method leading to the cessation of the aggregates, which is none other than the eightfold path.

While in the Lion Sutta, the Buddha only provides an outline of his fourfold teaching, according to the Aṭṭhakathā, the gods actually respond to the Buddha's complete teaching on the five aggregates. Hence, if one reads the sutta without acknowledging everything that is included in the Buddha's four brief statements about individual existence, then the manner in which the gods respond to the Buddha's teaching does not quite make sense. With the help of the commentary, one can fill in the essential details of the Buddha's teaching, and in the process, gain a better understanding of what exactly provokes the god's saṃvegic response in the scripture.

8. The saṃvegic response to the Buddha's teaching

The fourth segment of the Lion Sutta focuses on the gods' emotional response to the Buddha's teaching. Before I look closely into the nuances of this response and how the commentary views it, I would like to first take a step back and discuss the literary practice of including an audience in a text. Most early Buddhist scriptures are either dialogues between the Buddha and an interlocutor, or discourses that the Buddha delivers directly to an assembly of monks, lay followers, or other groups of sentient beings. In this dissertation, what I am calling an "embedded audience" refers precisely to such interlocutors or crowds whose particular response to the Buddha's word is incorporated into the scriptures themselves. In contrast to this, what I am calling the "potential audience" consists of any group or person who may listen or read these scriptures.[284] I should mention that some might elect to examine the existence and identity of the embedded audiences in early Buddhist scripture through a historical lens. While I am certainly not dismissive of such an approach, my focus is on the hermeneutical, philosophical, and literary aspects of these canonical texts, and thus, I am not concerned with the historical veracity of the accounts that are laid out in these scriptures.

In early Buddhist literature, the structure of the embedded audience varies from one scripture to another. I would like to map out four common types of early Buddhist scriptures, each

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[282] Some might be inclined to regard a specific aggregate as the self, such as the body (i.e., form) or consciousness. Others might consider the totality of the five aggregates as the self. In either case, the issue here is that the aggregates are constantly changing and thus unfit to qualify as an enduring self.

[283] The Aṭṭhakathā also discusses the origin and cessation of the aggregates, beginning with the origin of form, namely, nutriment (*āhāra*). A useful breakdown of the aggregates, their origin and cessation is found in SN 22:56.

[284] In this context, I am not making a distinction between a person who heard the Buddhist scriptures two thousand years ago and a reader like myself who reads them today. For the purposes of this discussion, both are considered examples of a "potential audience."

of which contains a different compositional structure. (1) In many scriptures, the Buddha addresses an assembly of monks directly by using the second person; however, the response of these monks is not included in the text. For the purposes of this study, such cases do not qualify as examples of a scripture that has an embedded audience. (2) However, in other scriptures, after the Buddha concludes his teaching, the assembly of monks he addresses is said, for example, to delight in his words. From a structural standpoint, such scriptures are a fairly simple and typical example of an embedded audience that is built into the text. (3) Another group of early Buddhist scriptures, which includes the Lion Sutta among other texts, is characterized by a more complex compositional structure. In these scriptures, the monks whom the Buddha directly addresses do not respond to his discourse; nonetheless, in the discourse itself, the Buddha mentions how a specific person or a group of individuals responded to his teaching of the Dharma. For example, in the Lion Sutta, the Buddha tells the monks how the gods reacted to his teaching, yet the monks' response to this discourse is not included in the text. Another common example of this compositional structure is found in scriptures where the Buddha tells the monks about a dialogue he had with some individual. In scriptures of this type, the Buddha relates to the monks how a certain individual responded to his teaching, yet the monks' response to this dialogue is not incorporated in the text.[285] (4) Finally, there are scriptures with two levels of embedded audience. In these complex compositions, the Buddha speaks to an assembly of monks about a person or a group that responded to his teaching in a certain way, and then, the scripture itself concludes with the monks' response to the Buddha's discourse.

The role of the embedded audience also changes drastically from one early Buddhist scripture to another. In most cases, the text focuses on what the Buddha taught, and therefore, the brief response of the embedded audience to the Buddha's word merely confirms the brilliance or efficacy of the Buddha's teaching. For instance, often at the end of a conversation between the Buddha and some individual, that individual will express his satisfaction with the Buddha's teaching and proclaim that from now on he takes refuge in the Buddha, the Dharma, and the *saṅgha*. In such cases, the role of the embedded audience in the scripture is marginal. On the other hand, in scriptures like the Lion Sutta, the Buddha's teaching takes a back seat to the vivid response of those who hear the Dharma for the first time. In such cases, the embedded audience is placed on center stage, playing a major role in the scripture.

The question of how to understand the function of the embedded audience in early Buddhist canonical literature is open to a variety of possible answers. Given my interest in the Buddhist conception of emotions, what I am most concerned with is the relationship between the embedded audience in scriptures like the Lion Sutta and the potential audience of these texts. I would like to suggest one way of interpreting this relationship and the function of the embedded audience that draws on the role of the chorus in Sophocles' tragedy. In the classical world, the chorus of the ancient Greek tragedies stands out as one of the most prominent examples of an embedded audience. Douglas Cairns' study of the chorus in Oedipus Rex, for example, shows its significance for the study of emotions in the ancient Greek world. Cairns focuses on the chorus' response to the scene of Oedipus' self-blinding. The sight of the horrible mutilation Oedipus inflicts upon himself elicits from the chorus an emotion called *phrikē*, a word that literally means "shivering" or "shuddering."[286] Like *saṃvega*, this emotion can refer to much more than just a physical

[285] See for example the Kesi Sutta (4.111), which I discuss in Chapter Four.
[286] Cairns 2017: 54.

reaction, and in this instance from Oedipus Rex, Cairns explains that the feeling of *phrikē* involves a complex interpretation of Oedipus' tragic state of affairs.

Reflecting on the chorus' response to Oedipus' mutilation and its impact on the potential audience, Cairns makes the following claim: "Simply calling their response *phrikē* goes a very long way towards specifying and recreating its phenomenological character, what it feels like to be moved as they are moved by Oedipus. Whether we ourselves see the play in the theatre or merely in our mind's eye as we read, the response of this internal audience is, at least in this instance, a guide to our own."[287] The claim here is that the inclusion of an audience in the text is both about articulating the particular emotional response the text aims to elicit, as well as guiding the potential audience towards recreating that aesthetic experience. I think the key to understanding this analysis of the embedded audience's function hinges on acknowledging the memetic aspect involved here. Through imitating the embedded audience's response, the potential audience is led, or perhaps even trained to appreciate and experience Oedipus' tragic state in a very specific way.

If we apply Cairns' understanding of the embedded audience to early Buddhist scriptures like the Lion Sutta, we may get a better sense of the type of effect these texts wish to have on their listeners and readers. In suggesting this, I am not claiming that the overall role of the chorus in Sophocles' tragedies is similar to that of the embedded audience in some of the early Buddhist scriptures.[288] What I am claiming is that there is a resemblance in the way the suttas and the tragedies use the embedded audience in order to affect and guide the potential audience.

Moreover, the inclusion of an embedded audience in early Buddhist scriptures might be indicative of the anxieties the tradition had about people's inability to appreciate and understand the Buddha's Dharma. In the Pāli canon, texts like the Brahmāyācana Sutta voice a deep concern about the prospect of the Buddha's novel insight being misunderstood. In this regard, I view the Lion Sutta as a text that wishes to stress the gravity and profoundness of the Buddha's word by tending to the emotional state one should inhabit upon hearing the Dharma. The significance of having the embedded audience guide the reader's response to the Dharma is predicated on the idea that understanding the teaching begins with a specific aesthetic experience elicited by the Buddha's word. The Lion Sutta does not merely tell the reader how to properly respond to the Buddha's teaching, it also aims to carry the reader through the affective experience itself.

8.1 The fear of the gods

In the Lion Sutta, the Buddha tells the assembly of monks how the gods (*devas*) reacted when they heard him preach the Dharma. The text, however, does not specify when all this occurred and under what circumstances. The Aṭṭhakathā fills in these details, situating this event within the life story of the Buddha. According to the commentary, after his awakening, the Buddha delivered his first sermon to the five ascetics, thus setting in motion the Dharma Wheel. At the time, the Buddha

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[287] Ibid, 55.

[288] There are many differences between the chorus of the ancient Greek tragedies and the embedded audience that appears in some of the Pāli suttas. For example, the chorus often possesses an "internal understanding" of the play in which it is embedded. In other words, the chorus knows more than the potential audience of the play, and thus, it is rightfully considered "internal" as opposed to the potential crowd, which is "external." In early Buddhist scripture, the embedded audience usually does not possess an internal vantage point that indicates a deeper understanding of the text.

was sitting cross-legged in the Deer Park in Sarnath, and as he shared his novel insight with the five ascetics, "the sound of the Dharma of the Tathāgata-lion went down below to the Avici hell and up to the highest point of the universe, spreading across the ten world systems."[289] The Aṭṭhakathā explains that when the Buddha's word reached the long-living gods in heaven, it made them tremble with fear like the animals that hear the lion's roar. In the Lion Sutta, this event is portrayed in the following way:

> When the gods, monks, who are long-living, beautiful, abundantly happy, and [accustomed to staying] for long periods of time in heavenly palaces hear the Tathāgata's teaching of the Dharma, for the most part, they are faced with fear, distress (*saṃvega*), and trembling.[290]

In my analysis of this passage, the first part I would like to address is the description of the gods. I believe this description is intentionally positioned right before the pivotal moment in which the gods hear the Buddha's teaching. In the first line of this passage, the gods are characterized as long-living (*dīgha-āyuka*). This bit of information is germane to the teaching of this text, and more specifically, to its focus on the saṃvegic response to the Dharma. The particular shock and terror the gods experience when they hear the Buddha's teaching on impermanence is partly predicated on the fact that their lives are so long that the thought of their demise has not even occurred to them. When the Buddha speaks about impermanence and the inevitability of suffering and death, this truly comes to the gods as "breaking news." The Buddha literally discloses to the gods their own mortality, and it is seemingly this disclosure that provokes their *saṃvega*. If indeed this is how one understands the crux of the Lion Sutta, then apparently there is a stark difference between the gods' experience of *saṃvega* and the human experience of this emotion. This difference stems from the fact that while the gods might be unaware of their mortality and are thus shocked by the Buddha's teaching on impermanence, humans clearly are aware of their mortality, so they must have a substantially different saṃvegic response to the Buddha's Dharma.

In my reading of the Lion Sutta, the text does not intend to strongly differentiate between gods and humans when it comes to the saṃvegic shock each is expected to experience upon hearing the Buddha's teaching for the first time. In fact, I think the opposite is true. In the face of the Buddha's Dharma, the gods turn out to be no different than humans. To be more precise, I believe the sutta focuses on the gods' response to the Dharma for two reasons. First, the description of the mighty gods' saṃvegic reaction can potentially provoke an even stronger emotional response from mere humans who hear the Dharma; and second, the gods' existential situation reveals something subtle yet essential about the human condition. I would like to elaborate on these two reasons.

For starters, as I have explained previously, the version of the Buddha's teaching that appears in the Lion Sutta focuses on the five aggregates. According to the commentary, this teaching intends to convey the notion that any being in the universe, regardless of whether it is a blade of grass, a rock, a human, or a god, consists of the five aggregates that are characterized by impermanence. In this regard, I agree with Brekke, who claims that the Buddha simply speaks in this scripture about the vicissitudes of *saṃsāra*,[291] revealing to the gods that they, too, are part of

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[289] *tathāgatasīhassa dhammaghoso heṭṭhā avīciṃ upari bhavaggaṃ gahetvā dasasahassilokadhātuṃ paṭicchādesi.*
[290] *yepi te, bhikkhave, devā dīghāyukā vaṇṇavanto sukhabahulā uccesu vimānesu ciraṭṭhitikā, tepi tathāgatassa dhammadesanaṃ sutvā yebhuyyena bhayaṃ saṃvegaṃ santāsaṃ āpajjanti.*
[291] Brekke 2002: 83.

the reality of impermanence and suffering. Therefore, the gods' existential situation is fundamentally similar to that of any other being. The gods might live longer, yet eventually they will also perish, and more importantly, their bodies and minds are subject to the constant change that occurs from one moment to another. If the gods truly are impermanent, just like humans or any other being in the universe, then this brings us back to the question of why the Lion Sutta focuses specifically on the gods and their response to the Buddha's word. As I see it, part of the rationale for this decision is predicated on the idea that if the gods who are long-living and powerful are frightened by the Buddha's teaching on impermanence, human beings should be absolutely terrified when they hear the Dharma for the first time. The gods' cosmological superiority is used here to induce from "us," the potential audience, a more intense emotional reaction to the Buddha's Dharma.

In addition, I think the particular kind of shock the gods experience is brought up to reveal an elusive aspect of the human condition. When the Buddha speaks about impermanence and the inevitability of death, it is easy to understand why this is shocking to the gods who have lived in heaven for thousands of years without even considering their mortality. However, how can one expect death to shock human beings in the same way, given that clearly on some level they are already aware of their mortality and the facticity of death. Lajos Brons believes the concept of *saṃvega* deals precisely with this matter.[292] Thus in his analysis of *saṃvega*, Brons invokes this perplexing question raised by James Baillie: "How can I be startled by what I already know, namely that I will die?"[293] This is one of the major philosophical questions surrounding the Buddhist concept of *saṃvega*.

Reflecting on this question, Baillie explores "the mysterious kind of believing-while-not-believing, or knowing-while-not-knowing that I will die."[294] He offers to resolve the seemingly paradoxical relationship one has with one's own mortality by considering the different ways in which one acknowledges the facticity of death. Drawing on Nagel,[295] Baillie distinguishes between the "objective self" that is indifferently aware of his own mortality, grasping his death in the third-person, and the "subjective self" that vividly experiences the "expectation of nothingness," anxiously confronting his mortality in the first-person. One's emotional relationship with death may alternate between the indifference of the objective self and the anxiety of the subjective self. Baillie, however, is specifically concerned with the existential shock characterizing the moment of subjectively acknowledging one's mortality, and he articulates this experience in a way that resonates with the Buddhist concept of *saṃvega*: "In existential shock I do not merely anticipate but recognize my nothingness, my insubstantiality throughout my existence. The distinctive awareness of my inevitable death has to be framed within this more fundamental revelation. The terror comes through recognizing that I am not what I have taken myself to be."[296]

In Brons' treatment of Baillie's question, and more specifically, of the workings of *saṃvega*, he shifts his discussion towards the direction of moral and social psychology. In so doing, he intentionally veers away from larger existential questions concerning mortality as well as from the traditional conception of *saṃvega* in Buddhist thought. Brons ends up making an

[292] Brons 2016: 90.
[293] Baillie 2012: S200.
[294] Baillie 2019: 2588.
[295] Nagel 1986.
[296] Baillie: 2019: 2600.

interesting case for the philosophical value of the Buddhist concept of *saṃvega* to contemporary discussions on "facing death" in psychology and philosophy of mind. Nevertheless, as my focus here remains on the Buddhological and existential dimensions of *saṃvega*, I will discuss now how Baillie's question is addressed in classical Buddhist literature.

In my reading of the Lion Sutta, the text centers on the gods' *saṃvega* because their obliviousness towards death draws attention to a similar tendency that human beings have. The longevity of the gods seemingly allows them to remain completely unaware of their mortality. Death, for the gods, is an event in the distant feature that has no bearing whatsoever on their present. Nonetheless, the Buddha's teaching on impermanence reaches the gods in heaven and forces them to confront the facticity of this future event here-and-now. The shock elicited by this confrontation is called *saṃvega*. In this regard, the gods' relationship with their mortality mirrors the Buddhist view of the prevailing human attitude towards death. The idea is that like the gods, humans, too, live in some form of obliviousness, or perhaps even a deep denial[297] of their own mortality.

In the fourth canto of the Buddhacarita, the Buddha expresses for the first time his bewilderment and frustration with the fact that human beings are consumed with sensual pleasures in the present despite knowing that death is a certainty for all of them in the future.[298] What separates the Buddha in this text from the people around him is that death for him no longer belongs to the distant future, for it has completely permeated his present. After his experience of *saṃvega*, the Buddha realized that all beings are "on the road to death" (*maraṇa-adhvani*), yet because of their attachment to objects of the senses, they fail to comprehend this dangerous path on which they tread.[299] Regardless of how long or short one's life is, according to this mainstream Buddhist view, death is always present. The *saṃvega* of the gods reveals that the length of one's life offers no solace and, to some degree, is irrelevant since "all life is occupied by death."[300]

From a phenomenological perspective, the Buddha's teaching on impermanence seems to rattle the gods by revealing to them that death is permanently drawing closer. When the Buddha speaks of the inevitability of old age, sickness, and death, and even more so when he refers to life as a journey on the road to death, his words are intended to make others mindful of the fact that death is always inching closer. Regardless of the length of one's life, when one perceives death as that which is constantly drawing closer with every passing moment, then the feeling of *saṃvega* begins to take root and grow stronger. This idea brings to mind Aristotle's claim that "all people know they will die, but because death is not near, they do not fear it."[301] In other words, only once death appears to be close does it actually become deeply frightening. This Aristotelian notion had a significant influence on Heidegger's phenomenological account of fear, according to which, "that which is detrimental, as something that threatens us, is not yet within striking distance [in beherrschbarer Niihe], but it is coming close. In such a drawing-close, the detrimentality radiates out, and therein lies its threatening character."[302] The Buddha's teaching on impermanence is

[297] On the "denial of death" and its possible relevance to the Buddhist concept of *saṃvega,* see Brons 2016: 104-106.
[298] Buddhacarita 4.99.
[299] Ibid, 4.97.
[300] *sabbaṃ jīvitaṃ maraṇena ositaṃ* (Mahāniddesa 172).
[301] Konstan 2006: 130.
[302] Heidegger 1962: 179-180.

designed to have a similar emotional impact on any living being regardless of how long their life is, for the feeling of *saṃvega* the Buddha aims to elicit is about perceiving death as that which perpetually draws closer with every passing moment. In this sense, the Buddhist saṃvegic attitude towards death is rooted in realizing the gravity of impermanence. The less extreme versions of this realization involve the feeling of death constantly inching closer with every breath, and the more radicle versions of it entail experiencing death in every fleeting moment.[303]

Bringing this discussion back to the translated passage from the Lion Sutta, the second attribute given to the gods in this text highlights their beauty. The Aṭṭhakathā clarifies that the sutta describes the gods as "beautiful because of the beauty of their bodies."[304] This is significant since in early Buddhist thought, the beauty of the body often masks the transient nature of matter, hindering one's ability to come to terms with the reality of impermanence. There is a variety of Buddhist ascetic practices that aim to induce *saṃvega* by calling attention to the impurity of the body (*aśubha-bhāvanā*). In the Skeleton Sutta,[305] for example, the Buddha specifically mentions *saṃvega* among the fruits of cultivating and developing one's perception of a skeleton. On this note, Acri explains that "*saṃvega* arises when the truth of Buddhist teachings finally hits home and becomes personally relevant. In the context of an ascetic discourse on bodies, it is the moment when a person realizes, perhaps for the first time, the truly unsatisfactory nature of bodied being."[306] Taking this into account, I believe the beauty of the gods is underscored in the Lion Sutta precisely because it blinds the gods from seeing the transience of their bodies, which in turn, increases the shock they experience when they hear the Buddha's teaching on impermanence. This Buddhist critique of beauty also applies to humans, who are often portrayed in Buddhist literature as foolishly clinging to beautiful objects despite their ephemeral nature.

Next, the sutta describes the gods as "abundantly happy" (*sukha-bahulā*). The main reason the text stresses the happiness of the gods is the sharp turn their mood takes once they hear the Buddha's teaching. One point the sutta makes here is that those who seem to enjoy themselves the most are struck particularly hard by the Dharma. Having said that, happiness is not exactly the opposite of the saṃvegic terror that the gods experience upon hearing the Buddha's teaching. In this sutta, *saṃvega* is not a form of sorrow or dejection,[307] but a state of being alarmed by the realization of the danger of existing in *saṃsāra*. Moreover, the happiness of the gods might allude to the Buddhist notion that celestial beings, in general, are less motivated to see reality for what it is and pursue the Buddhist path with urgency precisely because they enjoy their lives too much.

The Lion Sutta also describes the gods as "[accustomed to staying] for long periods of time in heavenly palaces" (*uccesu vimānesu ciraṭṭhitikā*). This description complements some of the gods' other attributes that I have already discussed, namely, their longevity and happiness. Yet it also points out that the gods have their fixed, comfortable place of residence in the universe. In this regard, I think the gods share something in common with the frightened animals that retreat to their natural dwelling places when they hear the lion's roar. Like those animals, the gods have their

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[303] The practice of *maraṇa-sati* (mindfulness of death) is examplry of the Buddhist commitment to constantly remaining mindful of death and its looming presence.
[304] *sarīra-vaṇṇena vaṇṇavanto*
[305] SN 46.57.
[306] Acri 2015: 219, n. 8.
[307] On the use of *saṃvega* as a feeling of sorrow in the Pāli canon, see Chapter Two.

heavenly palaces, where they can temporarily[308] "hide" from the perils of the world. However, positioned in between the animals and the gods, human beings find themselves particularly exposed to the reality of impermanence and suffering. According to this Buddhist idea, humans have no hole in the ground or castle in the sky where they can try to seek shelter from suffering. This is part of what makes human beings extremely vulnerable to the Buddha's teaching of the Dharma.

Finally, we reach the point in the Lion Sutta where the long-living, beautiful, and happy gods hear the Buddha's teaching and become terrified. Like in the case of the animals that hear the lion's roar, the sutta uses the expression "for the most part" in order to leave room for the exceptional gods who do not fear the Buddha's teaching. The Aṭṭhakathā suggests that the key to understanding this scripture's notion of *saṃvega* involves addressing the question of who does not experience the feeling of saṃvegic terror and why.

8.2 S*aṃvega* as knowledge

The Pāli commentary shows a special interest in the exceptional gods who are not terrified by the Buddha's teaching on impermanence. In its treatment of the segment that deals with the fear of the gods, the commentary hones in on the expression "for the most part." This expression is considered an acknowledgment of the fact that some gods do not experience terror when they hear the Buddha's teaching. The Aṭṭhakathā specifically mentions two groups of such exceptional gods.

> "**For the most part**." In this context, which [gods] are exceptional? The gods who are noble disciples [are exceptional]. For [some of those] gods, fear as mental terror does not arise since their influxes were destroyed. [In the case] of the one who was distressed (*saṃvigga*), because [he went on] attaining what ought be attained through striving properly, [even] distress as knowledge (*ñāṇa-saṃvega*) [does not arise].[309] For the other deities, who are engaging in the contemplation of [the phrase] "this very fear, monks, is impermanent," there is [still] fear as mental terror; yet, at the time of strong insight, fear as knowledge (*ñāṇa-bhaya*) arises.[310]

[308] Obviously, the Lion Sutta also seeks to stress that the Buddha's word reaches the gods in heaven, revealing to them that even the highest point in the universe is occupied by impermanence, suffering, and no-self.

[309] Bodhi (2012: 1685, n. 689) suggests a different way of reading this passage, according to which, these liberated gods do experience *ñāṇa-saṃvega* (distress as knowledge, or in Bodhi's translation, "the urgency of knowledge"). I have both syntactical and Buddhological concerns with Bodhi's reading. In terms of the syntax of the sentence, the most plausible option is to use the verb *na uppajjati* (does not arise), which appears in the middle of the sentence, elliptically, thus paring it once with *cittutrāsabhayam* midway through the sentence and once again with *ñāṇasaṃvego* at the end of the sentence. The use of the word "*api*" after both *cittutrāsabhayam* and *ñāṇasaṃvego* strongly suggests that the verb *na uppajjati* should apply to both of these nominatives. From a Buddhological standpoint, the implication of Bodhi's translation is that these gods who are arhats still experience some form of *saṃvega*, namely, what Bodhi calls "the urgency of knowledge." This is problematic, for by definition the fearless arhats do not experience any form of fear or distress. If, as Bodhi suggests, *ñāṇa-saṃvego* is to be understood here as "urgency of knowledge," the question is how does this make sense? Why would an arhat, a liberated being that possesses the highest knowledge, experience the "urgency of knowledge?"

[310] ***yebhuyyenā****ti idha ke ṭhapeti? ariyasāvake deve. tesaṃ hi khīṇāsavattā cittutrāsabhayampi na uppajjati, saṃviggassa yoniso padhānena pattabbaṃ pattatāya ñāṇasaṃvegopi. itarāsaṃ pana devatānaṃ tāso heso, bhikkhave, aniccanti manasikarontānaṃ cittutrāsabhayampi, balavavipassanākāle ñāṇabhayampi uppajjati* (Catukkanipāta-aṭṭhakathā 33).

The first group of gods who do not fear the Dharma are designated here as the most spiritually advanced disciples of the Buddha. The commentary explains that since these gods are liberated, i.e., their influxes were destroyed, they do not experience any kind of fear. This includes first and foremost having no "fear as mental terror" (*cittutrāsa-bhaya*).[311] Earlier in the Aṭṭhakathā commentary on this scripture, we saw the term "mental terror" (*citta-utrāsa*) being used to characterize the response of the animals that hear the lion's roar. As I have shown, the commentary practically glosses the trio of *saṃvega*, *santāsa*, and *bhaya* with the term "mental terror." When it comes to the current segment of the sutta, the commentary first wishes to clarify that having heard the Dharma, the liberated gods do not experience the same kind of mental terror that most animals endure once they hear the lion's roar.[312]

The Aṭṭhakathā, then, provides further explanation as to why a liberated being does not fear the Dharma. The commentary begins by referring to this special being as "one who was distressed" (*saṃvigga*), that is, one who experienced *saṃvega* in the past. The initial point here is that because this being has already been deeply disturbed by the Buddha's teaching, he is no longer shocked or terrified when he hears the Dharma. Next, the commentary invokes an exegetical formulation that I elaborate on elsewhere in this dissertation.[313] In short, according to this formulation, the experience of *saṃvega* enables one to generate energy, and by exerting that energy, one can pursue the Path with the proper level of effort and eventually attain nirvāṇa. For this reason, the commentary refers to such an individual as one that "has attained what ought to be attained," or in other words, an arhat. At this point, we reach a more ambiguous part of the commentary, which states that for those liberated gods, even "distress as knowledge" (*ñāṇa-saṃvega*)[314] does not arise.

The enigmatic compound *ñāṇa-saṃvega* does not appear in any other Pāli sutta or commentary. This fact alone makes the task of figuring out what it means especially challenging. The first step towards decoding the meaning of this compound involves noting that in the Aṭṭhakathā commentary on the Lion Sutta, we also find the compound *ñāṇa-santāsa*[315] ("trembling as knowledge") and *ñāṇa-bhaya*[316] ("fear as knowledge"). Thus, all three words that are used to

[311] It is also possible to read the compound *cittutrāsabhayam* as a *dvandva*, and in that case, it would mean "fear and mental terror." However, I find this possibility less appealing here.
[312] Previously, we have seen that the Aṭṭhakathā argues that even among the fearless beings, the one whose influxes are destroyed belongs in a category of his own (see pp. 68-69).
[313] See pp. 145-146.
[314] I am taking *ñāṇa-saṃvega* here as a type of Kammadhāraya-tappuruṣa (Skt. Karmadhāraya-tatpuruṣa) compmound. Grammatically, I am unpacking this compound as *ñāṇo eva saṃvego* ("distress as knowledge" or "distress that is knowledge"). There are, of course, other grammatical possibilities for unpacking this compound, some of which I address in this chapter. However, I believe this Kammadhāraya compound renders the intended meaning here, namely that *saṃvega* is to be understood in this context as a form of knowledge.
[315] Like *ñāṇa-saṃvega* this compound also does not appear in any other Pāli sutta or commentary. In the Aṭṭhakathā's unpacking of the Buddha-lion analogy, the compound *ñāṇa-santāsa* is used to characterize the gods' response to the Buddha's teaching. However, unlike *ñāṇa-saṃvega*, the Ṭīkā does not comment on the compound *ñāṇa-santāsa*, so there is not much to be gleaned from its appearance in the Aṭṭhakathā.
[316] The compound *ñāṇa-bhaya* appears in the Pāli commentaries on four suttas beside the Lion Sutta, namely, (1) the Aṭṭhakathā and Ṭīkā on the Sāmaññaphalasutta (DN 2.2), (2) the Ṭīkā on the Pāthikasutta (DN 24.5), (3) the Ṭīkā on the Kāyagatāsati-vagga (AN 1.563-584-599), and the Aṭṭhakathā and Ṭīkā on the Mettasutta (AN 7.62 and KN 4.22). The appearance of the compound *ñāṇa-bhaya* in these different texts is not particularly helpful, for most of these texts simply reference the appearance of this compound in the commentary on the Lion Sutta, which brings us back to our starting point. One exception to that is the commentary on the Sāmaññaphalasutta, where *ñāṇa-bhaya*

characterize the terror of the gods who hear the Buddha's teaching are paired here with *ñāṇa*. On its own, the Pāli word *ñāṇa* means "knowledge." It seems obvious to me that to understand the meaning of *ñāṇa-saṃvega,* one should consider it along with the other two "*ñāṇa* compounds" that appear in this text. Nevertheless, the hard question still remains: what does the Aṭṭhakathā mean when it speaks of "*saṃvega* as knowledge" or "fear as knowledge?"

I believe the next step towards understanding these compounds involves juxtaposing them with the compound *cittautrāsa-bhaya* ("fear as mental terror"). The text appears to be claiming that trembling, fear, or *saṃvega* can be a form of mental terror, yet they can also be a form of knowledge. Whether these emotions take on one form or another depends on certain circumstances. The argument the commentary will eventually make is that while most gods hear the Dharma and experience "fear as mental terror," some gods who are advanced disciples of the Buddha experience "fear as knowledge" or "*saṃvega* as knowledge." That said, before making this argument, the Aṭṭhakathā first wishes to stress that for the liberated gods, even "*saṃvega* as knowledge" does not arise. These arhats have completely eradicated fear and have attained the highest form of knowledge. Therefore, the gods' whose influxes were destroyed do not experience any form of distress.[317]

Now, when it comes to the distinction the Aṭṭhakathā makes between "fear as mental terror" and "fear as knowledge," what remains unclear is what it means exactly to experience *saṃvega* or fear as a form of knowledge. Fortunately, the Ṭīkā hints at the meaning of "*saṃvega* as knowledge" by glossing it with "understanding of appearance as terror" (*bhaya-upaṭṭhāna-paññā*). This gloss is most likely a reference to Buddhaghosa's discussion of "knowledge of appearance as terror," which is one of the eight kinds of knowledge addressed in the Visuddhimagga (Path of Purification). Examining this form of knowledge in Buddhaghosa's work calls for a bit of a detour that goes through the twenty-first chapter of the Visuddhimagga. Before I look closely into Buddhaghosa's text, I would like to first briefly tend to the Aṭṭhakathā's comments on the second group of exceptional gods, for in these comments, we learn about the gods who do experience "fear as knowledge."

The Aṭṭhakathā speaks of this second group of gods as having a unique response to the Buddha's teaching. These gods are not as spiritually advanced as the first group of liberated beings who do not experience any form of fear. The Ṭīkā explains that this second group of gods is designated as the "other gods" because unlike the first group they have not destroyed their influxes, i.e., attained nirvāṇa. These "other gods" are actually trying to overcome fear by meditating on impermanence. Although the commentary clearly states that these gods still experience fear as mental terror, we learn that they deal with their fear by bringing to mind the Buddha's saying that "even this fear is impermanent." Furthermore, in the process of their meditation practice, when these gods reach a strong level of "insight" (*vipassanā*), they experience what is called "fear as knowledge."[318] In other words, for these gods the experience of "fear as knowledge" occurs only

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is mentioned as one of four types of fear: *cittutrāsa-bhaya* ("fear as mental terror"), *ñāṇa-bhaya* ("fear as knowledge"), *ārammaṇa-bhaya* ("fear of sense-objects"), and *ottappa-bhaya* ("fear as remorse"). It is noteworthy that in these four types of fear, we find two of the fears that come up in the commentary on the Lion Sutta, that is, "fear as mental terror" and "fear as knowledge."

[317] Bodhi (2012: 1685, n. 689) provides a different way of reading this passage. I elaborate on his translation and interpretation of this passage in n. 309.

[318] This seems to be similar to "*saṃvega* as knowledge," which the liberated gods no longer experience.

at the high point of their contemplative practice.[319] To delve deeper into the meaning of experiencing fear or *saṃvega* as a form of knowledge, I will turn now to Buddhaghosa's discussion of "knowledge of appearance as terror."

8.2.1 Knowledge of appearance as terror

When the Ṭīkā commentary on the Lion Sutta glosses "*saṃvega* as knowledge" with "understanding of appearance as terror," it practically refers the reader to the Visuddhimagga. The habit of referencing a segment of Buddhaghosa's magnum opus for the sake of encouraging the reader to seek a more thorough explanation of a certain Buddhist concept or practice is quite common in the Theravāda exegetical tradition.[320] Ñāṇamoli explains that "the Visuddhimagga is probably best regarded as a detailed manual for meditation masters, and as a work of reference."[321] The structure of Buddhaghosa's text leads the reader through the progressing stages of the Buddhist path, beginning with the decision to leave the household life and ending with nirvāṇa.

Buddhaghosa's discussion of "knowledge of appearance as terror" is situated in the third to last chapter of the Visuddhimagga. In other words, it comes up in the final stages of the long and arduous path that leads to nirvāṇa. This is important to highlight for the purposes of this discussion because the stage called "knowledge of appearance as terror" is only experienced when the meditator reaches a highly advanced level of insight. This is aligned with what the Aṭṭhakathā says about "fear as knowledge," namely that it arises "at the time of strong insight."

At the beginning of the twenty-first chapter of the Visuddhimagga, Buddhaghosa states that "now, insight reaches its culmination with the eight knowledges."[322] The third of these eight kinds of knowledge is "knowledge of appearance as terror." To get a grasp on what this knowledge means, it is important to consider it within the framework of the first four kinds of knowledge. Therefore, I will discuss Buddhaghosa's "knowledge of appearance as terror" along with the kinds of knowledge that precede and succeed it in the Visuddhimagga. Furthermore, it is worth noting that in this context, the term "knowledge" entails a process of gaining a deeper and more profound understanding of the three marks of existence. For the sake of narrowing my discussion of Buddhaghosa's text, I will focus mainly on the process of attaining a deeper understanding of impermanence—the first of the three marks of existence.

The first kind of knowledge Buddhaghosa discusses is the "knowledge of the contemplation of rise and fall" (*udayabbaya-anupassanā-ñāṇa*). According to the Visuddhimagga, "the characteristics fail to become apparent when something is not given attention and so something conceals them. What is that? Firstly, the characteristic of impermanence does not become apparent because when rise and fall are not given attention, it is concealed by continuity." Buddhaghosa then further explains that "when continuity is disrupted by discerning rise and fall, the characteristic of impermanence becomes apparent in its true nature."[323] That is to say, the first

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[319] This is indicative of the fact that the second group of gods are also disciples of the Buddha, yet clearly not as spiritually advanced as the first group.
[320] On the commentarial practice of referring the reader of the Pāli suttas to the Visuddhimagga, see Ñāṇamoli 2010: xxxvii.
[321] Ibid, xlviii.
[322] Ibid, 666.
[323] Ibid, 667.

knowledge involves becoming aware of the fact that things are in a constant process of coming into being (i.e., rising) and passing away (i.e., falling). Instead of seeing things as a continuum, one must learn to pay attention to the succession of momentary events. As the meditator thus removes the veil of continuity which covers the entire field of phenomenal experience, he observes the "true nature" of things through the knowledge of rise and fall.[324]

Next, after observing how things rise and fall, the meditator reaches the stage called "knowledge of the contemplation of dissolution" (*bhaṅga-anupassanā-ñāṇa*). Buddhaghosa explains that "when he repeatedly observes in this way, and examines and investigates material and immaterial states, [to see] that they are impermanent, painful, and not-self, then if his knowledge works keenly, formations quickly become apparent."[325] The term "formations" (P. *saṅkhāra*, Skt. *saṃskāra*) denotes here more than just the fourth aggregate of "volitional formations." At this advanced stage, the meditator's field of experience becomes what Buddhaghosa calls a "field of formations."[326] The material and immaterial states the meditator observes appear to him as something that is perpetually forming and disintegrating. Yet according to Buddhaghosa, "once his knowledge works keenly and formations quickly become apparent, he no longer extends his mindfulness to their arising or presence or occurrence or sign, but brings it to bear only on their cessation as destruction, fall and breakup."[327] The point here is that after formations become apparent, i.e., the field of experience is marked by "rise and fall," the meditator no longer carefully observes the process of things coming into being and passing away. Instead, he focuses his mind solely on the destruction or disintegration of all phenomena.[328] Buddhaghosa further explains that the reason for focusing on the dissolution of the formations is that "dissolution is the culminating point of impermanence."[329]

After the segment on knowledge of dissolution, we arrive at Buddhaghosa's discussion of "knowledge of appearance as terror" (*bhaya-upaṭṭhāna-ñāṇa*). [330] This discussion opens with the following lines that describe the meditator at this advanced stage of insight.

> As he repeats, develops and cultivates in this way the contemplation of dissolution, the object of which is cessation consisting in the destruction, fall and breakup of all formations, then formations classed according to all kinds of becoming, generation, destiny, station, or abode of beings, appear to him in the form of a great terror, as lions, tigers, leopards, bears, hyenas, spirits, ogres, fierce bulls, savage dogs, rut-maddened wild elephants, hideous venomous serpents, thunderbolts, charnel grounds, battlefields, flaming coal pits, etc.,

[324] Ibid, 668.
[325] Ibid, 668-669.
[326] Ibid, 669.
[327] Ibid, 669.
[328] Buddhaghosa provides a concise description of how this process works: "consciousness with materiality as its object arises and dissolves. Having reflected on that object, he contemplates the dissolution of that consciousness" (Ibid).
[329] Ibid, 670. For more on *bhaṅga-ñāṇa* and its place within the historical development of the Buddhist doctrine of momentariness, see Rospatt 1995: 203-206.
[330] Throughout this dissertation I consistently translate the Pāli and Sanskrit word *bhaya* as "fear;" however, on this specific occasion I am following Ñāṇamoli in translating *bhaya-upaṭṭhāna-ñāṇa*, as "knowledge of appearance as terror." The reason I prefer here the translation of *bhaya* as "terror" is because on this specific occasion, the word *bhaya* might be referring to both a fearsome object and the fearful attitude one has towards that object. This duality involving the fearsome object and the fearful attitude is captured neatly by the word "terror."

appear to a timid man who wants to live in peace. When he sees how past formations have ceased, present ones are ceasing, and those to be generated in the future will cease in just the same way, then what is called knowledge of appearance as terror arises in him at that stage.[331]

There are two points I would like to highlight in this passage. First, knowledge is articulated here as a product of seeing things in a certain way. To some extent, this could be said about the previous two stages as well, for they describe knowledge as the result of contemplating the rise and fall of things and the dissolution of all formations. However, at this stage, the emphasis is not on the meditator's ability to contemplate the nature of things and see how everything changes or dissolves. Here, one begins to see impermanence itself as terrifying. At this stage of insight, the meditator realizes that all phenomena, including the aggregates constituting his own being, have either ceased to exist in the past, are ceasing to exist in the present, or will cease to exist in the future. This view of the dissolution of everything appears to that meditator as a form of great terror.

Moreover, what is unique about this stage is the elaborate comparison we find here. Buddhaghosa analogizes the way things like lions,[332] ogres, battlefields, and thunderbolts appear to the timid person who wishes to live in peace, to the way the dissolution of all formations appears to the meditator at this stage of insight. This comparison brings us to the second point I would like to emphasize in this passage, namely, Buddhaghosa's attention to the emotional state of the meditator. Ñāṇamoli mentions that in this chapter, Buddhaghosa "goes through the 'eight knowledges' with successive clarification —clarification of view of the object and consequent alterations of subjective attitude towards it."[333] What Ñāṇamoli calls the "subjective attitude" towards the object is what I call the emotional state of the meditator. The segment on knowledge of appearance as terror seems particularly invested in elaborating on this emotional state. Therefore, it presents the following simile to explain one's experience of perceiving the dissolution of all phenomena as a form of great terror.

> A woman's three sons had offended against the king, it seems. The king ordered their heads to be cut off. She went with her sons to the place of their execution. When they had cut off the eldest one's head, they set about cutting off the middle one's head. Seeing the eldest one's head already cut off and the middle one's head being cut off, she gave up hope for the youngest, thinking, "He, too, will fare like them." Now, the meditator's seeing the cessation of past formations is like the woman's seeing the eldest son's head cut off. His seeing the cessation of those present is like her seeing the middle one's head being cut off. His seeing the cessation of those in the future, thinking, "Formations to be generated in the future will cease too," is like her giving up hope for the youngest son, thinking, "He too will fare like them." When he sees in this way, knowledge of appearance as terror arises in him at that stage.

Reflecting on the meaning of this simile, Robert Sharf remarks that "the emotional valence of this advanced stage of insight is likened to that of a mother being forced to witness the execution of all three of her sons. Could one imagine a more disturbing image of human anguish? Yet, according

[331] Ñāṇamoli 2010: 673.
[332] It is noteworthy that the first terrifying thing the text mentions is the lion, apropos of my discussion of the *saṃvega* provoked by the Buddha and the lion.
[333] Ñāṇamoli 2010: xlix.

to Theravāda teachings, it is necessary to experience such despair—to confront the unmitigated horror of sentient existence—so as to acquire the resolve necessary to abandon the last vestiges of attachment to things of this world."[334] Sharf makes two key observations in this passage. The first concerns the emotional valence of this stage of insight. Through the simile of the mother witnessing the execution of her sons, Buddhaghosa outlines different emotions that constitute the meditator's subjective attitude towards what appears in his experiential field. Along with the fear and terror already mentioned above, this simile also touches on the despair and hopelessness that characterize this stage of insight. All of these emotions are encompassed in the concept of *saṃvega*. The second observation I wish to elaborate on concerns Sharf's emphasis on the necessity of experiencing sentient existence as something horrifying. The experience of terror Buddhaghosa is concerned with in this segment of his text does not belong to a specific meditator. It belongs to an advanced stage on the path to nirvāṇa. The idea that one is expected to undergo this horrifying experience is a testament to the prescriptive character we find in many of the traditional Buddhist accounts of emotions like fear and *saṃvega*. It is impossible to know whether every meditator actually experiences saṃvegic terror, yet what we can say with some confidence is that according to Buddhaghosa, experiencing the horror of sentient existence is considered a necessity.

The last part of the Visuddhimagga's segment on knowledge of appearance as terror I will touch on deals with the distinction made between the appearance of terror at this stage of insight and the ordinary sense of being afraid. Buddhaghosa goes out of his way to clarify that although the meditator sees the dissolution of all formations as a great terror, and despite being compared to a mother watching her children being executed, the meditator at this advanced stage of insight is not afraid in the ordinary sense of the word. This ties directly to the distinction that appeared in the commentary on the Lion Sutta between "fear as mental terror" and "fear as knowledge." The fear of the helpless animals that hear the lion's roar qualifies as mental terror. The fear of the person or god who hears the Buddha's teaching on impermanence for the first time and begins to come to terms with mortality also qualifies as mental terror. However, the fear of the meditator who sees the dissolution of all formations does not qualify as mental terror. According to the Buddhist exegetical framework, this fear is a form of knowledge. Unlike the helpless animals or those who hear the Dharma for the first time, the advanced meditator has no fear for his own life. The meditator's fear is not provoked by some threatening force or idea, for this fear is merely an expression or an aspect of the meditator's insight into the transient nature of things.

Finally, there is the fourth kind of knowledge Buddhaghosa discusses, namely, "knowledge of the contemplation of danger" (*ādīnava-anupassanā-ñāṇa*). In this segment of the Visuddhimagga, Buddhaghosa states that "understanding of appearance as terror is knowledge of danger."[335] With this statement we come full circle, for "understanding of appearance as terror" is the exact expression that appears in the commentary on the Lion Sutta. As one recalls it is this expression that refers the reader who wishes to understand the meaning of "*saṃvega* as knowledge" to the Visuddhimagga. To explain what Buddhaghosa means when he states that "understanding of appearance as terror is knowledge of danger," let us look at the following passage that opens this segment of the text.

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[334] Sharf 2015: 472.
[335] Ñāṇamoli 2010: 675

> As he repeats, develops and cultivates the knowledge of appearance as terror he finds no asylum, no shelter, no place to go to, no refuge in any kind of becoming, generation, destiny, station, or abode. In all the kinds of becoming, generation, destiny, station, and abode there is not a single formation that he can place his hopes in or hold on to. The three kinds of becoming appear like charcoal pits full of glowing coals, the four primary elements like hideous venomous snakes (S IV 174), the five aggregates like murderers with raised weapons (S IV 174), the six internal bases like an empty village, the six external bases like village-raiding robbers (S IV 174-75), the seven stations of consciousness and the nine abodes of beings as though burning, blazing and glowing with the eleven fires (see S IV 19), and all formations appear as a huge mass of dangers destitute of satisfaction or substance, like a tumour, a disease, a dart, a calamity, an affliction (see M I 436)….And just as that man is frightened and horrified and his hair stands up when he comes upon a thicket infested by wild beasts, etc., and he sees it as nothing but danger, so too when all formations have appeared as a terror by contemplation of dissolution, this meditator sees them as utterly destitute of any core or any satisfaction and as nothing but danger.[336]

The first thing to notice here is that the Buddhist notion of appropriate fear or terror is associated with the realization that there is no shelter, refuge, or anything one can hold onto, given that everything is impermanent. Next, Buddhaghosa goes through a long list of Buddhist schemes, beginning with the three kinds of becoming and ending with the nine abodes, and specifies how each of these appears as a form of danger. These schemes are a way of accounting for the totality of one's field of experience, which includes everything that might fall under the category of subject or object. In other words, everything is deemed here as dangerous, from the components that constitute an individual being and up to the universe as a whole. This danger, to clarify, comes from clinging to that which is in content flux. When one becomes attached to objects and the self, one places his existence in great danger. The shift here from seeing the dissolution of everything as terrifying to seeing it as "nothing but danger" is one I understand in practical terms. Buddhaghosa is making the case that it is not enough to see impermanence as terrifying, one must develop the capacity to recognize the danger of existing in *saṃsāra* for the sake of refraining from forming attachments in the future.

Since I will not be discussing the remaining four kinds of knowledge that deal with the progression from fear and danger to dispassion and equanimity, I would like to at least offer a broader perspective on the role that the Theravāda exegetical and scholastic traditions assign to fear (*bhaya*) and danger (*ādīnava*). Giustarini explains that in the Pāli exegetical literature, "*bhaya* results from paying attention (*manasikaronto*) to the threefold characteristic of phenomena, i.e. impermanence (*anicca*), suffering (*dukkha*) and no-self (*anattā*). In this light, fear seems to be a skillful response to reality, and a necessary step in the contemplative path." Giustarini further mentions that "in the Abhidhammatthasaṅgaha (Abhis I.63–64) intuitive knowledge of danger is represented by two elements (*bhayañāṇa* and *ādīnavañāṇa*) in a sequence of eight, nine, or ten insights (*vipassanāñāṇa*); it brings about detachment (*nibbidā*) and eventually culminates in equanimity (*upekkhā*)."[337]

[336] Ibid.
[337] Giustarini 2012: 517.

Now, before I return to the Lion Sutta and discuss the gods' saṃvegic response to the Buddha's teaching, it is important to keep in mind that the Pāli commentary associates knowledge of appearance as terror only with the Buddha's disciples whose "insight is strong." I do not think it makes sense to string a direct line between the typical experience of *saṃvega* and the advanced stage of insight Buddhaghosa describes in this segment of the Visuddhimagga. The Buddhist notion of a saṃvegic response to hearing the Dharma for the first time is not comparable to the terror that the meditator is expected to experience just before he attains nirvāṇa.

When it comes to the Buddhist concept of *saṃvega*, one crucial question is what type of intellectual realization is linked to this emotion. In Buddhist thought, the saṃvegic feeling of fear and distress is often regarded a form of understanding. However, what exactly does this understanding entail may vary drastically from one case to another.

8.3 The gods' saṃvegic realization

In the Lion Sutta, the gods express their saṃvegic shock by stating in clear words what they understood about themselves after hearing the Buddha's teaching.

> [These gods proclaim:] "It appears that truly we are impermanent, yet we considered ourselves permanent; it appears that truly we are unstable, yet we considered ourselves stable; it appears that truly we are non-eternal, yet we considered ourselves eternal. Truly we are impermanent, unstable, and non-eternal, taking part in individual existence." So powerful, monks, is the Tathāgata in the world along with its gods, so majestic and mighty.[338]

Earlier in this chapter, I quoted a passage from Acri's article "Between Fear, Impetus, and Disgust," where he states that *saṃvega* is the moment when the Buddha's teaching becomes impactful on a personal level.[339] I think Acri rightfully points out the "personal" aspect involved in experiencing this emotion, and in the Lion Sutta, the gods' reaction to the Buddha's word is a testament to that. While according to the commentary, the Buddha's teaching on the five aggregates speaks of the impermanent nature of every being, the gods seem solely preoccupied with their own impermanence. For that reason, they say, "we are impermanent," "we are unstable," and "we are non-eternal." The gods' insight is different from that of the advanced meditator I addressed in the previous pages, whose terror is part of his realization that everything constantly breaks apart and perishes with every passing moment. While the gods begin to fathom that their existence lacks permanence and stability, they are far from clearly seeing the ever-chancing reality that terrifies the meditator, which involves the dissolution of all formations. Although these gods have not reached that level of insight, they do manage to apply the Buddha's teaching to themselves and perceive their existence differently because of it. This personalization of the Buddha's teaching on the nature of impermanence is considered a significant feat in and of itself.

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[338] *'aniccā vata kira, bho, mayaṃ samānā niccamhāti amaññimha; addhuvā vata kira, bho, mayaṃ samānā dhuvamhāti amaññimha; asassatā vata kira, bho, mayaṃ samānā sassatamhāti amaññimha. mayaṃ kira, bho, aniccā addhuvā asassatā sakkāyapariyāpannā'ti. evaṃ mahiddhiko kho, bhikkhave, tathāgato sadevakassa lokassa, evaṃ mahesakkho evaṃ mahānubhāvoti.*

[339] Acri 2015: 219, n. 8.

Another important distinction between the fear of the gods and that of the advanced meditator is that the emotional experience of the former is articulated in the plural while that of the latter is in the singular. In the Lion Sutta, *saṃvega* is an emotion that pertains to a group rather than an individual. Whether one focuses on the animals or the gods, *saṃvega* in this scripture is a shared emotion. There are several similar cases in the Pāli canon and its commentaries where groups of people experience the emotion of *saṃvega* together at the same time.[340] In the case of the Lion sutta, I believe the assembly of monks that hears the Buddha preach the Lion Sutta is also expected to collectively feel *saṃvega*. To this, I would add that this scripture, more broadly, aims to provoke a saṃvegic response from its potential audience as a whole.

The pronoun "we" (*mayam*) is used repeatedly in the articulation of the gods' saṃvegic realization. Like a Greek chorus, the gods express their realization in unison as they proclaim: "It appears that truly we are impermanent, yet we considered ourselves permanent." The pronoun "we" here speaks directly to the notion of a collective emotional experience. Nevertheless, as I have previously claimed, the use of the first-person is also indicative of the fact that *saṃvega* is meant to affect one on a personal level. In the Lion Sutta, the collective experience of *saṃvega* and the personal aspect of this emotion come together to form an intersubjective representation of this emotive state. The gods all respond as a group to the Buddha's word, as their experience of *saṃvega* is uniquely shaped by the fact that they are all long-living, beautiful, and happy.

Furthermore, the gods who hear the Dharma seem to only partially grasp the Buddha's teaching. According to the Aṭṭhakathā, the Buddha speaks about the three marks of existence; and yet, the gods merely realize that they are impermanent (*anicca*), unstable (*addhuva*), and non-eternal (*asassatā*). All three of these adjectives are synonyms pertaining only to the first mark of existence (i.e., impermanence). In other words, it appears these gods have not yet comprehended that their existence is also permeated by suffering (the second mark), and that they are devoid of a self (the third mark). The focus on impermanence is emblematic of *saṃvega,* which is typically provoked by the Buddha's claim that everything perishes. Other emotions, such as revulsion (*nirveda*) and dispassion (*vairāgya*), as I have shown earlier in this chapter, are often considered part of the appropriate response to the pervasiveness of suffering and the denial of the self. I believe the mere mentioning here of the gods' fear is indicative of their partial understanding of the Dharma.

The Pāli commentary's sole remark on this passage focuses on the expression "taking part in individual existence." On the face of it, this expression simply indicates that the gods realize that like everything else, they too consist of the five aggregates and nothing else. However, the Aṭṭhakathā has more to say about this expression.

> **Taking part in individual existence**: Taking part in the five aggregates. Thus, when the perfectly awakened one teaches the Dharma stamped by the three marks [of existence], pointing out the faults in the cycle of rebirth, fear as knowledge enters them (i.e., the gods).[341]

[340] See for example Moggallāna Sutta (SN 51.14) and the Aṭṭhakathā commentary on the Attadaṇḍa Sutta (Sn 4.15).

[341] ***sakkāyapariyāpannā****ti pañcakkhandhapariyāpannā. iti tesaṃ sammāsambuddhe vaṭṭadosaṃ dassetvā tilakkhaṇāhataṃ katvā dhammaṃ desente ñāṇabhayaṃ nāma okkamati* (Catukkanipāta-aṭṭhakathā 33).

The final part of this exegetical remark, which mentions "fear as knowledge," may appear puzzling or at least surprising. In the lines leading up to this remark, the Aṭṭhakathā explains that only the gods who are noble disciples of the Buddha are considered exceptional because in the time of strong insight, they experience fear as a form of knowledge. As I have explained, the commentary even associates the particular experience of "fear as knowledge" with "knowledge of appearance as terror." Despite that being the case, the commentary states here that fear as knowledge enters the gods who are not disciples of the Buddha. This begs the question: how can most gods experience fear as knowledge after simply hearing the Buddha's teaching for the first time, and what happened to the qualification of experiencing fear as knowledge only when "insight is strong?"

I think the most plausible explanation of what seems like conflicting remarks by the Pāli commentary on the gods' *saṃvega* involves taking the expression "fear as knowledge" in this instance as one that means something broader than "knowledge of appearance as terror." Perhaps on this occasion, the Aṭṭhakathā is using the expression "fear as knowledge" in a wider sense, stating that any feeling of fear that is accompanied by or stems from a realization of the nature of things can fall under the category of *ñāṇa-bhaya*. Whether one speaks of the fear of the meditator who sees the dissolution of all formations or the fear of the gods who come to terms with their own mortality, both of these cases can fall under the broad category of "fear as knowledge," or better yet, "fear [grounded] in knowledge."[342]

The Aṭṭhakathā's eagerness to think of the distressing experience of *saṃvega* as a form of knowledge, or more broadly to link it to cognition, betrays the inclination of the Theravāda exegetical tradition to interpret *saṃvega* in cognitive terms. While the Lion Sutta and other Buddhist scriptures that I explore in this dissertation, often highlight the type of primal fear the emotion of *saṃvega* entails, the Theravāda exegetical tradition repeatedly stresses that when it comes to humans and gods, *saṃvega* must involve an intellectual realization. The question of what binds and separates the animal and human experiences of *saṃvega* is one I will continue to develop in the following chapters. Nonetheless, in each chapter, it will become apparent that the Pāli commentary frequently interprets *saṃvega*, and at times fear more generally, as a kind of cognition.

From a cross-cultural perspective, it is worth noting that the relationship between fear and knowledge is found in other philosophical traditions of the classical world. In Greek thought, for example, the concept of fear (*phobos*) usually involves knowledge and inference. David Konstan explains that cognition certainly plays a role in Aristotle's account of fear. According to Aristotle, in many cases, the catalyst of fear is the superior strength of another party.[343] In other words, fear often includes a recognition of the other's power and the possible threat it imposes on oneself. This notion is also apparent in the logic of the Lion Sutta, for the text likens the power of the Buddha to that of a lion, underlining the fear that both elicit once others recognize how intimidating they are.

[342] This would explain why on another occasion in the commentary on the Lion Sutta, the term "trembling as knowledge" (*ñāṇa-santāsa*) is used to describe the response of the gods as a whole to the Buddha's teaching of the Dharma.

[343] Konstan 2006: 130-132.

While the Theravāda exegetical tradition focuses on the fact that the Buddha's teaching on impermanence is what provokes the gods' *saṃvega,* clearly the power and dominance of the Buddha himself also plays a major role in this text. Unlike the Lion Sutta, there are several Pāli scriptures in which the mere figure of the Buddha causes the gods to tremble with fear.[344] Moreover, it is apparent that along with the Lion Sutta's emphasis on the power of the Dharma to elicit *saṃvega*, the text also presents the Buddha as an awe-inspiring figure. As a clear example of this, after the gods proclaim what they have realized in their *saṃvega*, we find the following statement: "So powerful, monks, is the Tathāgata in the world along with its gods, so majestic and mighty."

In the sutta itself, the fear of the embedded audience, i.e., the gods, is provoked by the Buddha's teaching; however, for us, the potential audience, perhaps it is the power of the Buddha himself that should elicit the strongest feeling of awe. To put this in a broader critical framework, one might say that there are three distinct factors that warrant a saṃvegic response in the Lion Sutta. The Buddha's teaching is, of course, the first one, yet it actually occupies a small fragment of the scripture itself. The second factor is the fear of the gods, for even if one is not terrified by the Buddha's teaching, one might still be shocked by the fact that the gods tremble with fear when they hear the Buddha's word. Lastly, the third factor that aims to provoke *saṃvega* is the powerful and majestic figure of the Buddha himself. The sutta sets out to present the Buddha as an intimidating and superior being, who has no match "in the world along with its gods."

9. The verse segment of the Lion Sutta

The Lion Sutta concludes with a few verses that briefly restate what is said in the preceding prose segment of the scripture. For the sake of avoiding repetition and belaboring some of the topics I have already addressed in the previous pages, I will extract from these verses only what can directly contribute to my discussion of this sutta and its notion of *saṃvega*. The concluding verses go as follows:

> When the Buddha, through higher knowledge, set in motion the wheel of Dharma,[345]
> the teacher, the incomparable person in this world along with its gods,
> [preached] individual existence, cessation, the origin of individual existence,
> and the noble eightfold path leading to the alleviation of suffering.
>
> Then, even those gods who are long-living, beautiful, and glorious,
> became fearful and trembled, just like the animals [when they hear the roar] of the lion.
> "We do not transcend individual existence, truly we are impermanent,"
> [the gods proclaimed] after hearing the speech of the *arahant*, the steadfast one who is liberated.[346]

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344 For examples of suttas in which the Buddha's powerful figure frightens the gods, see SN 2.9, SN 2.10, and SN 6.6. There are also more scriptures in the Pāli canon that resemble the Lion Sutta in the manner they emphasize the gods' terrified response to the Dharma. A good example of such a sutta is DN 21.4. (All the scriptures I have mentioned here make use of the root *saṃ-vij* to describe the fear of the gods.)

345 The fact that the verses speak of the setting in motion of the Dharma Wheel is another indication that the teaching that the Buddha delivers here is the famous first sermon in the Deer Park at Sarnath.

346 *yadā buddho abhiññāya, dhammacakkaṃ pavattayī.*
sadevakassa lokassa, satthā appaṭipuggalo.
sakkāyañca nirodhañca, sakkāyassa ca sambhavaṃ.

While this scripture is called the Lion Sutta, the verses clearly do not assign to the lion the same type of prominent role preserved for him in the prose segment of the text. In general, one can see that the first part of these verses focuses on the Buddha and his teaching, while the second part deals with the gods and their response to the Dharma. The lion is mentioned only once in these verses as part of a simile that is left undeveloped.

One aspect of the Lion Sutta that becomes quite clear in the verses is the role of the gods with respect to the Buddha. Both in the first and second part of this verse segment, the superiority of the Buddha over the gods becomes a point of emphasis. I believe the reader should put serious stock in the fact that these verses state that "even" (*api*) the gods became fearful when they heard the Buddha's teaching. The word "even" here strongly suggests that the sutta specifically incorporates the gods as an embedded audience to encourage or simply induce from the potential audience an intense reaction to the Buddha's word. If the glorious and powerful gods tremble with fear when they hear the Dharma, how much more fearful should lesser beings like humans be when they are exposed to the Buddha's teaching for the first time. Generally speaking, it seems the verses are more invested in the awe-inspiring figure of the Buddha than the appropriate response his teaching warrants.

My final remark on these concluding verses is best phrased as a simple question: where is *saṃvega*? Notice that in these verses, the gods, much like the animals, are described as "fearful" (*bhīta*) and are said to "tremble" (*santāsa*), yet *saṃvega* is never mentioned. The issue of what to make of the fact that *saṃvega* is absent from the verse segment, to a large extent, depends on how one assesses the relationship between the verses and the prose in this scripture. Buddhist scriptures like the Lion Sutta, in which we find a prose segment followed by verses that seem to restate what appears in the prose, often raise questions regarding the compositional history of the text. For example, one line of inquiry involves questioning whether the prose segment constitutes an earlier strata of the text, or, whether it is the other way around.

If one regards the prose segment as earlier, then the verses that follow are simply a way of rehashing the content of the preceding segment. In that case, I do not think there is any significance to the fact that *saṃvega* never appears in the verses, especially given that in the prose, fear, trembling, and *saṃvega* are essentially synonymous with one another. However, if the verses are taken to be earlier and the prose is seen as some form of expansion or development of the core verses, then the absence of *saṃvega* from the verse segment might be meaningful. In that case, it is worth raising the question of whether *saṃvega* was added to the text in a later phase because it has a more specialized meaning. In Buddhist literature, *saṃvega*, unlike *bhaya* (fear) and *santāsa* (trembling), retains strong positive connotations. Thus, by adding *saṃvega* to *bhaya* and *santāsa,* the text is able to clearly signal to the reader that in this case, experiencing fear and trembling is considered appropriate and even spiritually productive.

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ariyañcaṭṭhaṅgikaṃ maggaṃ, dukkhūpasamagāminaṃ.

yepi dīghāyukā devā, vaṇṇavanto yasassino.
bhītā santāsamāpāduṃ, sīhassevi'taremigā.
avītivattā sakkāyaṃ, aniccā kira bho mayaṃ.
sutvā arahato vākyaṃ, vippamuttassa tādinoti tatiyaṃ.

10. Conclusion

To conclude this chapter, I would like to reflect on three key points that I brought up in my discussion of the Lion Sutta and its notion of *saṃvega*. The first has to do with the Buddhist ideal of responding to reality intensely. The Lion Sutta associates different types of fear and distress with the complex experience of *saṃvega*; however, the responsive character of this emotion is the one consistent thread that runs throughout the entire text and its commentaries. According to this scripture, animals, gods, and humans are all bound by their capacity to respond. The Buddhist ideal of responding to the truth, in particular, is articulated in the Lion Sutta as a demand to be affected by the reality of impermanence and suffering, and more precisely, by the Buddha's teaching that reveals this reality. If the veil of continuity and stability is what allows one to remain mostly unperturbed by reality, then once that veil is lifted by the Buddha and the transient nature of things is exposed, one is expected to become deeply disturbed. Underlying the discussion of the specific type of response the Buddha's teaching warrants, is the Lion Sutta's strong emphasis on the significance of being moved by the reality of impermanence. *Saṃvega* is the Buddhist concept that encapsulates this demand to respond to the truth with emotional intensity.

Throughout my discussion of the Lion Sutta I highlighted a certain duality regarding the responsive character of *saṃvega*. From a thematic standpoint, the content of this scripture deals with the importance of responding to the Buddha's teaching. This is seen mainly through the spotlight the text casts on the embedded audience's reaction to the Dharma. Meanwhile, from an affective standpoint, the Lion Sutta itself is considered the Buddha's word and aims to provoke a saṃvegic response from its potential audience. In this regard, I believe the responsive character of *saṃvega* is part of both the thematic and affective dimensions of this text. This duality is a key feature of all the early Buddhist scriptures I explore in this dissertation.

The second point I would like to address concerns the notion of fear as a form of understanding, which the Aṭṭhakathā considers the philosophical crux of the Lion Sutta. The idea that fear is reflective of the way one sees and interprets the world is developed in this scripture by means of two images. The first image is that of the animals fleeing in terror when hearing the lion's roar. This image clearly intends to convey the lion's power and dominance over the other animals. Yet, at the same time, this image renders the distress of the animals that hear the lion's roar as indicative of their understanding of the threat the lion poses to them. The fear of the animals is therefore interwoven with their keen recognition of the reality of danger. The Aṭṭhakathā adds that the different animals that hear the lion's roar experience fear as a form of "mental terror." Despite the unpleasantness of this feeling, its significance is stressed time and again. Since the lion's roar signals danger for most creatures, perceiving it as such and feeling scared is not only appropriate but necessary. From a Buddhist perspective, the same logic applies to the reality of impermanence, which manifests in the form of birth, aging, sickness, and death. Recognizing these basic conditions of human existence as dangerous and being frightened of *saṃsāra* is what the Buddha expects from his disciples. It is this type of productive and essential experience of fear that is strongly associated with the concept of *saṃvega* in early Buddhist literature.

The second image employed in the Lion Sutta to develop the notion of fear as a form of understanding is the gods' terrified response to the Buddha's teaching. The Aṭṭhakathā explicitly states that the experience of fear one has after hearing the Dharma is a kind of knowledge. Yet the precise character of this "fear as knowledge" (*ñāṇa-bhaya*) varies from one case to the other. For

most gods, once they hear the Buddha's word, a certain type of fear arises as they begin to come to terms with their transient nature. In particular, the gods' newly formed fear of death is considered a novel insight into their existential situation, which they acquire thanks to the Buddha and his Dharma. In this scripture, the Buddha's ability to frighten the gods with his words clearly aims to establish the superiority of the Buddha over the gods. At the same time, the Lion Sutta praises the gods for appropriately experiencing distress when hearing the Dharma and realizing that truly they are impermanent. The *saṃvega* of most gods reveals how similar humans are to these divine beings. The fundamental difficulty of personally confronting one's mortality and the fear accompanying the realization that everything perishes applies to both gods and humans. The broader idea invoked here is that any being that finds some form of security, peace, comfort, or even hope in a permanent and stable existence is doomed to face distress once that is proven to be false. *Saṃvega* captures the shock and feeling of disillusionment, which Buddhism deems essential for realizing that nothing lasts.

Furthermore, the traditional commentary takes special interest in the notion of fear as a form of knowledge. Thus, it attributes the experience of "fear as knowledge" or "*saṃvega* as knowledge" (*ñāṇa-saṃvega*) to a specific group of gods. The Aṭṭhakathā explains that for the gods who are noble disciples of the Buddha, fear as knowledge is associated with a highly advanced stage of insight. The Ṭīkā links this experience of fear to what Buddhaghosa calls "knowledge of appearance as terror." This terrifying experience is deemed a form of understanding, yet one that is considered more profound than most gods' fearful realization of their mortality. The Pāli commentary thus draws several lines between *saṃvega* and different notions of "fear as knowledge," granting the concept of *saṃvega* a robust cognitive dimension.

The third and final point I would like to end with concerns the representation of *saṃvega* in the Lion Sutta as a shared experience. In this scripture, *saṃvega* is articulated as a public emotion rather than a private, internal state. The animals are moved in unison by the lion's roar and the gods respond collectively to the Buddha's teaching. The Buddha-lion analogy draws out the parallel between the lion's unique ability to stir up the animals around him and the Buddha's power to shake the entire universe, making even the gods tremble with fear. In this way, this sutta emphasizes the capacity of one special being to elicit a far-reaching collective emotional response. We may add to this the monastic assembly to whom the Buddha delivers his discourse as well as the potential audience of the text, for both are also intended or even expected to share the feeling of *saṃvega*.

The model of a shared emotional experience, and more specifically, the notion of a co-state-of-mind has a long history in the tradition of Indian thought. One famous example of this is the concept of *rasa* in premodern Indian aesthetics, which stands out as one highly complex model of a collective emotional experience. The prospect of thinking about *saṃvega* as a type of *rasa* is a matter I discuss elsewhere in this dissertation.[347] In this context, however, the specific point I wish to highlight is that there is justification to bring up both *saṃvega* and *rasa* as examples of premodern Indian concepts that challenge any simplistic understanding of emotion as a merely private, internal state. The Lion Sutta and its traditional Pāli commentaries consistently refer to *saṃvega* as an emotion that pertains to a group rather than an individual. The emotional response of *saṃvega* in this early Buddhist scripture is experienced, enacted, and voiced publicly.

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[347] See pp. 12-13.

The Attadaṇḍa Sutta: *Saṃvega* as an Existential State

1. Introduction

The Buddha's experience of *saṃvega* is mentioned only once in the entire Pāli canon. This singular occurrence is found in a text called the Attadaṇḍa Sutta (The Sutta on One's Own Stick).[348] In the Buddhist tradition, *saṃvega* is widely recognized as the Buddha's initial response to the reality of impermanence and suffering. This momentous event in the life of Prince Siddhārtha set him on the path to becoming the Buddha.[349] In Aśvaghoṣa's Buddhacarita, for example, the poet describes the young prince as distressed (*saṃvigna*) and despondent (*viṣaṇṇa*) after his first encounter with old age, sickness, and death.[350] The Attadaṇḍa Sutta, on the other hand, provides an account of the Buddha's *saṃvega* that is noticeably different from the Buddhacarita's well-known episode. In this sutta, first of all, there is no mention of the Buddha's three monumental encounters with suffering. Secondly, here, the Buddha himself reiterates his past experience of *saṃvega*. Instead of a narrator providing a depiction of the three encounters that gave rise to the Buddha's existential distress and how he felt at the time, in the Attadaṇḍa Sutta, we have the Buddha speaking directly about his engagement with the world in a state of *saṃvega*.

In this chapter dedicated to the Attadaṇḍa Sutta, I will bracket the question concerning the historical veracity of the Buddha's first-person account of his *saṃvega*. Nevertheless, to fully appreciate this scripture's unique perspective on *saṃvega*, I will seriously consider the fact that in the context of this sutta, the Buddha chooses to speak to a crowd of people about his experience of deep distress. The Pāli commentaries on the Attadaṇḍa Sutta discuss at length the alleged circumstances in which the Buddha uttered this discourse, his reason for doing so, and the effect the sutta had on the people who heard it directly from the Buddha's mouth. Regardless of its historical accuracy, the traditional commentary on this scripture has tremendous value from an exegetical, literary, and philosophical standpoint. For this reason, the commentary plays a pivotal role in my reading of the Attadaṇḍa Sutta and the picture of *saṃvega* I glean from it.

In an article on the topic of "aesthetic shock," Coomaraswamy briefly mentions the significance of the Attadaṇḍa Sutta's opening verse to the study of *saṃvega*.[351] In this chapter, I build on Coomaraswamy's work by exploring what the entirety of the Attadaṇḍa Sutta,[352] along

[348] The interpretation and translation of this sutta's title is a contentious matter that I will address at length in this chapter. For reasons that will become clear, I refer to this text by its Pāli title.

[349] The bodhisattva's journey to becoming the Buddha is actually traced back through countless past lives spanning many eons. Therefore one might consider the last birth of the Buddha as Prince Siddhārtha to be merely the final part of his long path to Buddhahood.

[350] Buddhacarita 3.35 and 3.45. For my analysis of these verses, see pp. 42-48.

[351] Coomaraswamy 1943: 174.

[352] Sn 4.15 (KN 5.53). The Attadaṇḍa Sutta belongs to a collection of scriptures called the Aṭṭhakavagga (The Chapter of Octads). On the key themes and compositional history of this collection, see Bapat 1951: *1-21 and Bodhi 2017: 138-148.

with its Pāli commentaries[353] and early Chinese translation,[354] can contribute to our understanding of *saṃvega* and the conception of emotions in early Buddhist thought.

There are two broad themes I discuss in this chapter. The main one concerns the nature of *saṃvega*, or to put it in the form of a question: what is *saṃvega*? In the Attadaṇḍa Sutta, the Buddha does not describe his *saṃvega* as an introspective experience, but focuses on how the world is in a state of *saṃvega*. While according to this text, *saṃvega* involves overwhelming feelings of fear and discontent, the gravity of this distressing experience lies in its capacity to radically transform the world one inhabits. In this sense, *saṃvega* joins a broader cluster of emotions in Buddhist literature that challenge the predominant "metaphor of inwardness" that is closely associated with the emotions.

Reflecting on the classical Buddhist conception of emotions, Tzohar argues that "emotions are not something that pertains to a subjective interior space, constituting mere 'inner' activations by an 'outside' stimuli, but rather already ways of experientially inhabiting the world, in which the subject and the world are, phenomenologically speaking inextricably tangled."[355] To a large extent, I think this argument holds true with respect to *saṃvega*, especially when considering how it is articulated in the Attadaṇḍa Sutta. Hence in this chapter, I contemplate *saṃvega* in existential terms, [356] tackling questions such as, what are the implications of considering *saṃvega* to be a kind

[353] There are two separate Pāli commentaries on the Attadaṇḍa Sutta. These commentaries are aligned in the way they interpret and explicate this sutta. The first commentary is the Attadaṇḍasutta-vaṇṇanā, which is located in the Suttanipāta-aṭṭhakathā. For my complete translation of this commentary, see Appendix B. Henceforth, I refer to this commentary as the Aṭṭhakathā. The second commentary is the Attadaṇḍasutta-niddesa located in the Mahāniddesa of the Khudaka Nikāya. Moving forward, I refer to this second commentary as the Niddesa. The Niddesa commentary is more extensive than the Aṭṭhakathā, and at times, it can be quite wordy and repetitive. In many cases, the Niddesa works simply like a second layer of commentary, as if it were expounding on the remarks made in the Aṭṭhakathā. Bodhi (2017: 1189-1202) offers a partial translation of the Niddesa commentary, which covers its essential parts.

[354] The early Chinese translation of the only existing parallel version of Attadaṇḍa Sutta (T.198, 189b12-189c22) is dated to the third century AD, and is attributed to the Chinese translator Zhi Qian. This discourse is part of a much longer text called the "King Virūḍhaka Scripture" (*wei lou le wang jing* 維樓勒王經). This long scripture places the preaching of the Attadaṇḍa Sutta in the aftermath of a story about a rogue king called Virūḍhaka. In the Pāli tradition, there is a clear editorial distinction between the framing narrative, which appears in the Aṭṭhakathā commentary on the Suttanipāta, and the twenty verses of the Attadaṇḍa Sutta, which are in the Suttanipāta compilation itself. The Chinese text does not make the same distinction. However, at the point in which the narrative about King Virūḍhaka ends and the verses preached by the Buddha begin, the Chinese clearly states that this (i.e., The Attadaṇḍa Sutta) is an Arthapada scripture (*yi zu jing* 義足經). (On the parallels between the Chinese Arthapada and the Pāli Aṭṭhakavagga, see Bapat 1951: *1-21). Therefore, I think the Chinese text also indicates that there is a distinction to be made between the framing narrative and the twenty verses preached by the Buddha. For my complete translation of the Attadaṇḍa Sutta's early Chinese translation, see Appendix A. For a translation of the entire "King Virūḍhaka Scripture" see Bapat 1951: 164-181. I would further like to clarify that the Chinese translation of the Attadaṇḍa Sutta is most likely not based on the Pāli version of this text. In fact, many of Zhi Qian's translations were based on earlier Chinese translations of Indic Buddhist scriptures that he merely revised. While the early Chinese translation of the parallel version of the Attadaṇḍa Sutta does not perfectly match the Pāli version, it is clearly the same scripture, and it closely aligns with the Pāli text. For more information about Zhi Qian and his canonical translations, see Nattier 2008: 116-148.

[355] Tzohar 2021: 279-280.

[356] Several scholars have referred to *saṃvega* as an existential state (Ṭhānissaro 1997; Liang and Morseth 2021; and Brekke 2002: 74). These scholars use the term "existential" in this context to describe an event or experience that has a profound impact on one's worldview. In other words, they use "existential" in the more popular, everyday sense of the word. This manner of using the term works well since in Buddhist literature, *saṃvega* is often

of state a person can inhabit? And why do some Buddhist texts assign significant value to the saṃvegic experience of an existential crisis?

The second theme I deal with in this chapter is the rhetoric associated with eliciting *saṃvega*. In the Attadaṇḍa Sutta, the use of prescriptive forms of speech is tied to the prospect of provoking this powerful emotion. According to the Pāli commentary, "after hearing this [discourse], everyone [present] was faced with *saṃvega*."[357] Simply put, the commentary states that this text as a whole was, and perhaps still is intended to provoke *saṃvega*. Most of the Attadaṇḍa Sutta's verses consist of different forms of prescription. These include injunctions, statements about how one ought to act, and verses in praise of the sage who embodies the way one should be. In the Pāli version of the Attadaṇḍa, these prescriptions are found primarily in the second section of the sutta.[358] As Bodhi observes, the Attadaṇḍa Sutta "seems to be constituted by two sections that sit loosely together."[359] The first section is comprised of the five opening verses where the Buddha speaks about his *saṃvega*, and the second section consists of the remaining fifteen verses where the Buddha delivers a more typical Buddhist teaching on attaining nirvāṇa. I base my main discussion of *saṃvega* as an existential state on the first section of this scripture, and then, I briefly address some of the rhetorical devices and strategies used to steer the audience into a state of *saṃvega* in the second part of the sutta.

2. Translation[360]

Fear is born from one's own stick;
see the people quarrel.
I will speak [now] about [my] distress (*saṃvega*);
how I was distressed [in the past]. (1)

When I saw the people quivering,
like fish in shallow water,
when I saw them hostile towards each other,
fear came upon me. (2)

The entire world had no essence,
all directions were in chaos.
Searching for a place for myself,
I did not see [one that was] unoccupied. (3)

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articulated as an event or experience that substantially changes the way one sees the world. However, the term existential also has a more technical use in continental philosophy, which might be the source of its more popular application today. Philosophers like Heidegger and Sartre use the term *existential* to address the world's ontological structure and the fundamental way the human subject is embedded in the world. In this chapter, I will discuss the merit of using the term existential in this more technical, philosophical sense. Referencing Sartre's philosophy of emotions, I will explain what it means to adopt an existential-phenomenological approach to the emotions and why I think this approach is useful when discussing the Buddhist notion of *saṃvega*.

[357] *taṃ sutvā sabbe saṃvegappattā* (Suttanipāta-aṭṭhakathā 362).

[358] In the Chinese translation, we do not find the same strong division in the text that splits it into two sections that seem loosely connected.

[359] Bodhi 2017: 147.

[360] Below is a translation of the Pāli version of the Attadaṇḍa Sutta.

Even at the end, when I saw [them still] hostile,
dissatisfaction came over me.
Then I saw the dart, here,
difficult to see, stuck in the heart. (4)

Pierced by that dart,
one flees in all directions;
but after pulling out the dart,
one does not flee nor does one sink. (5)

At this point, the trainings are recited:
Whatever fetters there are in the world,
one should not give in to them.
Having fully penetrated through sensual desires,
one should train for one's own nirvāṇa. (6)

One should be true, not impudent,
free of dishonesty and devoid of malicious speech.
Without anger, the sage should cross over
the evil of greed and avarice. (7)

One should overcome sleepiness, sloth, and torpor;
one should not dwell carelessly.
A person with nirvāṇa in mind
should not abide in pride. (8)

One should not be led into false speech;
one should not engender affection for form.
One should comprehend pride;
one should refrain from acts of violence. (9)

One should not find pleasure in the old;
one should not engender expectation for the new;
one should not feel sorrow over what is passing;
one should not be attached to attraction. (10)

Greed, I say, is the great flood;
the torrent, I say, is yearning;
the foundation is shaking;
the mud of desires is hard to cross. (11)

A sage does not turn away from the truth;
a Brahmin stands on solid ground;
having renounced everything,
one is truly called peaceful. (12)

One is truly a knower and a master of knowledge
when one understands the Dharma, [for only then,] he depends on nothing.
Behaving properly in the world,
he does not yearn for anything here [and now]. (13)

One, here, who has crossed over sensual desires,
the tie so difficult to overcome in this world;
one who has cut off the stream and is without bonds,
does not sorrow and does not stress. (14)

Let what belongs to the past wither;
may you have nothing in the future;
if you do not grasp [at anything] in between,
you will live peacefully. (15)

One who does not claim as 'mine'
anything whatsoever in name and form;
one who does not sorrow over what is nonexistent,
truly, never loses in the world. (16)

One for whom there is no thinking 'this is mine,'
or 'something [belongs] to others;'
not finding anything [at all] he considers 'mine,'
does not sorrow thinking 'it is not mine.' (17)

Not bitter, not greedy,
not lustful, everywhere the same,
I speak of this benefit
when asked about one who is unfazed. (18)

For the one who has no lust, the knower,
there is no accumulation [of merit or demerit] at all.
Abstaining from instigating,
he sees security everywhere. (19)

The sage does not speak [of himself]
as among equals, inferiors, or superiors;
peaceful, without malice,
he does not take nor does he reject. (20)

3. Framing the Attadaṇḍa Sutta

The Pāli version of the Attadaṇḍa Sutta and the early Chinese translation of this scripture are complemented by a framing narrative that focuses on the context in which this discourse was originally uttered. In the Chinese, we find a long preamble to this scripture, which tells the tale of

the massacre of the Śākya people by Virūḍhaka, the king of Kosala.[361] According to this version of the story,[362] as a young prince, Virūḍhaka felt deeply disrespected by the Śākyans. So, when his time came to ascend the throne, Virūḍhaka was eager to exact his revenge on the Śākya clan. Initially, the king hesitated to do so, for he heard that the widely revered Buddha had close ties to the Śākya people. Yet eventually, Virūḍhaka's ministers managed to convince him that the Buddha had cut off all of his social ties to the world, including those to the Śākya clan. King Virūḍhaka then launched an attack on Kapilavastu, the city of the Śākyans, but to no avail. The Śākya people were able to fend off the strong military forces of Virūḍhaka thanks to the strategic war counsel they received directly from the Buddha. Later, however, the city was sacked after several members of the Śākya clan foolishly decided to disregard the Buddha's advice. Having breached the city walls, Virūḍhaka ruthlessly slaughtered the Śākyans, allowing only a fraction of them to escape. At the time, the Buddha was dwelling with a group of monks in a forest grove in the kingdom of Kosala. Shortly after the massacre, the Buddha decided to go to the great hall in Kapilavastu accompanied by his fellow monks. On their way there, they all witnessed the aftermath of Virūḍhaka's massacre. The Buddha heard the cries of the Śākya survivors who were lying injured on the city grounds surrounded by corpses. The survivors told the Buddha how the Śākya people were unjustly killed by Virūḍhaka. In response, the Buddha began preaching the Dharma and explaining the karmic repercussions of committing such horrible acts of violence. Finally, in front of a crowd of people consisting of monks and the surviving Śākyans, the Buddha uttered a discourse, which is known in Pāli as the Attadaṇḍa Sutta.[363] Following the twenty verses that make up this scripture, the Chinese text ends by briefly mentioning that after the Buddha delivered this discourse, the monks all rejoiced.

Before moving on to discuss how the Pāli commentary contextualizes this sutta, there are two elements I would like to highlight with respect to the framing narrative of this scripture in the Chinese. The first is the structure of this narrative frame, which consists of a lengthy introduction to the scripture and a very short statement following the twenty verses. Clearly, the bulk of the weight here is placed on what occurred before the Buddha preached the Attadaṇḍa Sutta. As I will show, this is not the case when it comes to the Pāli framing of this scripture. The second noteworthy element pertains to the notion that this discourse was uttered right after a horrible tragedy has taken place. In the Chinese, the framing narrative depicts quite a disturbing and dramatic scene in which the Buddha and his followers arrive at Kapilavastu to find among the corpses of those who were slaughtered a number of injured survivors crying in pain. Preaching the discourse under these circumstances, that is, immediately after a massacre, seems to directly relate the Buddha's words to the horrific violence and suffering. By situating the Buddha's discourse in this tragic setting, the text invokes the saṃvegic notion that the Buddhist path must be pursued with urgency. The logic here is that one cannot deny the horrors of the world in the face of such carnage, and so, there is no better time to embrace the Dharma than right here and now. The Chinese verses of the scripture also touch on this issue when they refer to the opportunity a human birth provides to pursue the Path as an "urgent matter (*ji-shi* 疾事)."[364] On top of that, I believe the idea of hearing

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[361] T.198, 188a10-189b21.
[362] On the different Chinese canonical versions of the story of Virūḍhaka's massacre of the Śākyans see Pu 2013.
[363] The Chinese preamble adds that this scripture is a summary of the Buddha's teaching, meant to accommodate the transmission of the Dharma to later generations and facilitate the long-term preservation of this teaching in the world.
[364] T.198, 189c02 and 189c08.

a Buddhist discourse being preached where a massacre has just occurred, or reading a scripture immediately after a description of a terrible slaughter is also a feature of *saṃvega*. The pairing of tragic and horrifying images with the Buddha's Dharma is clearly at work here, as the exposure to the massacre sets the stage for the Buddha's word to have a substantial impact.

The framing narrative of this sutta in the Pāli exegetical literature relates the text to *saṃvega* in an even more explicit manner than the Chinese. For starters, the Aṭṭhakathā commentary on the Attadaṇḍa Sutta says the following about the origin story of this scripture: "it is said that a dispute [broke out] between the Śākyans and the Koliyans over water. Learning about it, the Blessed One thought, 'my kinsmen are disputing, I shall stop them.' [And so], standing between the two armies, he uttered this sutta."[365] After situating the preaching of the Attadaṇḍa Sutta in this context, the Aṭṭhakathā adds that the Buddha reproached the hostile people who acted wrongfully, and then, for the sake of provoking *saṃvega* through a teaching on the right practice (*sammā-paṭipatti*), he began speaking about the distress he experienced in the early stages of his life.[366] Along with these remarks, which appear before the Buddha's discourse, the Aṭṭhakathā also addresses the profound effect this sutta had on those in attendance. The commentary claims that when the Buddha finished uttering the Attadaṇḍa Sutta, everyone present was faced with *saṃvega* and immediately discarded their weapons.[367] Furthermore, upon hearing this discourse, five hundred young men of the Śākya and Koliya clans decided to renounce the household life and join the Buddha's monastic community. At that time and place, after completing a short procedure of admission, these new members of the monastic community followed the Buddha into the forest.[368]

When comparing the Pāli and Chinese framing narratives, it is apparent that the saṃvegic urgency associated with this sutta is expressed quite differently in each of the two texts. In the Pāli, the Buddha utters the Attadaṇḍa Sutta on the cusp of war to prevent violence, while in the Chinese, he delivers it immediately after a massacre has taken place. It seems that the Pāli text elects to articulate the urgency of this sutta in a thrilling fashion, as the lives of many are hanging in the balance when the Buddha makes his discursive intervention.

There is also an element of shame and humility involved in the Pāli framing of this scripture. The commentary tells us that the Buddha opens his speech by scolding the people of both clans on account of their intention to harm their relatives standing on the other side of the battlefield. This is significant for the purposes of this study since in early Buddhist literature,

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[365] *sākiyakoliyānaṃ udakaṃ paṭicca kalaho vaṇṇito, taṃ ñatvā bhagavā "ñātakā kalahaṃ karonti, handa ne vāressāmīti dvinnaṃ senānaṃ majjhe ṭhatvā imaṃ suttamabhāsi* (Suttanipāta-aṭṭhakathā 942). This story is told in greater detail in the Aṭṭhakathā commentary on the Sammāparibbājanīya Sutta ("The Sutta on Proper Wandering"), see Suttanipāta-aṭṭhakathā 362. For an English translation of this lengthier version of the Attadaṇḍa Sutta's framing narrative, see Bodhi 2017: 837-838. The Theravāda exegetical tradition also provides another framing narrative for the Attadaṇḍa Sutta. According to the commentary on the Purābheda Sutta, this scripture was originally spoken to the gods at the Great Gathering. For more on the different framing narratives of the Attadaṇḍa Sutta, see Bodhi 2017: 147-148.
The Gītā-like setting in which the exegetical tradition places this sutta is worth further exploring, yet this is beyond the scope of the current study. I will mention, however, that not only is the layout described in the Attadaṇḍa Sutta's framing narrative similar to the Gītā, in which the Buddha positioned between the two armies like Arjuna and Kṛṣṇa, but also the fact that the two armies that are standing face to face are decedents of the same family lineage links the Attadaṇḍa Sutta and the Gītā.
[366] Suttanipāta-aṭṭhakathā 942
[367] Suttanipāta-aṭṭhakathā 362.
[368] Suttanipāta-aṭṭhakathā 961.

saṃvega is often paired with shame, and in some cases, it even bears the meaning of feeling ashamed.[369] Broadly speaking, shame (*hiri*) and fear (*ottappa*) are described in the Pāli canon as qualities that "protect the world," for they both can strongly motivate a person to refrain from wrongdoing.[370] *Saṃvega*, too, occasionally has a protective function, and in this capacity, more often than not it is intended to protect one from oneself.[371]

Moreover, the Pāli commentary explicitly states that the Buddha's discourse aims to provoke *saṃvega,* and later it confirms the efficacy of the Attadaṇḍa Sutta by mentioning that everyone present was faced with distress upon hearing these verses uttered by the Buddha. Unlike the Chinese framing narrative, the Pāli depicts at some length the events that followed the Buddha's preaching of this sutta. The Aṭṭhakathā addresses the people's saṃvegic reaction and the Buddha's success in preventing the war between the two clans. Shaken up by the Buddha's discourse, the soldiers of both armies dropped their weapons to the ground in what seems like an involuntary reaction to the Buddha's penetrating words. The commentary then moves on to focus on the reverence and devotion shown to the Buddha. In so doing, the Pāli exegesis provides a glimpse into the relationship between saṃvegic fear and the Buddhist notion of conversion, a topic Brekke discusses in his book, "Religious Motivation and the Origin of Buddhism."[372]

Brekke never mentions the Attadaṇḍa Sutta or its commentaries; however, this scripture makes for an intriguing canonical case study of *saṃvega* and conversion. According to the Aṭṭhakathā, in their *saṃvega*, the people of both the Śākya and Koliya clans paid homage to the Buddha and prepared for him a lofty throne. Having ascended that throne, the Buddha related stories about his past lives and the great history of the lineage to which the Śākyans and Koliyans belong. Realizing their ancient family ties, the two clans took pleasure in their shared history and managed to resolve their conflict.[373] At this point, the devotion of the two clans to the Buddha is already made fairly obvious; nevertheless, the commentary also mentions that five hundred young men of both clans joined the monastic community and followed the Buddha into the forest. The emphasis on the youth of the men who renounced the household life to become monks is emblematic of their saṃvegic urgency. The act of converting on the spot involves here a group of people who have most of their lives ahead of them and have not yet paid their debt to society. From both an individual and a social standpoint, the lives of these young men are extremely valuable, yet in this saṃvegic frenzy, their precious future is sacrificed without a second thought.

It is evident from the first verse of the Attadaṇḍa Sutta that this text foregrounds the importance of *saṃvega*. Yet the traditional Buddhist framing of this scripture reveals that *saṃvega* is operating here on at least three different levels. The first level is the setting in which this sutta

[369] One image in the Pāli canon associated with the experience of *saṃvega* is that of a daughter-in-law who sees her father-in-law. A detailed account of this image is given in MN 37, where we are told that the daughter-in-law experiences shame (*ottappa*) and embracement (*hiri*) upon seeing her father-in-law. The Mahāhatthipadopama Sutta (MN 28) uses this image when comparing the *saṃvega* of a monk who fails to establish equanimity by bringing to mind the three jewels, with the *saṃvega* of the daughter-in-law who sees her father-in-law. This comparison seems to underscore the shame of both the monk and the daughter-in-law, an experience that should motivate them to perform their duties with more urgency and care. For more on the notion of *hiri* and *ottappa* as the "guardians of the world," see Heim 2022: 137, 217.
[370] Finnigan 2021: 923.
[371] I elaborate on this function of *saṃvega* in Chapter Five.
[372] See Brekke 2002.
[373] Suttanipāta-aṭṭhakathā 362.

was uttered. In both the Pāli and Chinese, the preamble to this scripture highlights the urgency and distressing disposition linked to this text. The second level is the Buddha's recollection of his *saṃvega*. The Buddha's past experience of existential distress is explicated in the commentary and becomes an essential part of the exegetical text. The third level is the strong effect this discourse had and should continue to have on those who are exposed to it. The commentary sets out to establish the efficacy of this scripture by discussing the original audience's saṃvegic response to the Buddha's preaching of this discourse.

4. **The Buddha's *saṃvega* in the Attadaṇḍa Sutta**

From an exegetical standpoint, the Buddha's *saṃvega* can be a sensitive topic. *Saṃvega* entails a disquiet and distressed disposition that is in clear conflict with the quintessential calmness and equanimity of the Buddha.[374] In the Attadaṇḍa Sutta, *saṃvega* includes feelings like fear and discontent that by definition a buddha or an arhat no longer experiences. The Pāli commentary on the Attadaṇḍa Sutta handles the possible tension around the Buddha's *saṃvega* by explaining that in this sutta, the Buddha is speaking about the *saṃvega* he experienced prior to his nirvāṇa, that is, before he became a buddha.[375] This makes perfect sense, despite the fact that the Pāli scripture never actually fleshes this out. The sutta merely articulates the Buddha's experience of *saṃvega* in the past tense, which could mean it occurred a week before the Buddha preached the Attadaṇḍa Sutta or in his youth when he was still a young prince. More specifically, it is noticeable that the sutta does not explicitly relate the Buddha's experience of *saṃvega* to a famous event from his past, such as the well-known first encounter with suffering outside the palace walls. Nevertheless, the commentary's assertion that the Buddha's *saṃvega* must be prior to his nirvāṇa is a reasonable and simple way to discard any notion that the Buddha had experienced distress or fear after his awakening.

The tension around the Buddha's *saṃvega* becomes apparent when juxtaposing the Pāli version of the Attadaṇḍa Sutta with the early Chinese translation of this scripture. For example, in the last two legs of the Pāli text's opening verse, the Buddha says, "I will speak [now] about [my] distress (*saṃvega*); how I was distressed [in the past]."[376] In the same stanza of the Chinese text, the Buddha states, "Now, I wish to speak about how I was distressed (*shang* 傷, *saṃvega*?), and the path I follow, which eradicates fear."[377] At first glance, it seems the Chinese's opening verse significantly differs from the Pāli. Instead of casting the spotlight solely on the Buddha's distressing experience of *saṃvega*, as the Pāli text does, the Chinese text immediately turns our attention to the fact that the Buddha teaches the path that eliminates fear. Perhaps the Chinese translation purposefully softens the tension surrounding the Buddha's *saṃvega* by immediately asserting that ultimately the Buddha had rid himself of any feeling of distress or fear, and proceeded on to help others attain this coveted state.

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[374] On the tension between *saṃvega* and the Buddhist ideal of calmness see Webster 2005: 102-103; and and Lopez 2012: 108.

[375] Even claiming that prior to his awakening the Buddha experienced fear and distress is something one should not take for granted. The Buddhist tradition views the bodhisattva as a special being that has purified his karmic stream for eons, and therefore, the depiction of the bodhisattva in his final birth amidst an existential crisis is not at all trivial.

[376] *saṃvegaṃ kittayissāmi, yathā saṃvijitaṃ mayā.*

[377] 今欲說義可傷　我所從捨畏怖.

As I will show in this chapter, my reading of the Chinese translation makes it clear that the text reflects a deep understanding of Buddhist doctrine, and more importantly, that it successfully captures the crux of the Attadaṇḍa Sutta. For the purposes of this study, one crucial matter I believe the Chinese text clarifies right from the start is that *saṃvega* is not the main goal of the Buddhist path. Buddhism is not about experiencing distress, but about overcoming fear and suffering. As essential as *saṃvega* is to a person pursuing nirvāṇa, it is only useful up to a certain point. This becomes evident when reading the entire corpus of early Buddhist scriptures that deal with *saṃvega*. In Chapter Five, I address this issue when discussing a canonical case where an arhat scoffs at the prospect of experiencing *saṃvega* at his advanced spiritual stage.[378]

In short, when comparing the Pāli version of the Attadaṇḍa Sutta to the early Chinese translation of this scripture, the noticeable differences are mainly stylistic and structural. While the Pāli begins by speaking about the Buddha's *saṃvega* and then pivots, laying out some of the basic principles that lead to liberation from fear and suffering, the Chinese text begins by clarifying that the Buddha's *saṃvega* and his path are ultimately about eliminating fear and suffering, after which it continues along similar lines to the Pāli.[379] It seems that the Chinese translation states right from the first verse that the Buddha's path is about eradicating fear in order to provide a more consistent and coherent version of this scripture. In so doing, the Chinese text's opening verse softens the uneasy fit between the scripture's first five verses on *saṃvega* and the remaining fifteen verses that deal with attaining nirvāṇa.

It is important to acknowledge that the tension surrounding the Buddha's *saṃvega* is tied to a larger issue, namely, the complex and often conflictual attitude towards fear in early Buddhist thought. In the following pages, as I look more closely at the opening verses of the Attadaṇḍa Sutta, it will become clear that the possibility of interpreting fear in a negative or positive sense is built into this scripture.

The ambivalent character of fear in early Buddhist thought has caught the attention of several contemporary scholars. For example, Brekke speaks of "the paradox of fear" in early Buddhist texts, and Giustarini points to the "seemingly contradictory nature" of fear in the Pāli canon. More specifically, Brekke presents the paradoxical character of fear by underscoring the "double role" it has in early Buddhism. Fear is considered both a source of suffering one seeks to be freed from as well as a motivating force one depends on in pursuit of the Buddhist path.[380] *Saṃvega*, in particular, according to Giustarini, functions as a "dramatic switch," marking a turning point from a detrimental and inappropriate form of fear to a beneficial and appropriate one.[381] This interpretation of *saṃvega* underlines its instrumental role in allowing one to alternate between a paralyzing and incentivizing mode of fear. Brekke and Giustarini's analysis of the double role of fear is extremely helpful when trying to make sense of the seemingly conflictual use of terms like *bhaya* and *santāsa* in early Buddhist canonical texts.

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[378] See pp. 170-171.
[379] I continue to develop the comparison between the two versions of the Attadaṇḍa Sutta in this chapter; however, for a more robust account of the similarities and distinctions between the two versions see my annotated translations in Appendix A.
[380] Brekke 2002: 94; and Giustarini 2012: 512.
[381] Ibid, 523.

In a more recent article, Brownyn Finnigan examines this characterization of fear as paradoxical in the Pāli Nikāyas. In so doing, Finnigan offers a "refined analysis of fear" in the early Sutta literature that aims to "resolve the paradox of fear."

> The Nikāya suttas thus appear to assume a refined conception of 'danger' and thus of the object of fear. The object of fear is danger, but an object is properly (actually, ultimately, truly) dangerous if causally related to karmic suffering. Call this the refined analysis of fear. Fear is or causes a wise response to a situation rather than an improper reaction, we might say, when the individual properly perceives the presence of danger. To properly perceive the presence of danger, however, is to realise, with a disturbed sense of urgency and aversion, that the object is a cause of karmic suffering.[382]

What Finnigan calls "karmic suffering" is the suffering one is expected to endure in the future due to one's (wrongful) actions in the past or present. A common example of this is the suffering one might experience when reborn in hell on account of the bad karma accumulated in a present life. Finnigan wishes to draw a clear line between the inappropriate fear of suffering and the appropriate fear of karmic suffering. According to his refined analysis of fear in the Pāli canon, if one is scared of a snake, for example, one's fear may be interpreted as appropriate or inappropriate depending on what actually causes one to be scared. If one fears the snake because one does not wish to feel pain and possibly die in agony, then one is inappropriately scared. However, if one fears the snake because one does not wish to end this human birth and squander the opportunity it presents to practice the Dharma, then one's fear is appropriate.[383] In this sense, one might say that the person who is scared of dying in agony is simply afraid of suffering and death, while the one who is scared of squandering the opportunity to practice the Dharma in this life is afraid of karmic suffering.

Finnigan's analysis certainly has exegetical merit; however, I would rather refrain from attempting to "resolve the paradox of fear" in the Pāli canon for two reasons. First of all, the task of resolving or removing some of the inconsistencies and tensions found in the Pāli canon is one I leave to the traditional Buddhist exegetes and scholiasts. As a critical scholar of Buddhism, I am not particularly concerned with absolving large bodies of Buddhist texts, like the Pāli canon, from certain conflicts and contradictions that they will surely have. Second, from a philosophical standpoint, I consider the prospect of understanding the concept of fear in early Buddhist scripture as an unresolved paradox to be a more accurate and "generous"[384] way of reading these canonical texts. The Pāli canon does not provide us with a single, consistent conception of fear, and I believe this is an example of what makes the canon a complex and sophisticated textual corpus.

What I find most helpful in Finnigan's analysis is the emphasis on the contextual nature of fear in the Pāli canon. For Finnigan, it is the karmic framework, or what I refer to as the soteriological context, that can assign positive value to the experience of fear. This is an important point, for as I show in this dissertation, Buddhist thought includes several frameworks, such as the ethical, the aesthetic, and the soteriological, which render the experience of fear meaningful and essential. *Saṃvega,* specifically, emerges as a key Buddhist term for revealing the different contexts in which the experience of fear is deemed favorable and even necessary.

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[382] Finnigan 2021: 924.
[383] Ibid.
[384] By "generous," I mean that it interprets fear in early Buddhist scripture as a more complex concept.

4.1 The origin of fear

The opening verse of the Attadaṇḍa Sutta is perplexing, especially its first leg, which includes the enigmatic compound "*atta-daṇḍa.*" Norman and Bodhi have addressed the main philological challenges of interpreting and translating this verse from the Pāli. I will add my comments to their valuable work, while also introducing to this discussion some of the issues and insights that come out of the early Chinese translation of this scripture.[385] Moreover, considering my specific interest in what the Attadaṇḍa Sutta's opening verse can tell us about the Buddhist concept of *saṃvega*, I will pay special attention to the exegetical and philosophical implications of the different readings of this stanza. Before dissecting the sutta's opening verse and looking into its different parts, here is the verse in its entirety:

> Fear is born from one's own stick;
> see the people quarrel.
> I will speak [now] about my distress (*saṃvega*);
> how I was distressed [in the past].[386]

When analyzing this verse, the less difficult part to deal with consists of the third and fourth legs, in which the Buddha announces he intends to speak about his past experience of *saṃvega*.[387] This announcement sets the stage for the following four verses that expound on the Buddha's existential crisis. The more ambiguous part of this verse consists of the first two legs. These legs are made of what seems to be a general statement about the origin of fear– "fear is born from one's own stick"– followed by the use of the second person to directly address the audience– "see the people quarrel."

The Aṭṭhakathā commentary explains that in the first two legs of this verse, the Buddha reproaches the Śākya and Koliya people on account of their wrongful actions. Having done that, he proceeds to talk about his *saṃvega* in legs three and four, as he begins to deliver a teaching on the right disposition and conduct. This explanation is a good starting point, yet it still leaves a number of unanswered questions. For example, what does it mean that "fear is born from one's own stick?" Why does the Buddha make this statement in the opening leg of the sutta? And how does this general statement about fear relate to *saṃvega*, which is also brought up in the opening verse of the scripture?

Any attempt to make sense of the first verse, and perhaps of the entire scripture hinges on how one unpacks the Pāli compound *atta-daṇḍa*. This compound, which also appears in the title of the Pāli sutta, is made of two elements *atta* and *daṇḍa*. The first element, *atta*, could be taken as two different words in this context. It could either be the noun *atta* (Skt. *ātman*), which means "self," or the past participle *atta* (Skt. *ātta*), which means "taken up." The second element of the compound, *daṇḍa*, is a word that like many others in Pāli has several different meanings. The literal meaning of *daṇḍa* is "stick," yet by metaphorical extension it also means "punishment" and

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[385] In so doing, I also consider Bapat's pioneering work on the Attadaṇḍa Sutta from 1951.
[386] *attadaṇḍā bhayaṃ jātaṃ,*
janaṃ passatha medhagaṃ.
saṃvegaṃ kittayissāmi,
yathā saṃvijitaṃ mayā.
[387] As I mentioned earlier, in the fourth leg of the Chinese, the Buddha also announces his desire to speak about how he freed himself from fear (T.198, 189b13).

"violence,"[388] two actions that in the ancient world often involved the use of a stick. Another factor that makes the *atta-daṇḍa* compound so hard to interpret and translate has to do with the flexibility of the Pāli grammar. In this verse, it is perfectly plausible to unpack *atta-daṇḍa* in at least three different ways, depending on what type of compound one considers it to be.[389]

The Aṭṭhakathā commentary provides the following explanation for the first two legs of the opening verse:

> Whatever fear is born in the world, whether pertaining to this life or to the next life, all of it is **fear born from one's own stick** (*daṇḍa*). [In other words, fear is] born because of one's own misconduct. That being so, "**see the people quarrel**," i.e., see the Śākya people and the others quarrel, hurt, and harass each other.[390]

This passage unpacks the compound *atta-daṇḍa* in a concise fashion, taking it to mean "one's own misconduct."[391] In so doing, the Aṭṭhakathā extracts from the root text a philosophical claim about the origin of fear. The claim is that fear is not rooted in some external source that poses a threat to one's life or to that which one holds dear; instead, "fear comes from one's own misconduct." Whether purposefully or not, the Pāli commentary's interpretation of the Buddha's statement about the origin of fear places his words in strong tension or even contrast with the famous Upaniṣadic phrase: "Fear truly comes from another" (*dvitīyādvai bhayam bhavati*). [392]

Before I further explore the conception of fear and its origin in the Theravāda exegetical tradition, there are two other points I would like to highlight in the quoted passage from the Aṭṭhakathā. The first is the statement that any fear that arises in the world either pertains to this life or to the next life. There is a subtle observation made here about the temporality of fear, which considers it as an emotion directed at the present or the future, but not the past. The second point is that according to the commentary, the first leg of this verse is supposed to seamlessly relate to the second leg. If that is the case, then the sutta is saying that fear comes from one's own misconduct and this is revealed in the way people quarrel (which in this instance, involves the Śākyans and their rival kinsmen).

The Aṭṭhakathā commentary sheds some light on the opening verse, yet its concise style requires further clarification. Therefore, I turn now to the Pāli Niddesa commentary to delve deeper into the meaning of this sutta. The Niddesa elaborates specifically on the manner in which the

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[388] Norman 2001: 380-381; and Bodhi 2017: 1539, n. 2003.

[389] This is not just a hypothetical matter. In my translation, I follow the Pāli commentaries and consider this to be a determinative Tappurisa (Skt. Tatpuruṣa) compound, and on the other hand, Norman and Bodhi reject the commentary's position and consider it to be a possessive Bahubbīhi (Skt. Bahuvrīhi) compound. A case could be made that one should consider this as a descriptive Kammadhāraya-tappuruṣa (Skt. Karmadhāraya-tatpuruṣa) compound. In fact, it seems that this is how the Chinese translator understood it.

[390] *yaṃ lokassa diṭṭhadhammikaṃ vā samparāyikaṃ vā bhayaṃ jātaṃ, taṃ sabbaṃ* ***attadaṇḍā bhayaṃ jātaṃ*** *attano duccaritakāraṇā jātaṃ, evaṃ santepi* ***janaṃ passatha medhagaṃ****, imaṃ sākiyādijanaṃ passatha aññamaññaṃ medhagaṃ hiṃsakaṃ bādhakant* (Suttanipāta-aṭṭhakathā 942).

[391] The compound *atta-daṇḍa* is explained here as "*attano duccaritakāranā*," which literally means "due to the bad conduct of oneself." Norman (2001: 380) explains that in the Jain tradition the term *daṇḍa* is sometimes used for "action" or "deed," much like the word *karma*. Yet it also has a negative valence, therefore, it is plausible to understand it as "misconduct" or "bad action."

[392] Bṛhadāranyaka Upaniṣad 1.4.2

claim that fear originates from one's own misconduct[393] relates to the distinction between the fear that pertains to this life and the fear pertaining to the next life.

First, the Niddesa provides an example explaining how the fear that pertains to this life originates from one's own misconduct by describing a certain sequence of events. This sequence begins with a person performing wrongful actions such as killing living beings, taking what is not given, breaking into houses, or telling lies. That person is then captured and brought to the king as a criminal awaiting punishment (*daṇḍa*). The king censures him, after which the person becomes frightened, experiencing misery and grief. But the king is not satisfied yet, so he imprisons that person and inflicts on him various horrible forms of punishment, which include beating him with a whip, a cane, and a short stick (*daṇḍa*). Once again, the person is frightened, experiencing misery and grief. Every time the commentary says the person is frightened and miserable, it goes on to raise the question: "From where does this fear, misery, and grief come?" to which it immediately provides the answer: "It is born from one's own misconduct."[394]

In a similar fashion, the Niddesa also explains how fear pertaining to the next life originates from one's own misconduct. It uses the same example of a person who performed those wrongful actions mentioned previously, yet this time, on account of his bad karma, that person is reborn in hell after death. In hell, he undergoes various kinds of horrible torture. For example, the guardians in hell shove a hot iron spike through his hands, feet, and chest, and as terribly painful as this is, the person does not die as long as his bad karma is not exhausted.[395] At this point, the Niddesa repeats the formulaic question: "From where does this fear, misery, and grief come?" To which the answer is always the same: "It is born from one's own misconduct."[396]

In the course of the Niddesa's explanation there is a sophisticated use of the different meanings of the word *daṇḍa*. Like the Aṭṭhakathā, the Niddesa begins by glossing *daṇḍa* with misconduct; however, it also uses the word *daṇḍa* in the sense of punishment and even as a stick used to inflict a certain form of corporal punishment. The notion that fear originates from misconduct is explained here through a causal sequence. The first chain in this sequence is misconduct, which often takes the form of a violent action. However, later the Niddesa explains that the moment fear actually creeps in happens when a person faces the consequence or simply the punishment for his misconduct. It is noteworthy that the commentary provides both a "worldly" version of retribution for misconduct that is enacted by the king, as well as a "cosmic" one, which is meted out in hell according to one's karma. One key point the Niddesa makes is that from a causal or metaphysical standpoint, fear does indeed originate from misconduct; nevertheless, one might only begin to experience fear when faced with the consequences of one's bad actions. Therefore, fear is born from one's own stick (*daṇḍa*) both in the causal sense, for it originates, for example, from the stick associated with misconduct and more specifically with violence, as well as in the phenomenological sense, for one experiences fear when facing the stick of civil punishment or karmic retribution.

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[393] According to the Niddesa, there are three types of misconduct: bodily, verbal, and mental misconduct.
[394] Mahāniddesa 170.
[395] The Buddhist descriptions of various forms of torture that people suffer in hell are another strategy for provoking *saṃvega*. On this strategy, see pp. 54-55.
[396] Mahāniddesa 170.

4.1.1 Questioning the Pāli commentary

Karma plays a crucial role in the Pāli commentary's conception of fear as that which is rooted in one's own misconduct. The Niddesa, in particular, looks at the Attadaṇḍa Sutta through a Buddhist scholastic prism, which produces the aforementioned causal explanation of the origin of fear. A question that I think is worth asking at this point is whether the Pāli commentary offers the most plausible interpretation of the opening leg of the Attadaṇḍa Sutta.

Norman and Bodhi, for instance, reject the Pāli commentary's reading of this opening leg. Both scholars provide a translation of the sutta's first leg that deviates from the entire discussion in the commentary regarding one's misconduct as the origin of fear. They do so by considering the first element in the *atta-daṇḍa* compound, i.e., *atta*, as the past participle "taken up" or "embraced." Thus, Norman translates the Attadaṇḍa Sutta's opening leg: "Fear comes from [the one who] embraced violence,"[397] and Bodhi translates it: "Fear has arisen from one who has taken up the rod."[398] The two translations are fairly similar, even though Norman translates *daṇḍa* as "violence," while Bodhi chooses the more literal translation of "rod." Both scholars provide sound philological justification for their translation, referencing at least one example of a canonical case where the compound *atta-daṇḍa* means "one who has taken up the rod" or "one who embraced violence."[399] That said, what is most intriguing to me is the hermeneutical implications of their reading of the Attadaṇḍa Sutta's opening verse. According to Norman and Bodhi, the sutta opens by stating that fear comes from the one who has taken up a stick, i.e., the person who resorts to violence. This interpretation of the text suggests that it is not necessarily one's own misconduct or violence that is the root of fear, as the Pāli commentary states. Instead, it is the general act of embracing violence or the threatening act of taking up a rod that is the origin of fear. Thus, one's own fear might very well be caused by someone else's misconduct or violence. In comparison to the Pāli commentary, it seems Norman and Bodhi offer a more "commonsensical" understanding of the Attadaṇḍa Sutta's opening leg. Their reading provides an alternative to the Pāli commentary's "karma-centric" notion of fear, which conceives of fear by looking strictly at the causal chain of one's past actions for the sake of sufficiently explaining what gives rise to this emotion. Norman and Bodhi's translation of the opening leg can perhaps be simply reduced to the following statement: fear is born out of violence.

Although Norman and Bodhi focus solely on the Pāli version of the Attadaṇḍa Sutta, the early Chinese translation of this scripture can complement their reading of the text quite nicely. According to the Chinese, the opening leg reads: "Fear comes from lack of compassion."[400] This seems close to Norman and Bodhi's interpretation of the opening verse, for where there is no compassion and in its place people revert to animosity and violence, sooner or later fear is born. Norman and Bodhi's reading of the Attadaṇḍa Sutta's opening leg makes sense from both a Buddhological and philosophical standpoint. It also works well with the traditional contexts in which this sutta was allegedly uttered, which, as I have mentioned, place this discourse either in the midst of or immediately after an extremely violent episode. However, it seems that this reading, unlike the Pāli commentary's interpretation, does not seek to provide a comprehensive answer to

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[397] Norman 2001: 122.
[398] Bodhi 2017: 315.
[399] Norman 2001: 380-381; and Bodhi 2017: 1539, n. 2003.
[400] 從無哀致恐怖.

the question concerning the origin of fear. The karma-centric notion that fear is rooted in one's own misconduct has the potential to explain the origin of any type of fear, not merely fears that are related to violence. To elaborate on this point, there is a need to briefly address the relationship between the Buddhist conception of fear and the classical Indian ideal of fearlessness (*abhaya*).

4.1.3 The promise of fearlessness

The karma-centric notion of fear we find in the Pāli commentary is compatible with a classical Indian representation of yogis and sages as powerful beings that have abandoned all fear.[401] Heim makes the following remarks on the Buddhist understanding of fearlessness:

> A central promise of Indian therapies of emotions held out that fear could be completely eradicated. A Buddhist practice can serve as our example. The Buddha insisted that all beings fear death, even those in the worst hells. (In India, hells are not eternal and one is reborn from them once one's evil karma is burned off.) But why would beings in hell fear death if death is a deliverance from their suffering? The answer is that fear of death and the means that usually take us there—violence and illness—is so deeply ingrained in human nature that we will always shrink from it. The only exception is the awakened person: by attaining nirvana, one becomes utterly free from fear. These thoughts suggest simultaneously the primal nature of fear, and the extraordinary ambition that is the religious goal. Fear can actually be completely eradicated.[402]

In the Pāli canon, more specifically, a line is often drawn between the ignorant person who engages in misconduct and lives in fear, as opposed to the wise and peaceful person who avoids wrongdoing and lives with no fear.[403] There is a similar distinction made in the Attadaṇḍa Sutta between the unenlightened person who finds no security in the world[404] and the sage who finds security everywhere.[405] One might even say that if fear could simply originate from an external source, such as a threatening person who embraces violence, it would have been impossible for an arhat or a buddha to ever attain the coveted state of fearlessness. It is precisely because fear is dependent solely on one's own intentions and actions, or more technically on one's karmic stream, that it is considered that which one can be fully controlled and eventually eliminated.

Some might consider the line of reasoning I present here to be circular or flawed, for it seems to intentionally seek out a notion of fear that can accommodate the classical Indian ideal of fearlessness, which is central to Buddhism and other śramaṇic traditions. This is a fair critique; nonetheless, I think the notion that fear comes from one's own immoral action is philosophically potent, especially when considered in the context of classical Indian thought. Underlying the Pāli commentary's position on the origin of fear is the conception that one's own misconduct reveals the ever-present potential for wrongful action. Through one's own violence, for example, one

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[401] See for example Bhagavadgītā 2.56.
[402] Heim 2022: 84.
[403] Finnigan 2021: 918.
[404] Verse three speaks about the Buddha's experience of the world as a chaotic and insecure place. The Niddesa elaborates on this, explaining that prior to the Buddha's awakening, he realized there is no refuge, cavern or safe place one can inhabit in the world that is not already pervaded by suffering.
[405] Verse nineteen, which speaks of the person embodying the ideal disposition and conduct, says that "abstaining from striving, he sees security everywhere." The Aṭṭhakathā explication of this verse adds that the sage "sees only fearlessness (*abhayam eva*) everywhere."

comes to understand that the possibility of violence is always looming. This is a central aspect of the classical Indian notion of fearlessness, which stresses that being fearless entails more than overcoming one's most primal fears. Fearlessness, in Indian thought, is about eliminating the fear for others, as much as it is about eliminating the fear of others. Buddhists and Jains are known for holding the view that one's mere existence (breathing, eating, sleeping, etc.) typically involves harming other living beings. In this regard, overcoming the fear for others involves an extreme level of ethical awareness and a strong commitment to the practice of non-violence (*ahiṃsā*). As Heim puts it, "fearlessness is the condition of not having fear in the first place. Abhaya is a feeling of security, the lack of a need to fear. It occurs when people consider how they might offer it to others. *How can I live so that other creatures need not fear me?* Fearlessness is achieved when others grant it."[406] This notion of fearlessness, which includes transcending the fear for others, can give credence to the idea that fear comes from one's own misconduct, and that fearlessness is tied to the practice of leading a moral life.

The karma-centric notion of fear we find in the commentary on the Attadaṇḍa Sutta considers both one's fear and the conditions that provoke it as causally produced by one's own karmic past. Whether one considers this view as a form of idealism (since seemingly it assumes one's reality is generated by one's past karma) is a question that goes beyond the scope of this study. What is clear, however, is that the Theravāda exegetes are committed to the idea that fear ultimately originates from one's own doings.

4.1.4 Appropriate fear and the *atta-daṇḍa* compound

The last issue I will address with respect to the opening verse will bring this discussion back to the term *saṃvega*. I have already addressed the hermeneutical and philosophical differences between the Pāli commentary's reading of this opening verse and the reading preferred by Norman and Bodhi. Yet, there is another important layer of meaning to this opening verse that neither the traditional exegetes nor the contemporary scholars mention. In the Attadaṇḍa Sutta, I would argue, the compound *atta-daṇḍa* and the fear born from it could also be understood in a positive way. Notice that whether one takes *atta-daṇḍa* to mean "one's own misconduct" like in the traditional commentary or "the one who embraced violence" like in contemporary scholarship, it is clear that both of these options consider *atta-daṇḍa* as something negative and the fear that arises from it as harmful. But if one keeps in mind the double role fear has in the Pāli canon, it also makes sense to interpret the term *atta-daṇḍa* as "self-punishment" or "self-discipline." In this sense, *atta-daṇḍa* or "one's own stick" refers to that which keeps one from going astray. The fear born from this method of self-restraint is an appropriate or useful form of fear. It is the fear that prevents one from engaging in transgressive behavior. In Buddhism, the notion of appropriate fear is strongly associated with *saṃvega*.[407]

If we go back now to the opening verse and reread it, yet this time, take "one's own stick" to mean that by which one restrains oneself and the fear originating from it as useful, the verse makes sense but in a new way. First, it begins by stating that appropriate fear comes from self-punishment. Then, it says, "see the people quarrel," i.e., see those who lack the appropriate fear

[406] Heim 2022: 34.

[407] Giustarini 2012: 523. In Chapter Five, I discuss at length a number of canonical examples that use *saṃvega* in this particular sense.

foolishly hurt each other. [408] The next two legs follow this naturally, as the Buddha now wishes to speak about his *saṃvega*, i.e., about his experience of the appropriate form of fear that the people around him seem to lack.

To wrap up this analysis of the Attadaṇḍa Sutta's first verse, I would like to divide the different readings of this verse according to the manner in which they handle the relationship between fear (*bhaya*) and *saṃvega*. As I have shown, the first two legs of the verse deal with fear and the second two legs with *saṃvega*. In the Chinese translation, both fear (*kongbu* 恐怖) and distress (*shang* 傷, *saṃvega*?) are understood in a negative way. Fear comes from lack of compassion and distress is what the Buddha's teaching eventually aims to eliminate. The Chinese text is thus consistent and straightforward in its conception of fear and distress, considering both as obstacles on the path to liberation. Next, we have the way the traditional Pāli commentary reads this verse and the alternative reading that Norman and Bodhi propose. These different readings, traditional and contemporary alike, all consider fear to have a negative valence and *saṃvega* to have a positive one. This way of reading the text highlights the distinction between the negative fear addressed in the first two legs (i.e., *bhaya*) and the positive fear found in the last two legs (i.e., *saṃvega*).[409] Finally, there is the reading I suggested, which sees both fear and *saṃvega* in a positive way. Much like in the Lion Sutta, for example, where terms such as fear (*bhaya*) and trembling (*santāsa*) are considered favorable when appearing next to *saṃvega,* so in the opening verse of the Attadaṇḍa Sutta, the fear born from one's own stick joins *saṃvega* as an incentivizing force on the path to nirvāṇa.

4.2 *Saṃvega* as a perceptual mode

The Pāli commentary prefaces the second verse of the Attadaṇḍa Sutta by stating that the text is "showing [here] the manner by which [the Buddha] was distressed."[410] This statement applies to the four following verses, each of which casts a slightly different light on the Buddha's *saṃvega*. In the second verse of the Pāli version, the Buddha's account of his experience begins

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[408] In the Aṭṭhakathā's reading of this scripture, the Buddha supposedly says that fear comes from misconduct, and because such is the case, he turns our attention to the people engaging in strife. I guess the logic here is that the people on the battlefield or the people we see in the world quarreling are exemplary of misconduct. Norman's reading also seems to interpret the first verse in this way. Therefore, he suggests that the opening leg says: "Fear comes from the one who embraced violence," and the next leg, then, points to an obvious demonstration of embracing violence when it says: "look at people quarreling" (Norman 2001: 381). If this is how one understands the verse, it is clear that violence or misconduct is what ties the first leg to the second one. However, what remains unclear is the role of fear in all of this. When the Buddha says: "see the people quarrel," how does this relate to the fear he speaks of in the first leg? Perhaps, the idea is that people are quarrelling out of fear? Or that the people's misconduct will eventually lead to fear and suffering? These are plausible options for making sense of this verse, but I am suggesting an entirely different interpretation that I believe works just as well. In my reading, the Buddha opens by stating that useful fear comes from one's own stick (i.e., self-discipline), and then he points to the people on the battlefield or maybe all around him who quarrel because they lack this useful type of fear, they lack the stick of discipline. In support of the reading I am suggesting here, I will also point out that while the Niddesa has little to say about the Buddha's *saṃvega* mentioned in the opening verse, it does gloss *saṃvega* with a number of words that mean fear including *bhaya,* which as mentioned, is the Pāli word used for fear in the opening leg of the Attadaṇḍa Sutta

[409] The key to this interpretation is paying close attention to the different terms the sutta uses to talk about fear. This reading shows that from a Buddhist standpoint, one type of fear can be drastically different from another one.

[410] *idāni yathānena saṃvijitaṃ, taṃ pakāraṃ dassento* ***phandamāna****ntiādimāha* (Suttanipāta-aṭṭhakathā 943)

with an emphasis on perception, specifically, on seeing the world in a state of *saṃvega*. I read the four legs that make up this second verse as a single sentence.

> When I saw the people quivering,
> like fish in shallow water,
> when I saw them hostile towards each other,
> fear came upon me.[411]

This verse reads as a causal account of the Buddha's experience. At the heart of it, there is a simile that I will unpack shortly. First, however, I would point out that the verse as a whole deals with what the Buddha saw and the effect this had on him. There is a causal sequence here that includes an act of perception followed by an emotional response. Sequences of this kind are ubiquitous in the Pāli canon, primarily in the Abhidhamma and Sutta literature. At times, Buddhist texts also include a third link that completes a causal model of emotion, which consists of perception, feeling, and action,[412] or in a different rendition: "seeing, feeling, doing."[413]

While in the second verse of the Attadaṇḍa Sutta, we only have the first two links of this type of causal sequence, namely, seeing and feeling, in the following verses, a sequential third link is introduced as well. Regardless of whether there are two or three links in this emotional structure, the question I am concerned with is what can one glean from this about the nature of *saṃvega*? More specifically, is *saṃvega* a way of seeing the world, or, is it an overwhelming feeling that follows an act of perception? In this dissertation, I show that in different texts, *saṃvega* stands for different phenomena including a form of perception, an emotional response, and even a kind of knowledge. Nonetheless, in this particular Pāli verse, the Buddha's *saṃvega* is described first and foremost in perceptual terms.

In Aśvaghoṣa's Buddhacarita, the emotional crisis Prince Siddhārtha undergoes after his initial encounter with old age, sickness, and death is articulated as a new way of seeing.[414] Shortly after his transformative encounter, the prince looked around at things he used to find beautiful and charming, but now he saw them as abhorrent and disturbing. In a state of *saṃvega*, the Buddha perceived transience everywhere, and every object reminded him of the inevitability of death. In an article dedicated to the different perceptual modes in the Buddhacarita, Tzohar ascertains that the Buddha's emotional state after encountering death for the first time "is not a fleeting mood but a pervasive one that colors the whole of the Buddha's experience."[415] In a similar fashion, the second verse of the Attadaṇḍa Sutta begins to paint a picture of an entire experiential field that is colored by *saṃvega*.

In this scripture, the first thing the Buddha saw through his saṃvegic perception was people quivering. The Aṭṭhakathā commentary hones in on what causes people to quiver, stating that "in

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[411] *phandamānaṃ pajaṃ disvā,*
macche appodake yathā;
aññamaññehi byāruddhe,
disvā maṃ bhayamāvisi.
[412] Heim 2003: 533.
[413] Trainor 2003: 326.
[414] Tzohar 2019.
[415] Ibid, 318.

this context, 'quivering' [means] trembling out of thirst and so forth."[416] "Thirst" (*taṇhā*) here is a technical Buddhist term that refers to one's primal craving as the source of suffering. The Aṭṭhakathā mentions that thirst is only the first element in a list of reasons why people in the world quiver. The Niddesa, in its more tedious style, names many other such reasons, including misconduct, lust, and delusion.[417] The main point both Pāli commentaries are making is that fundamentally, people in the world are perpetually shaking because they are conditioned to suffer. It is not the case that they are temporarily trembling out of fear or some other reason. The quivering people suffer from is inherent to the type of lives they are leading.

When the sutta says the Buddha saw the people all around him quivering, the text highlights the Buddha's saṃvegic perception, which revealed a world characterized by motion and instability instead of stillness and permanence. In his *saṃvega,* the transience and fragility of human life became conspicuous to the Buddha. A certain façade was lifted, unveiling the constant struggle people have to find peace and stability. The Theravāda exegetes explain this by asserting that at this pivotal moment, the Buddha began to notice a root existential and psychological problem that is endemic to the human condition. I am making here a simpler claim, namely that in his *saṃvega,* an element of motion and instability was introduced into the Buddha's field of vision.

In the Chinese translation, the first leg of the second verse says: "The people of the world were all rolling around in agony."[418] The Chinese text thus expresses the crux of this opening leg, telling us that in his *saṃvega*, the Buddha became aware of the pervasiveness of human suffering. Yet, what is noticeable in the Chinese is the lack of emphasis on the Buddha's perception. In place of the Buddha's description of what he saw, we find a more impersonal statement about the reality of human suffering. In the next verse, the Pāli version also drops the emphasis on what the Buddha saw and begins to speak directly about how the world is in a state of *saṃvega*. I think this is significant, and therefore, in my analysis of the third verse, I will focus on the shift in this scripture from talking about the Buddha's experience and how things appeared to him, to directly speaking about the world and how things are.

Returning to the second verse, it appears the fish simile that comes up in the second leg aims to illuminate the first leg and add a poetic component to the Buddha's account of his *saṃvega*. In the Pāli text, the idea is that the Buddha saw people in the world quiver or flounder[419] like fish swimming in shallow water. The Niddesa runs a bit wild with this simile, explaining that just as fish flounder in a pool where the water is evaporating while different birds are attacking them from the air, grabbing them with their claws, and devouring their flesh, so people in the world quiver with thirst. The Niddesa's graphic unpacking of this simile highlights the anguish and hopelessness that people in the world share with these miserable fish. It also clearly adds an aspect of anxiety and urgency, which stresses that for the person driven by craving, dangerous threats are coming

[416] *tattha* ***phandamāna****nti taṇhādīhi kampamānaṃ* (Suttanipāta-aṭṭhakathā 943).
[417] Mahāniddesa 170.
[418] 展轉苦皆世人.
[419] Norman uses "floundering" to translate the Pāli word *phandamānam*. It is a beautiful translation that works particularly well with the simile that compares the movement of people in the world to that of fish in shallow water (Norman 2001: 122). Nevertheless, I chose to translate *phandamānam* as "quivering" based on the Pāli commentary, which glosses *phandamānam* with *kampamānaṃ*, a word that means to shake, quiver, or tremble nervously (Suttanipāta-aṭṭhakathā 943).

from every direction. Taking all this into account, the Niddesa explains that the constant trembling the Buddha witnessed in his *saṃvega* is a direct result of the people's dreadful existential situation.

In the Chinese, the fish simile has a bit of a different emphasis. It states that people were rolling around in agony "like fish in a river whose waters have run dry."[420] Along with the misery and helplessness that both fish and people share, it is worth noting that this simile also underscores the resemblance between the world and a body of water in a dire state. The lack of water is also apparent in the prevalent conceptual metaphor of thirst, which as I have mentioned, the Pāli commentary brings up in the context of this verse. I believe the fish simile, more specifically, aims to amplify the Buddhist thirst metaphor, for as crucial as water is for human beings, it is even more essential for fish. To put it differently, the constant craving that causes people to quiver is presented here as something even more severe than a lack of water for humans; it is like an absence of water for fish.

In the third leg of the Pāli sutta, the Buddha goes back to the description of what he saw in his experience of *saṃvega*, namely, people being "hostile towards each other." The Niddesa commentary expounds on this by addressing the omnipresence of hostility and violence in the world. First the commentary mentions different conflicts among people of the same group or class. For example, kings disputing (*vivadanti*) with kings, warriors with warriors, Brahmins with Brahmins, and householders with householders. Then it goes on to name all the different forms of domestic disputes involving parents and their children, as well as siblings who fight among themselves. This long list of quarrels ends with conflicts among friends. The way this list is formatted suggests that the Niddesa is trying to show how hostility exists everywhere, even among the people who are expected to respect and love each other the most. The commentary then goes on to name the different instruments of violence people in the world use to hurt each other, beginning with one's bare hands and ending with sticks (*daṇḍa*)[421] and knives. Finally, the Niddesa asserts that all this animosity leads to death and suffering. In this manner, the Pāli commentary interprets the third leg of the second verse as an account of the Buddha's heightened perception of hostility and violence permeating throughout society.

The fourth and final leg of this verse addresses the Buddha's fear (*bhaya*). The Pāli scripture features here the same word for fear that we find in the opening leg of this sutta, thus challenging any attempt to make a clear terminological distinction between appropriate and inappropriate fear by using *saṃvega* as the former and *bhaya* as the latter. Here, the Buddha speaks about *bhaya* in a way that seems exemplary of the most appropriate form of fear. The fact that in this sutta, the Buddha shares with a crowd of people his transformative feeling of fear is a testament to the significant role assigned to this emotion in Buddhist thought.[422]

The precise phrasing the Buddha uses in this scripture to express his fear is noteworthy. Referencing Tzohar's work, I mentioned earlier that the Attadaṇḍa Sutta's account of *saṃvega* joins other Buddhist textual examples where emotions are not articulated as private, inner states. In this sutta, the Buddha's fear is considered to be something that comes to him from the outside.

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[420] 如乾水斷流魚.

[421] The aforementioned *daṇḍa* reappears here, this time in the sense of a weapon.

[422] As I have mentioned earlier, the Chinese translation of the parallel version of the Attadaṇḍa Sutta conceives of fear as that which the Buddha eventually abandons. Therefore, it is unsurprising that in the Chinese, the fourth leg is noticeably different from the Pāli (see Appendix B).

In legs one and three, the Buddha's saṃvegic perception reveals to him the people of the world in a new and disturbing way, and as a result, in the fourth leg, the Buddha says that fear approached (*āvisi*) him. The Pāli verb *āvisi,*[423] used in this verse, also appears in Buddhist texts that describe the act of a spirit possessing a person.[424] Although in this verse, fear comes as a response to what the Buddha saw, it is not articulated as some inner activation caused by external stimuli. If anything, the Buddha's fear is presented as an external force that comes to overpower him. This willingness to speak and think about emotions, and *saṃvega* in particular, through what continental philosophers call existential or ontological terms becomes even more pronounced in the next verse.

4.3 Saṃvega as a transformation of the world

In "The Emotions: Outline of a Theory," Sartre claims that "emotion is a certain way of apprehending the world."[425] I find this way of articulating the nature of emotion useful for reflecting on the Buddhist conception of emotions. The second verse of the Attadaṇḍa Sutta, which I have just discussed, is a prime example of *saṃvega*, and emotions more broadly, as a manner of apprehending the world. However, in the third verse of this sutta, the Buddha no longer stresses what he apprehended or saw in *saṃvega*. Instead, he makes the following statements about the world and his place in it.

> The entire world had no essence;
> all directions were in chaos.
> Searching for a place for myself,
> I did not see [one that was] unoccupied.[426]

The Buddha is speaking here about the world he inhabited in a state of *saṃvega*. This is a world configured by an emotion of deep distress. The question of how to understand the relationship between one's emotions and the world in which one lives is a philosophical topic that has picked up steam in the last few decades. Sartre, for instance, makes the case that we can contemplate the nature of emotion by considering the things around us. The emotions, he ascertains, become part of the texture of worldly objects. In more technical terms, these emotionally configured objects that make up one's environment are what Sartre also calls "the noematical correlative of our activity."[427]

For Sartre, the basic notion that we can conceive of emotions by tending to the world is rooted in Husserl's innovative method. According to Husserl, the phenomenological reduction, which pays close attention to the way things are given to us in experience, is meant to bring us back to the "things themselves."[428] When Husserl speaks of the "things themselves," he is referring to worldly objects, not to some ultimate reality that exists independent of our interaction with it. As Hagi Kenaan explains, "what is revealed to us in the field of experience is not an image or a

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[423] The Aṭṭhakathā glosses *āvisi* with *paviṭṭhaṃ*, which means "entered" or "visited" (Suttanipāta-aṭṭhakathā 943).
[424] Rhys-Davids and Stede: 112.
[425] Sartre 1948: 52
[426] *Samantaṃ asāro loko;*
disā sabbā sameritā.
icchaṃ bhavanamattano,
nāddasāsiṃ anositaṃ.
[427] Sartre 1948: 58
[428] Husserl 2001: 168

representation of things and events belonging to the world, but the world itself."[429] With this phenomenological notion in mind, Sartre claims that "we can conceive of what an emotion is. It is a transformation of the world."[430] This claim is at the heart of Sartre's phenomenological approach to the emotions. Now, to tie all this back to my discussion of the Attadaṇḍa Sutta's third verse, I believe the way the Buddha speaks of the world in a state of *saṃvega* lends itself to Sartre's idea of emotion as a radical change in the entire field of experience. Simply put, *saṃvega* is a transformation of the world.

In the Pāli version of the Attadaṇḍa Sutta, the first leg of the third verse describes the world as completely devoid of essence. This description is reminiscent of classical Indian accounts of *vairāgya*,[431] an emotion that, much like *saṃvega,* entails a radical transformation of the world. In the Advaita Vedānta tradition, for example, considering the world as meaningless or essenceless is often a requisite condition for being eligible (*adhikari*) to take on the path of *mokṣa*.[432] In this respect, a certain disenchantment with the world is deemed necessary for the person seeking liberation.

The Pāli commentary sets out to explain the essencelessness of the world in metaphysical terms. What I mean by that is twofold. First, the commentary hones in on the word "entire" (*samanta*), which modifies the "world" in the first leg of the verse. By doing so, the commentary explains that when saying: "The entire world had no essence," the Buddha is stressing that there is no essence in this world or in the many heavens and hells that make up the Buddhist universe. The meaninglessness of this world is not juxtaposed with the meaningfulness of another world. The idea is that since there is nothing permanent and substantial one can hold onto anywhere, there is no solid ground to be found in the entire cosmos. The second point the commentary makes is that when the Buddha describes the world as "essenceless" (*asāra*), it means the world is devoid of substance, permanence, stability, and so forth. The commentary, then, goes on to compare the world to a mirage or magical illusion.[433]

In the Chinese translation, the opening leg of the third verse is similar to the Pāli in meaning, yet it has a certain poetic twist. The Chinese text reads: "The entire world was in flames."[434] I think, for starters, it is worth at least asking whether this is a metaphor or if the world is actually on fire for the person in *saṃvega*.[435] The tension in this text between the possible literal and figurative interpretations of some of these lines is a topic I will address later in this chapter.[436] Meanwhile, I will point out that the fire imagery is ubiquitous in Buddhist literature. Typically, fire represents passion, change, instability, and danger.[437] If we interpret fire here in a figurative way, which is the most plausible option, then when the Buddha says that the entire world was burning, he is stating that everything was in flux and nothing had permanent essence. At the same

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[429] Kenaan 2013: 15
[430] Sartre 1948: 58
[431] On *vairāgya* see Bhattacharyya 2008: 95-96; Chakrabarti 1988: 33; Raveh 2012:31-33; and Feinberg 2023: 66-67. On the relationship between *saṃvega* and *vairāgya,* see p. 58.
[432] Das 1940: 360
[433] Suttanipāta-aṭṭhakathā 944 and Mahāniddesa 172.
[434] 一切世悉然燒.
[435] I am hinting at is the possibility that the person experiencing *saṃvega* has some king of vision of a world in flames.
[436] On the application of figurative and literal meaning in early Buddhist thought, see Tzohar 2018: 3-7.
[437] On the fire imagery in early Buddhist literature, see Gombrich 2006a: 65-66; and Hamilton 2000: 100-102.

time, through the fire imagery, the Buddha is also conveying that the world is a dangerous and terrifying place. Much like the famous burning house parable in the Lotus Sūtra,[438] the image of a world in flames calls for immediate action. The urgency associated with *saṃvega* comes to the forefront through this image. Moreover, considering that in the third leg of this verse, the Chinese translation also mentions the detrimental force of desire, one might also consider fire as a figure that invokes here the notion that the world is driven by passion and lust.

The second leg of the third verse, in both the Pāli and the Chinese, continues to address the world the Buddha inhabited as a place where chaos roamed in every corner and peace could not be found. This emphasis on disorder and turmoil joins the larger theme of disenchantment from the first leg, creating a more vivid picture of the world in *saṃvega*. The Aṭṭhakathā adds a short comment on this leg, explaining that the different directions of the world were shaking on account of impermanence.[439] Similar to the people's quiver in the second verse, the principle of impermanence is characterized here by motion, and more precisely, the instability of things. As for the lack of peace, the Niddesa takes this to mean that there was no shelter or refuge anywhere in the world.[440]

In legs three and four, the Buddha addresses the existential predicament of having no secure place in the world, which was revealed to him in the experience of *saṃvega*. In the Pāli version, the Buddha says he searched for a place or an abode for himself but every space was occupied. The Buddha's sense of *unheimlich* in this verse captures another aspect of *saṃvega*, which is the strong feeling of displacement and alienation that this emotion often entails. The Pāli commentary claims that the Buddha is lamenting here the fact that there is no place that truly offers refuge or shelter in the world. Such is the case because every place is occupied by suffering. The Niddesa expounds on this by stating that in his *saṃvega* the Buddha realized that "all youth is occupied by old age, all health is occupied by sickness, all life is occupied by death, all gain is occupied by loss, all fame is occupied by disgrace, all praise is occupied by insult, and all happiness is occupied by suffering."[441]

At this point of the sutta, *saṃvega* is articulated as a mode of being-in-the-world, to use a Heideggerian expression. The distress, fear, despondency, and hopelessness associated with *saṃvega* make up "the texture of the world" the Buddha once inhabited. However, just as it seems the Buddha's account of his *saṃvega* has reached the depths of an existential abyss, the next two verses take a sharp turn away from any sense of nihilistic despair. Although at this moment in the text, the world is a dark place in which the Buddha could not find a haven, in the next two verses, this picture begins to change as the Buddha gains insight into the root cause of this dreadful state

[438] The fire imagery is prevalent in early Buddhist literature and even the burning house metaphor appears in the Pāli canon (see for example AN 1.101). Therefore, it is possible Zhi Qian, the Chinese translator of the Attadaṇḍa Sutta, was familiar with the image of a world on fire from his work on *āgama* literature. However, Zhi Qian also translated serval Mahāyāna scriptures, including the Vimalakīrtinirdeśa and the Aṣṭsāhasrika Prajñāparamitā. Now, given that this image of a world on fire is one of the most obvious instances where the Chinese translation is clearly different from the Pāli version (Bapat 1951: 174, n. 17), I wonder whether Zhi Qian specifically had here the famous Lotus Sūtra parable of the burning house in mind.
[439] Suttanipāta-aṭṭhakathā 944
[440] Mahāniddesa 172
[441] *sabbaṃ yobbaññaṃ jarāya ositaṃ, sabbaṃ ārogyaṃ byādhinā ositaṃ, sabbaṃ jīvitaṃ maraṇena ositaṃ, sabbaṃ lābhaṃ alābhena ositaṃ, sabbaṃ yasaṃ ayasena ositaṃ, sabbaṃ pasaṃsaṃ nindāya ositaṃ, sabbaṃ sukhaṃ dukkhena ositaṃ* (Mahāniddesa 172).

of affairs. *Saṃvega* is not paired here with "serene confidence" or "calmness" as in the later *saṃvega-pasāda* scheme. Nevertheless, the Attadaṇḍa Sutta clearly wishes to show that *saṃvega* is beneficial, for it leads to a realization that there is something to be done about the dire state of living in an essenceless world full of suffering and violence.

4.4 The Buddha's saṃvegic insight

In verses four and five of the Attadaṇḍa Sutta, the Buddha's experience of *saṃvega* begins to shift as he realizes there is a way out of the cycle of suffering. This epiphany is an important part of the Buddha's *saṃvega*. It counters his overarching pessimistic view of the human condition with a productive insight into the prospect of eliminating suffering. Just before this realization dawned on the Buddha, he had one last disappointing look at the people around him.

> Even at the end, when I saw [them still] hostile,
> dissatisfaction came over me.
> Then I saw the dart, here,
> difficult to see, stuck in the heart. (4)
>
> Pierced by that dart,
> one flees in all directions;
> but after pulling out the dart,
> one does not flee nor does one sink. (5)[442]

I am not alone in grouping these two verses together. The Pāli commentary also sees these verses as a set. The main thread connecting these two verses is the dart of which the Buddha speaks. Yet before tending to the meaning of this dart, I will briefly discuss the first two legs of verse four. These legs deal with the Buddha's saṃvegic perception, much like in the second verse of the sutta. Notice that after directly addressing how the world is in a state of *saṃvega* in verse three, the Buddha goes back to the formula of describing what he saw and how it made him feel. In this verse, however, there is another link in the form of a realization that follows the seeing-feeling duo.

As for what the Buddha perceived, the text says, "even at the end," the Buddha saw the people's hostility. The Pāli commentary illuminates what "the end" means in this instance. According to the Aṭṭhakathā, in his *saṃvega*, the Buddha observed that even at the end of youth, at the time of approaching death, and in the face of destruction, people remained hostile towards each other. The commentary then adds that "the end" of which the Buddha speaks is the result of old age, sickness, and death. [443] The idea is that the Buddha witnessed how the people around him

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[442] *osānetveva byāruddhe,*
disvā me aratī ahu.
athettha sallaṃ addakkhiṃ,
duddasaṃ hadayanissitaṃ.

yena sallena otiṇṇo,
disā sabbā vidhāvati;
taṃ eva sallaṃ abbuyha,
na dhāvati na sīdati.

[443] Suttanipāta-aṭṭhakathā 945

continued in their hostile ways even when finally faced with their own mortality. Thus, "the end" or death is underlined in this verse because it is considered the last, and perhaps ultimate opportunity to confront the reality of impermanence and put an end to one's delusion. As he recognized the people's failure to gain understanding and show compassion even at the end of their lives, the Buddha could not help but feel deep frustration and dissatisfaction (*arati*).

The next two legs of verse four seem a bit mysterious at first glance. The third leg starts with the word "then" (*atha*), marking a turning point in the text. What the Buddha saw next was a dart situated in the heart.[444] The commentary focuses on the kind of dart the Buddha saw and in whose heart was it stuck. Yet first, I think it is worth acknowledging that the seeing described in this verse involves a type of perception that differs from the one the Buddha exercised so far in this text. In the previous verses, much of what the Buddha perceived is presented as visible to the naked eye. As I mentioned, the Buddha's saṃvegic vision made him more perceptive and sensitive to the violence, suffering, and chaos around him.[445] Having acquired a heightened awareness of the transient nature of things, the Buddha started to see constant motion, instability, and change everywhere.[446] However, here, when the Buddha speaks of the dart he saw, which is planted in the heart, he immediately points out that this is something difficult or even impossible to see (*duddasa*). The fact that the sutta and the commentary describe only the dart as *duddasa* and never apply this attribute to the other sights the Buddha perceived in the previous verses, suggests that a different form of seeing is taking place here. Perhaps the Buddha was exercising a supernormal vision when perceiving this dart, or, the text might be speaking figuratively about the Buddha's sight in this instance. I believe the tension between the physical act of seeing and the figurative meaning of sight is built into the Attadaṇḍa Sutta. For this reason, I like the use of the term "insight" in this context, which maintains an etymological connection to seeing while carrying the meaning of an intellectual realization that is figuratively associated with sight.

In this scripture, the Pāli for "dart" is *salla*, a word that can also be translated as "arrow." I am following Norman and Bodhi's lead in translating this as a small object that is harder to see, like a dart or a barb, for this translation maintains the ambivalence regarding whether the Buddha actually saw a subtle object or merely realized something about the human condition. The Aṭṭhakathā commentary specifies that the dart the Buddha saw was situated in the heart of the hostile beings of the world mentioned previously. This dart is glossed as "the dart of passion and so forth" (*rāgādi-salla*). As usual, the Niddesa fills in the blanks, dividing this dart into seven elements, namely, passion, hatred, delusion, pride, views, sorrow, and doubt.[447] The commentary also glosses the word "heart" (*hadaya*) with "mind" (*citta*), suggesting that the dart of which the Buddha speaks is mental rather than physical. These remarks make it obvious that the commentary understands the Buddha's "seeing" primarily as a cognitive act.

[444] This turn occurs in the Chinese translation at exactly the same point in the text (T.198, 189b19).
[445] If one considers the framing narrative of this sutta, which places the Buddha on a battlefield as he delivers this discourse, one will notice that most of what the Buddha describes in his *saṃvega* are things people typically see on a battlefield. For example, he sees people quarreling or people trembling in fear. The text might be playing on the notion that the world of the person in *saṃvega* resembles a battlefield.
[446] The fire in verse three of the Chinese might be an exception to this, as it also raises the question of whether a different kind of vision is involved in noticing that the entire world is in flames or whether it is simply a metaphor.
[447] This is an extended list of the defilements (*kleśas*).

I should also mention that the image of a person struck by a poison dart is well-known in Buddhist literature, for it appears in the widely referenced Cūḷamālunkya Sutta.[448] In this canonical text, the Buddha compares the monk Māluṅkyaputta to a person who was struck by a poison arrow (*salla*) yet fails to realize the urgency of removing this deadly object. By using this parable, the Buddha manages to shift the monk's attention from metaphysical questions to the main goal of the Buddhist path, namely, ending suffering. More broadly, poison and poison darts are used in Buddhist literature as a metaphor for the defilements (*kleśas*).[449] A good example of this is found in the Pāli commentary's explication of the aforementioned dart in the Attadaṇḍa Sutta.

While the traditional exegetes jump on the opportunity to explain the meaning of the dart in verse four, the Buddha himself directly comments on this matter in verse five. The Buddha says that the person pierced by this dart runs in every direction but once the dart is removed that person does not run or sink. The Pāli commentary elaborates on this, stating that the one struck by this dart flees in every direction both in a literal and figurative sense. That person runs in the different geographical directions, as well as in the direction of misconduct and other such bad habits. As for the person who has removed the dart, the commentary explains that he does not run in those directions and does not sink in the four floods.[450]

One question worth asking is whether the realization conveyed in the fifth verse occurred to the Buddha at the time of his *saṃvega*, like everything that happened in the previous three verses, or, is the Buddha adding this remark at the time of preaching this sutta (i.e., after his nirvāṇa). To put it differently, in his *saṃvega*, did the Buddha merely see the world in a new way but could not yet fully comprehend what he saw, or, did the Buddha see the world in a radically different manner and was able to make sense of it all at once. This is a central and contentious matter regarding the experience of *saṃvega*, which reveals two different conceptions of this Buddhist emotion. Either *saṃvega* is merely a distressing and disturbing experience that can push one in the direction of nirvāṇa, or, it is an overwhelming emotional experience that also involves an act of reflection and understanding of one's existential predicament.

The Pāli commentary on the Attadaṇḍa Sutta clearly favors the second conception of *saṃvega*. The exegetical tradition does not wish to associate the Buddha with the slightly unflattering image of a perturbed prince who once upon a time was eager to find peace.[451] Beyond the traditional Buddhological context, it is worth noting that Ananda Coomaraswamy also thinks *saṃvega* must include a "second phase"[452] that transcends the sensory and affective experience alone. In Coomaraswamy's words,

> *saṃvega* is a state of shock, agitation, fear, awe, wonder or delight induced by some physically or mentally poignant experience. It is a state of feeling, but always more than a merely physical reaction. The "shock" is essentially one of the realisation of the

[448] MN 63
[449] Lamote 1988: 35
[450] According to the commentary, the four floods are the flood of desire, the flood of existence, the flood of views and the flood of ignorance (Suttanipāta-aṭṭhakathā 4.15.946; and Mahāniddesa 174).
[451] The Theravāda exegetes have no problem adding a reflective dimension to the Buddha experience of *saṃvega*, for they already considered the Buddha's seeing of the dart in verse four as an expression of his insight into the detrimental effect passion has on all sentient beings.
[452] Trainer (1997: 175-176) comments on Coomaraswamy's conception of *saṃvega* as comprised of two phases.

> implications of what are strictly speaking only the aesthetic surfaces of phenomena that may be liked or disliked as such. The complete experience transcends this condition of "irritability."[453]

Coomaraswamy adds that *saṃvega* has a reflective component and even a disinterested intellectual aspect that is reminiscent of the Kantian aesthetic judgment.[454] This type of comparative thinking is part of what makes Coomaraswamy's work on *saṃvega* intriguing; having said that, I would slightly push back against his inclination to turn *saṃvega* into a "complete" and refined aesthetic experience. There is also a raw and primal side to *saṃvega*, one which comes up time and again whenever this state is considered to be one shared by both humans and animals. Thus, if one pushes *saṃvega* too far in the direction of a refined intellectual experience, one runs the risk of losing the rawness and animality so often associated with this concept.

Finally, looking closely at the fifth verse from a philological standpoint, it is also worth considering the possibility that this verse is an exegetical remark, which eventually made its way into the scripture. Notice that this fifth verse is the only one among the opening five verses of this sutta in which the Buddha does not make use of the first-person. In this regard, there is a stark difference in both grammar and style between this verse and the previous four verses. The Chinese translator also seems to have noticed this deviation. Thus, while in the fourth verse, the Chinese translation has the Buddha using a first-person pronoun when describing his *saṃvega*, in the fifth verse, the text is speaking about the Buddha in the third-person, thus, giving some credence to the possibility of separating the fifth verse from the first four.

4.5 Conclusion: The Buddha's existential crisis

In this chapter, I have shown that the Attadaṇḍa Sutta wishes to establish the significance of the Buddha's existential crisis. This scripture carefully describes both the unique perception and disposition that make up the Buddha's experience of *saṃvega*, as well as the manner in which this emotion brings about a transformation of the Buddha's world. However, as long as *saṃvega* is articulated through the image and story of the Buddha, the tradition tends to portray it in a glorified and heroic manner. In most of the canonical examples I discuss in the other chapters of this dissertation, the experience of *saṃvega* has a humbling and at times even a humiliating component to it. Yet, in the Buddha's case, even an existential meltdown is described gracefully and admirably. Thus, the tension I addressed surrounding the Buddha's *saṃvega* is one central theme that remains apparent in the characterization of this emotion in the Attadaṇḍa Sutta and its commentarial literature. While keeping this in mind, I tried nevertheless to explore what the canonical depiction of the Buddha's experience of existential distress can tell us about *saṃvega* and the Buddhist conception of emotions.

Wrapping up my main argument in this chapter concerning *saṃvega* as an existential state, I would like to highlight a crucial element in my view of this emotion. In the Attadaṇḍa Sutta, the Buddha's experience of *saṃvega* is primarily presented as an existential mode of human reality. This feeling of deep distress is depicted as an uneasy way of being embedded in the world. Everything the Buddha perceived in his saṃvegic state was touched by an emotion that completely

[453] Coomaraswamy 1943: 176
[454] Ibid: 177.

reconfigured his field of experience. In this regard, the scripture's notion of *saṃvega* contests the presupposition that emotions in Buddhist thought are merely considered private, mental events. There is a tendency to rely heavily on the metaphor of inwardness when contemplating the nature of emotions in early Buddhism.[455] This tendency also stands out in the way *saṃvega* is often defined and explained. For example, Bodhi suggests that "*saṃvega* might be described as the inner commotion or shock we experience when we are jolted out of our usual complacency by a stark encounter with truths whose full gravity we normally refuse to face."[456] My main worry about this characterization of *saṃvega* is that it renders this experience as an "inner commotion." Bodhi seems to take it as a given that *saṃvega* is a private, mental state.

In the Attadaṇḍa Sutta, almost everything about the Buddha's experience of *saṃvega* is pointing at the world. The Buddha does not elect to articulate his *saṃvega* in this scripture by focusing on his internal struggles, and there is no strong introspective character to the Buddha's description of his past experience of existential distress. Instead, the Buddha expresses his emotional state by talking about the chaos and commotion he witnessed all around him. It is as if the Buddha's *saṃvega* is plastered all over the phenomenal world and his emotion is reflected back at him through the different objects in his perceptual field. In this light, the crux of my argument concerning *saṃvega* as an existential state alludes to the interactive aspect of this emotion. *Saṃvega* entails an experience of being uncomfortably entangled in the web of *saṃsāra*, wherein one is both absorbed in and deeply disturbed by the reality of impermanence and suffering.

5. The rhetoric of *saṃvega* in the Attadaṇḍa Sutta

In the final section of this chapter, I will leave behind the existential argument and focus on what I call the rhetoric of *saṃvega*, which is another central feature of the Attadaṇḍa Sutta. The first five verses of the sutta provide a description of the Buddha's *saṃvega*; however, I would argue that this description is prescriptive in its exemplary character. The opening verses represent an ideal version of an existential crisis. In a Buddhist context, no figure is better suited than the Buddha himself for setting such an example. I mention this since if we accept the commentary's premise that this entire scripture is meant to provoke *saṃvega*, one thread that runs through all twenty verses of the text is its prescriptive approach. The opening verses' account of the Buddha's *saṃvega* articulates the disposition one should strive to have, while the remaining verses focus on the conduct one should practice and the fruits promised to the one who perfects the Buddhist path.

Like several other Buddhist scriptures, the emotional response the Attadaṇḍa Sutta aims to elicit is triggered first and foremost by the Dharma itself. If understood correctly, the Buddha's doctrine is supposed to initially shock and rattle one's entire being. In the case of this scripture, eliciting *saṃvega* is also tied to a specific manner of preaching the Dharma. The rhetorical devices employed in the Attadaṇḍa Sutta are woven with different prescriptive forms of speech. This combination results in an array of strategies meant to provoke *saṃvega* by confronting the listener or reader with the way one should conduct oneself.

In terms of their content, the fifteen verses that make up the second section of the Attadaṇḍa Sutta are comprised of a selection of Buddhist precepts that do not directly relate to the concept of

[455] Tzohar 2021: 284.
[456] Bodhi 2012: 40.

saṃvega. Therefore, I do not find it necessary to carefully analyze each of the remaining verses as I have done with the five opening verses that describe the Buddha's distress. The commentary splits the last fifteen verses of this scripture into two groups. In the following pages, I select a few verses from each one of these groups and highlight the different strategies they employ for eliciting *saṃvega*. These verses include a variety of doctrinal themes and rhetorical devices, all of which play a role in provoking the intended emotional reaction to this Buddhist scripture.

5.1 Prescribing temporality

In the Pāli version, the division between the two sections of the Attadaṇḍa Sutta is marked by an interjection that occurs at the beginning of the sixth verse.[457] While the entire sutta consists of verses uttered by the Buddha, the sixth verse is the one exception to that. The verse begins with the following remark: "At this point, the trainings are recited."[458] Bodhi notes that "this seems to be a remark by the compilers that was absorbed into the sutta."[459] Immediately after this interjection, in the remainder of the verse, the Buddha speaks about nirvāṇa as the goal one should strive to attain. The Aṭṭhakathā comments on this by explaining that after establishing the ultimate goal in the sixth verse, the Buddha proceeded now to address the manner in which one should train for nirvāṇa.[460] Subsequently, in the following group of verses, the Buddha lays out how one should and should not act. In examining this segment of the scripture, my focus will be on a pair of verses that deal with temporality, and more specifically, with one's relationship with the past, the future, and the present. The core metaphysical principle that shapes the notion of temporality that emerges from these verses is impermanence. The issue the Buddha discusses here concerns how one should treat past, future, and present phenomena, given that everything is in constant flux. For starters, in verse ten of the Pāli version, the Buddha begins his teaching on temporality by stating what one should avoid doing.

> One should not find pleasure in the old;
> one should not engender expectation for the new;
> one should not feel sorrow over what is passing;
> one should not be attached to attraction.[461]

The verse's prescriptive mode is apparent in the formulation that repeats itself in each of the four legs.[462] As a whole, this verse tends to the issue of temporality through the categories of the old, the new, and the passing. The Pāli commentary on the verse begins by clarifying that the first leg is about not finding pleasure in any phenomena that belong to the past. Next, the commentary glosses "the new" with "the present." I find this a bit surprising, for I think the second leg actually pertains to one's attitude towards future phenomena; nonetheless, the commentary understands it

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[457] The Chinese translation does not have a parallel interjection that separates the first five verses from the remaining fifteen.
[458] *tattha sikkhānugīyanti.*
[459] Bodhi 2017:1358, n. 217. On this interjection in the sutta, see also Norman 2001: 383; and Bodhi 2017: 1539, n. 2009.
[460] Suttanipāta-aṭṭhakathā 948.
[461] *purāṇaṃ nābhinandeyya,*
nave khantiṃ na kubbaye,
hiyyamāne na soceyya,
ākāsaṃ na sito siyā.
[462] In grammatical terms, this repeated formulation is a negation of a third-person verb in the optative.

as referring to the present moment. (I will elaborate on this point shortly when I consider the Chinese translation of this verse). As for the third leg, the commentary simply glosses "passing" with "perishing." Finally, the Aṭṭhakathā explains that in the fourth leg, "attraction" (*ākāsa*)[463] works as a synonym for thirst (*taṇhā*) since thirst or craving engenders one's attraction to various objects. Thus, the fourth leg conveys that one should not give in to one's desire for sensual pleasures.[464]

Overall, the Pāli commentary tries to make sense of this verse by breaking it into two sentences that are each comprised of two legs. The first sentence is about how not to engage with the old (past) and the new (present). The second sentence is about the inappropriate sorrowful attitude towards the transient nature of things, as well as the harmful tendency that causes one to develop such an attitude, namely, attachment to craving. Unlike the Pāli commentary, I prefer to read the whole verse as consisting of one long sentence. In my reading, the first three legs are a continuum that deals with one's relationship with the past (the old), the future (the new), and the present (the passing), and finally, the fourth leg addresses what one should do given the reality of impermanence. This reading is aligned with how the verse is articulated in the early Chinese translation.

> Thoughts about the old should be abandoned, not recollected;
> one should have no expectation for future affection;
> seeing what is fleeting now, one should not attach sorrow to it;
> departing from the four oceans, one should run towards the urgent matter.[465]

The first leg of the Chinese, much like the Pāli, centers on letting go of past phenomena. The second leg, then, pertains to one's relationship with the future, which goes against the Pāli commentary's association of this leg with the present.[466] The third leg interprets the fleeting character of phenomena as pertaining to the now, or in other words, to the present. The fourth and final leg in the Chinese breaks the pattern of prescribing what one should not do by stating what one should do. The "four oceans" (*si-hai* 四海) from which one departs are most likely a synonym for *saṃsāra* or the entire cosmos, for each ocean stands for one of the four cardinal directions around the universe's axis mundi (i.e., Mount Meru).[467] If this is indeed the case, then the text is stating that retiring from the world, one should pursue nirvāṇa as urgently as possible.

Considering both the Chinese and the Pāli, I would say that this verse deals with the difficulty of fully immersing oneself in the present. Holding on to the past and taking pleasure in the old is one tendency that obstructs one from focusing on the present, while waiting for the future

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[463] *Ākāsa* (Skt. *ākarṣa*) means "attraction" not space (Skt. *ākāśa*). On this reading, see Bodhi 2017: 1540, n. 2011.
[464] Suttanipāta-aṭṭhakathā 951; and Mahāniddesa 179.
[465]久故念捨莫思
亦無望當來親
見在亡不著憂
離四海疾事走
[466] Notice that like the Pāli scripture, the prescription in the Chinese also speaks of having no expectation, which I think makes more sense as an attitude towards the future rather than the present.
[467] On the meaning of *si-hai* 四海 see Nakamura 1975 (*Bukkyōgo daijiten*): 509d; Nakamura 2002 (*Iwanami Bukkyō jiten*): 340; Soothill and Hodous 2014: 178; Muller 2007: DDB's entry on 四海. On the four oceans in early Buddhist cosmology see Gethin 1998: 113.

with hope and expectation for something new is another hindrance. Even if one manages to overcome these proclivities and concentrate on the now, the next great challenge is to perceive the fleeting nature of things without experiencing melancholy. In this manner, the tenth verse's strategy for eliciting *saṃvega* is predicated on warning the listener or reader from giving in to these different propensities that shape one's relationship with time. Verse fifteen embraces a similar strategy, yet it addresses the audience directly, focusing more on what one should be doing.

> Let what belongs to the past wither;
> may you have nothing in the future;
> if you do not grasp [anything] in between,
> you will live peacefully.[468]

One feature that stands out in this verse is the promise it holds for living in peace. The relationship prescribed here with the past, the future, and the present is consistent with verse ten, yet it is articulated differently. The first leg uses the metaphor of letting what belongs to the past wither or dry out. The basic idea is that one should let the past fade away, but the metaphor also seems to suggest that people tend to nurture or "water" the past, attempting to give it life instead of allowing it to perish.[469] Much like the tenth verse, after the prescription to avoid all harmful engagement with the past comes the instruction to have no stake in the future. Then, the third step involves accepting the fleeting nature of the present (i.e., that which is between past and future), without trying to hold on to what exists only momentarily. Finally, commenting on the promise the verse gives in the fourth leg, the Aṭṭhakathā explains that "living in peace" means attaining arhatship, or in other words, nirvāṇa.[470] The promise of nirvāṇa is another type of strategy the Attadaṇḍa Sutta employs for provoking *saṃvega*. By mentioning the most coveted fruit of practicing the right disposition and conduct, the text seeks to deeply motivate one to take on the Buddhist path.

5.2 Praising the sage

The Pāli commentary mentions that in the five final verses of the sutta, the Buddha speaks in praise of the arhat,[471] who is also called here the sage (*muni*). Embodying many of the Buddhist ideals, the arhat's figure is meant to inspire awe. In "Buddhist Images of Human Perfection," Nathan Katz explores the Pāli canon's portrayal of the arhat as an exemplary Buddhist figure. He contends that

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[468] *yaṃ pubbe taṃ visosehi;*
pacchā te māhu kiñcanaṃ;
majjhe ce no gahessasi,
upasanto carissasi.

[469] Verse sixteen in the Chinese translation seems to parallel the Pāli verse (fifteen) I analyze here. In the parallel Chinese verse, the focus is placed strongly on the metaphor of nurturing one's confusion:

To become pure, one should remove the root of primal confusion.
As for its future sprout, do not give it any nourishment.
While in the thick [of primal confusion], one should not grasp it.
[Simply] do not associate [with this confusion], in order to [eventually] get rid of it

本癡根拔爲淨　後栽至亦無養
已在中悉莫取　不須伴以棄仇.

[470] Suttanipāta-aṭṭhakathā.957.

[471] Ibid.

the arhat's path to nirvāṇa is never driven by ego. Instead, the arhat is motivated by what Katz calls "spiritually productive" or "religious" emotions, one of which is *saṃvega*.[472] Realizing this, many Buddhist texts use the arhat's image and his path to liberation as a means to evoke these spiritually productive emotions.[473] The Buddha's praise of the arhat in the final part of the Attadaṇḍa Sutta functions in this capacity. Moreover, it is worth noting that the final part of the sutta creates a structural symmetry between the five opening verses and the five closing ones. While the opening verses focus on the Buddha's disposition as a means to elicit *saṃvega*, the five closing verses focus on the arhat's figure for the exact same purpose.

Of the five closing verses, I will first briefly address verses sixteen and seventeen. In these verses, the Buddha speaks in praise of the arhat by using philosophical arguments. In so doing, the sutta's strategy for provoking *saṃvega* incorporates a kind of logical thinking. Take for example verse sixteen:

> One who does not claim as 'mine'
> anything whatsoever in name-and-form;[474]
> one who does not sorrow over what is nonexistent,
> truly, never loses in the world.[475]

The argument here is that the arhat, being one who does not consider anything to be his own, never loses because he has nothing to lose. According to the Pāli commentary, the sutta is working with the notion that losing must entail the loss of something, therefore, the one who has no possessions to begin with simply never loses.[476] In this respect, the commentary explains, for example, that when it says in the third leg that one feels no sorrow over what is nonexistent, the point is that the person who never claims anything as 'mine' never grieves once something is gone (i.e., becomes nonexistent).[477] In verse seventeen, the Buddha provides another version of this argument.

> One for whom there is no thinking 'this is mine,'
> or 'something [belongs] to others;'
> not finding anything [at all] he considers 'mine,'
> does not sorrow, thinking 'it is not mine.'[478]

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[472] As I have mentioned earlier, in the Pāli canon, *saṃvega* is not described typically as part of the awakened experience of an arhat; however, it is considered a force that propels one towards the ultimate goal of becoming an arhat. Katz is not entirely clear about whether he considers *saṃvega* to be an emotional state that is spiritually productive even after attaining arhatship (Katz 2010).
[473] Katz 2010: 156-158.
[474] Name-and-form (*nāmarūpa*) is a technical Buddhist term that refers to most of the physical and mental phenomena that constitute the human experience. As Anālayo explains, "'Form' represents the material side of experience…'Name' stands for the functions of the mind apart from consciousness" (Anālayo 2018:10). In this case, the term name-and-form emphasizes that there is nothing, neither physical nor mental that the arhat associates with or claims as his possession.
[475] *sabbaso nāmarūpasmiṃ,*
yassa natthi mamāyitaṃ,
asatā ca na socati,
sa ve loke na jīyati.
[476] According to this logic, it seems that the one who never claims anything as 'mine' also never wins.
[477] Suttanipāta-aṭṭhakathā 4.15.956 and Mahāniddesa 184.
[478] *yassa natthi idaṃ meti,*
paresaṃ vāpi kiñcanaṃ;

The logic of this argument is essentially the same as the previous verse, yet here, the text simply pushes this line of reasoning a step further to completely deconstruct the notion of ownership. In the previous verse, the text makes the case that after ridding himself of a sense of ownership, the arhat overcomes any feelings of sorrow that are triggered by loss. In this verse, the arhat is portrayed as one who does not even make the distinction between what is his and what belongs to others. Avoiding making this distinction allows the arhat to never experience sorrow over not owning something.[479]

With respect to both verses sixteen and seventeen, I should mention that the Buddha's attack here on the concept of possession or ownership is quite relevant to the context in which the Pāli commentary situates the Attadaṇḍa Sutta. As I have mentioned, according to the Aṭṭhakathā, the Buddha delivers this discourse in order to resolve a conflict between two fellow clans over water. These verses seem to work particularly well as a direct response to such a hostile dispute over the possession of a certain resource.

The remaining verses in praise of the arhat do not use philosophical arguments or sophistry to elicit *saṃvega*. They simply laud the sage for his flawless conduct and his peaceful demeanor. The final verse is a good example of this.

> The sage does not speak [of himself]
> as among equals, inferiors, or superiors;
> peaceful, without malice,
> he does not take nor does he reject.[480]

The first two legs address the humility of the arhat. The Niddesa points to an etymological feature that is highlighted here. The Pāli for sage is *muni*, which is derived from the word *monam* (silence). The commentary explains that the quintessential silence of the sage is a refusal to speak about himself out of pride. [481] More specifically, the sage avoids comparing himself to others by claiming

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mamattaṃ so asaṃvindaṃ,
natthi meti na socati.

[479] One issue worth raising is what the text means exactly when it says in the second leg that the arhat does not consider anything to belong to someone else. Is the sutta stating that the arhat does not acknowledge the property of others? Unfortunately, the commentary does not expound much on this issue. (The commentary does quote different suttas in which the Buddha encourages his disciples to abandon everything, Mahāniddesa 184. For an example of such a sutta, see SN 22.33. The way I make sense of this claim, however, is assuming that as long as one has no notion of "this is mine," then the notion of "something [belonging] to others" is rendered meaningless. That is because the concept of something belonging to someone else can only exist in contrast to the concept of something belonging to oneself. The meaningfulness of these opposite concepts is interdependent. In this sense, the arhat ultimately transcends the binary distinction between owning and not owning something.

[480] *na samesu na omesu,*
na ussesu vadate muni.
santo so vītamaccharo,
nādeti na nirassatīti.

[481] The emphasis in this verse on humility is noteworthy, for *saṃvega* is also designed to be a humbling experience. The emphasis on humility comes up both in the Attadaṇḍa Sutta's final verse and in the Pāli commentary's farming narrative.

he is equal,[482] superior, or inferior to someone else.[483] The final two legs of the sutta raise once more the issue of violence and hostility that appears in the opening verse. The arhat is applauded for his peaceful disposition and conduct, a fitting note on which to end the Buddha's discourse, considering the preaching of this sutta is situated on a battlefield.

5.3 Conclusion: preaching the Dharma to provoke *saṃvega*

Anytime and anywhere the Dharma is preached, there exists the possibility or even the expectation of provoking *saṃvega*. However, what makes the Attadaṇḍa Sutta special is the fact that the Buddha reiterates his experience of *saṃvega* in the first five verses, before preaching the Dharma in the remaining verses. In this regard, the text first provides an account of the ideal emotional response to the truth about the nature of reality, and then proceeds to give the audience a taste of that truth. Another way of looking at this involves considering that within the logic of this scripture, the Buddha is using his past experience to set an example of how a saṃvegic response should pan out. Then, he invites his audience to respond in a similar manner to the teaching he delivers in the following verses. This argument ties directly to a point I made in the previous chapter about the ability of a text to serve as a guide for the reader's aesthetic experience.

In the Attadaṇḍa Sutta, more specifically, the power of poetic speech is employed for the sake of provoking *saṃvega*. While there are other instances in the Pāli canon where one chooses to speak in verse and use metaphors to provoke this emotion, the Attadaṇḍa Sutta stands out as an extensive and diverse example of a canonical text that uses an array of rhetorical devices to elicit a feeling of existential distress. Perhaps this scripture foreshadows a later development in the Buddhist world, in which various works of poetry and art proclaim that their ultimate goal is to provoke a feeling of *saṃvega*.[484]

[482] Both the Pāli sutta and the commentary commend the arhat for not comparing himself to other people at all. Even the perception of others as equals is considered harmful. The Chinese translation articulates this in a slightly differently way: "When superior he is not arrogant; when inferior he does not dread. Nor is he seen abiding [only] among equals" (上不憍下不懼　住在平無所見).
[483] Suttanipāta-aṭṭhakathā 961; and Mahāniddesa 189.
[484] Walker 2018.

The Goad Sutta: The Conditions for Experiencing *Saṃvega*

1. Introduction

Saṃvega is the Buddhist concept of an emotional disruption that can change the entire trajectory of one's life for the better. The question I am concerned with in this chapter is what does it take to give rise to *saṃvega*? According to the Goad Sutta (Patodasutta), the answer to this query depends on the sensibility of the person in question. While one might become deeply distressed after merely hearing about the misery of a stranger, another person might remain indifferent after personally witnessing the death of a relative. The Goad Sutta establishes that the conditions for experiencing *saṃvega* can differ dramatically from one sentient being to another. This scripture provides a range of encounters with the reality of impermanence and suffering that can elicit the feeling of *saṃvega*.

Structurally, the Goad Sutta revolves around a complex analogy involving four types of horses and four types of persons. Each horse resembles a certain person in terms of its saṃvegic sensibility. That is to say, there is a similar range and variety of conditions that provoke the emotion of *saṃvega* among horses and human beings. The scripture moves sequentially from beings that are easily steered into a state of distress to those that are difficult to upset. The goad stick, which appears in the Pāli title of the sutta, is the object that triggers the horse's *saṃvega*, much like human suffering elicits this emotion for the person. While the scripture sets out to show the similarities between horses and humans in their varying degrees of emotional sensibility, it also clearly differentiates between the ways in which each of them experiences *saṃvega*. In early Buddhist literature, the Goad Sutta stands out as the most extensive and multifaceted comparison between the animal and human experience of *saṃvega*.

For starters, one might ask why the Buddha compares horses and humans in this Buddhist scripture.[485] The answer is that both horses and humans need to be disciplined or tamed. In classical Indian culture, the metaphor of taming came to dominate the entire mythology of horses. However, as Wendy Doniger points out, there are different versions of the taming metaphor in Indian literature. Some versions emphasize the violence of the tamer, while others stress the mutual aspect involved in the taming process. Regardless of whether the disciplining act itself is violent or not, it is important to understand that in the classical Indian *imaginaire*, taming is not considered something that comes at the detriment of the horse. In other words, the taming act is typically not about suppressing or subduing the one being tamed, and in fact, it often has an empowering and even liberating component to it.[486] In the previous chapter, I briefly touched on the significance of *saṃvega* to the Buddhist ideal of self-discipline. In this chapter, I will further develop this theme as I explore the relationship between *saṃvega* and the practice of restraining oneself.

The canonical setting of the Goad Sutta situates this discourse on *saṃvega* within a dialogue between the Buddha and a horse trainer called Kesi. The Buddha tries to make the Dharma more accessible to Kesi by comparing the Buddhist master to a horse trainer and the Buddhist disciple to a thoroughbred horse. There are many sides to this comparison, yet on the

[485] In the AN alone there is a total of eighteen suttas that compare persons or sometimes monks, more specifically, to horses (2.58, 3.96, 3.97, 3.98, 3.140, 3.141, 3.142, 4.111, 4.112, 4.113, 4.259, 5.203, 6.5, 6.6, 6.7, 8.13, 8.14, 9.22). The reason for making these horse-person comparisons may differ from one sutta to another.
[486] Doniger 2021: 13-15.

surface, what the Buddha seems to find most appealing about it is the extreme level of effort and discipline the thoroughbred horse and the fervent disciple are expected to display.

A few scholars have acknowledged the importance of the Pāli version of the Goad Sutta[487] to the study of *saṃvega* and the conception of emotions in early Buddhist thought. These contemporary scholars lay out two main approaches for interpreting the meaning of *saṃvega* in this scripture. The first one focuses on what the Goad Sutta can tell us about the classical Indian notion of an aesthetic experience.[488] The second approach hones in on how the scripture characterizes the role of *saṃvega* in Buddhist doctrine, specifically addressing the ethical dimension of this emotion.[489] Taking both of these approaches into account, I will introduce to the discourse on this scripture my reading of the text, highlighting the existential aspects of the Buddhist concept of *saṃvega*.

Along with the Pāli version of the Goad Sutta, I will also consider the two early Chinese translations of this scripture (which I will refer to as the SĀ and SĀ^2 versions). These translations are most likely based on parallel versions of this scripture that may be traced back to different Buddhist transmission lineages.[490] The Pāli commentarial literature on the Goad Sutta is quite brief and technical,[491] therefore, comparing the three existing versions of this scripture is crucial for deciphering the meaning of this Buddhist text. In terms of content and style, the different versions of the Goad Sutta are quite similar, and thus, they come together to form a coherent picture of this scripture. Having said that, the Chinese translations include a variety of terms referring to *saṃvega*, indicating that the translators had their own way of understanding this Buddhist concept and how it is specifically used in this scripture. Aside from the breadth of my discussion of the Goad Sutta in comparison to the brief treatments of this scripture in previous scholarship, what clearly distinguishes my study of this text and its notion of *saṃvega* is the attention I pay to the parallel versions in Chinese and the Pāli commentary.

Stylistically, the Goad Sutta stands out in comparison to the other early Buddhist scriptures that I focus on in this dissertation. It is a formulaic and repetitive text that lacks some of the poetic and literary features I emphasize in my analysis of other early scriptures that deal with *saṃvega*.

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[487] AN 4.113. The Pāli version of the Goad Sutta is located in the Book of Fours on account of the sets of four types of horses and persons. The Book of Fours is included in a large collection of Buddhist scriptures called the Aṅguttara Nikāya (AN). For a comprehensive overview of the AN, see Bodhi 2012: 17-84.
[488] Coomaraswamy 1943: 178.
[489] Heim 2003: 546-547; and Liang and Morseth 2021: 217-222.
[490] One early Chinese translation of a parallel version of the Goad Sutta is located in the completely preserved Saṃukta Āgama (SĀ), which most likely belongs to a Mūlasarvāstivāda transmission lineage (Anālayo 2019: 15-16, n. 4). Henceforth, I refer to this parallel version of the Goad Sutta as the SĀ (T.99, 234a16- 234b20). For a complete translation of the SĀ version, see Appendix A. The second early Chinese translation is found in the partly preserved Saṃukta Āgama (SĀ^2), which most likely belongs to the Mahīśāsaka transmission lineage (Karashima, personal communication 3/28/2019). Henceforth, I refer to this version of the Goad Sutta as the SĀ^2 (T.100, 429b15-429c10). I should mention that Anālayo and other scholars assign the T.100 Saṃukta Āgama to a Mūlasarvāstivāda transmission lineage, yet one that is distinct from the Mūlasarvāstivāda transmission lineage responsible for the T.99 Saṃukta Āgama mentioned above (Anālayo 2017: 16, n. 5). For a complete translation of the SĀ^2 version of this scripture, see Appendix A. For more information on the Chinese translations of scriptures that have close parallels in the AN, see Bodhi 2012: 71-74.
[491] The only Pāli commentary on the Goad Sutta is the Patodasutta-vaṇṇanā, which is located in the Catukkanipāta-aṭṭhakathā. For my complete translation of this commentary, see appendix B. Henceforth, I refer to this commentary as the Aṭṭhakathā or simply as the Pāli commentary.

Noticeably, the Goad Sutta bears some of the marks of an oral text, and in this regard, it represents many of the typical compositional characteristics of an early Buddhist discourse.[492] While its stylistic features might make this scripture less pleasing to read, the Goad Sutta is an extremely rich text that touches on core issues that are invaluable to the study of emotions in early Buddhist thought.

2. Translation[493]

There are, monks, these four types of fine thoroughbred horses existing in the world. Which four? (1) Here, monks, one type of fine thoroughbred horse becomes distressed when it sees the shadow of the goad; facing distress (*saṃvega*) it thinks: "What will the horse trainer make me do today? How am I to serve him?" Such, monks, is one type of fine thoroughbred horse. This, monks, is the first type of fine thoroughbred horse existing in the world.

(2) And, monks, another type of fine thoroughbred horse does not become distressed and does not face distress when it sees the shadow of the goad. However, this horse becomes distressed when its hair is struck [by the goad]; facing distress it thinks: "What will the horse trainer make me do today? How am I to serve him?" Such, monks, is another type of fine thoroughbred horse. This, monks, is the second type of fine thoroughbred horse existing in the world.

(3) And, monks, another type of fine thoroughbred horse does not become distressed and does not face distress when it sees the shadow of the goad, nor when its hair is struck by it. However, this horse becomes distressed when its skin is struck [by the goad]; facing distress it thinks: "What will the horse trainer make me do today? How am I to serve him?" Such, monks, is another type of fine thoroughbred horse. This, monks, is the third type of fine thoroughbred horse existing in the world.

(4) And, monks, another type of fine thoroughbred horse does not become distressed and does not face distress when it sees the shadow of the goad, nor when its hair is struck by it, nor when its skin is struck by it. However, this horse becomes distressed when its bone is struck [by the goad]; facing distress it thinks: "What will the horse trainer make me do today? How am I to serve him?" Such, monks, is another type of fine thoroughbred horse. This, monks, is the fourth type of fine thoroughbred horse existing in the world.

Likewise, monks, there are these four types of fine thoroughbred persons existing in the world. Which four? (1) Here, monks, one type of fine thoroughbred person hears that in some village or town a certain woman or man is ailing or dead. Distressed by this, that person faces distress. Distressed, he strives properly. Strenuous, he realizes the ultimate truth with the body, penetrates [it] with comprehensive knowledge, and sees [it]. I say, monks, that this fine thoroughbred person is similar to the fine thoroughbred horse that becomes distressed and faces distress when it sees the shadow of the goad. Such, monks, is one type of fine thoroughbred person. This, monks, is the first type of fine thoroughbred person existing in the world.

(2) And, monks, another type of fine thoroughbred person does not merely hear that in some village or town a certain woman or man is ailing or dead. Instead, he sees for himself a woman or man who is ailing or dead. Distressed by this, that person faces distress. Distressed, he strives properly. Strenuous, he realizes the ultimate truth with the body, penetrates [it] with comprehensive

[492] On orality, formulas, and the study of the compositional features of early Buddhist scripture, see McGovern 2019; Allon 2021; and Shulman 2021.
[493] Below is a translation of the Pāli version of the Goad Sutta.

knowledge, and sees [it]. I say, monks, that this fine thoroughbred person is similar to the fine thoroughbred horse that becomes distressed and faces distress when its hair is struck [by the goad]. Such, monks, is another type of fine thoroughbred person. This, monks, is the second type of fine thoroughbred person existing in the world.

(3) And, monks, another type of fine thoroughbred person does not hear that in some village or town a certain woman or man is ailing or dead, nor does he see for himself a woman or man who is ailing or dead. Instead, a kinsman or a relative of his is ailing or dead. Distressed by this, that person faces distress. Distressed, he strives properly. Strenuous, he realizes the ultimate truth with the body, penetrates [it] with comprehensive knowledge, and sees [it]. I say, monks, that this fine thoroughbred person is similar to the fine thoroughbred horse that becomes distressed and faces distress when its skin is struck [by the goad]. Such, monks, is another type of fine thoroughbred person. This, monks, is the third type of fine thoroughbred person existing in the world.

(4) And, monks, another type of fine thoroughbred person does not hear that in some village or town a certain woman or man is ailing or dead, nor does he see for himself a woman or man who is ailing or dead, nor is a kinsman or a relative of his ailing or dead. Instead, he himself is affected by bodily sensations that are painful, piercing, sharp, severe, disagreeable, unpleasant, and life-threatening. Distressed by this, that person faces distress. Distressed, he strives properly. Strenuous, he realizes the ultimate truth with the body, penetrates [it] with comprehensive knowledge, and sees [it]. I say, monks, that this fine thoroughbred person is similar to the fine thoroughbred horse that becomes distressed and faces distress when its bone is struck [by the goad]. Such, monks, is another type of fine thoroughbred person. This, monks, is the fourth type of fine thoroughbred person existing in the world.

3. Framing the Goad Sutta: The Buddha and the horse trainer

In the AN, the two suttas[494] that precede the Goad Sutta provide the traditional context for this canonical text. According to these Pāli scriptures, a horse trainer by the name of Kesi approached the Buddha, paid homage to him, and took a seat beside the master. The two then had a brief conversation, after which the Buddha delivered two short discourses on the similarities between horses and persons. The second of these discourses is the Goad Sutta.[495] The verbal exchange between the Buddha and the horse trainer, which spurs the Buddha's teaching, is vital for understanding the meaning of the Goad Sutta. I believe this exchange sets the tone for the emotional response the Goad Sutta aims to provoke.

The Buddha begins his conversation with Kesi by asking the horse trainer how exactly he disciplines a horse. Kesi replies that it varies from one case to another. With one horse he is gentle, with another one he is stern, and in certain cases he is both gentle and stern. The Buddha then asks Kesi how he handles a horse that must be tamed but for some reason cannot be disciplined. Kesi answers, "I kill him. For what reason? So it may not disparage my teacher's guild."[496] At this point in the dialogue, the roles are reversed. Kesi poses the same set of questions to the Buddha, who provides answers that are almost identical to Kesi's. The Buddha explains to the horse trainer that

[494] Kesi Sutta (AN 4.111) and Java Sutta (AN 4.112).
[495] In the AN, the group of suttas that follow the Goad Sutta do not have an obvious thematic connection to these three discourses that focus on horses.
[496] *hanāmi naṃ, bhante. taṃ kissa hetu? mā me ācariyakulassa avaṇṇo ahosīti* (AN 4.111).

he also disciplines one person with a gentle method, another with a stern method, and in some cases relying on a method that is both gentle and stern. Then, Kesi asks the Buddha how he handles a person who needs to be tamed but for some reason cannot be disciplined. The Buddha gives a startling answer: "If a person who needs to be tamed cannot be disciplined using a gentle method, a stern method, or a method that is both gentle and stern, then I kill him, Kesi."[497] The horse trainer is stunned by the answer, yet he knows very well the Buddha does not go around killing people. So Kesi immediately responds: "But, venerable one, it is not permissible for the Blessed One to destroy life, yet the Blessed One just said 'I kill him, Kesi.'"[498] Upon hearing this, the Buddha first acknowledges that it is in fact impermissible for the sage to kill. Then, he goes on explaining to Kesi that when a person cannot be disciplined, he is considered an outcast. That is to say, a person who will not submit to discipline is deemed one who should not be spoken to or instructed by the Buddha and the wise monks. Killing in the discipline (*vinaya*) of the Buddha, therefore, means considering one unworthy of hearing the Dharma and benefiting from the monastic community. Having heard this explanation, Kesi confirms that such a person is truly doomed. After this conversation, Kesi goes on to praise the Buddha and declares that from now on he wishes to be considered a lay follower who takes refuge in the Buddha, the Dharma, and the *saṅgha*.[499] The Buddha then gives a short speech, comparing the virtues of a royal horse to those of a Buddhist monk,[500] after which, he utters the Goad Sutta.

The dialogue between the Buddha and Kesi is of interest to me for several reasons. First of all, it reveals a certain harshness that is emblematic of the Buddha's character, the Dharma, and the monastic community. It is no secret that Buddhism, both in its early and later stages, is an extremely strict and rigorous tradition. This is especially apparent in the uncompromising methods of Buddhist discipline. In this dialogue, the harshness I speak of becomes evident when the Buddha asserts that one who cannot act accordingly is to be excommunicated from the *saṅgha*. On this note, I should mention that the Buddhist tradition has its own way of justifying the Buddha's harshness and in particular his harsh words. Addressing this matter, Heim mentions that in the Milindapañha, for example, the Buddha's harshness is explained as a means to soften sentient beings, not to cause them fear and trembling. With this in mind, Heim raises the possibility that the presence of harshness in early Buddhist texts is actually meant to provoke sensitivity and tenderness, not distress.[501] When contemplating this matter, I think it is important to understand

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[497] *sace me, kesi, purisadammo saṇhena vinayaṃ na upeti, pharusena vinayaṃ na upeti, saṇhapharusena vinayaṃ na upeti, hanāmi naṃ, kesīti* (Ibid).

[498] *na kho, bhante, bhagavato pāṇātipāto kappati. atha ca pana bhagavā evamāha — 'hanāmi, naṃ kesī'ti* (Ibid).

[499] This can be another good case study for looking into the relationship between fear and conversion in early Buddhist literature.

[500] The Java Sutta, which directly precedes the Goad Sutta in the AN, is one of many scriptures in this collection of canonical texts that compares the virtues of a horse to those of a Buddhist disciple. In this sutta, the virtue of speed (*java*) is emphasized as one shared by both thoroughbred horses and monks. Some might be surprised to learn that speed is an important quality for a Buddhist monk to possess. The monk's speed is measured, for example, by his ability to progress quickly on the Buddhist path (AN 3.97). For the purposes of this discussion, it is useful to consider the close relationship between *saṃvega* and speed. In Sanskrit, *saṃvega* can literally mean a swift movement of the body, which characterizes the quivering or trembling of a frightened animal or person. It is also often paired with the act of running of fleeing from a great threat. In Buddhism, the speed and urgency associated with *saṃvega* are commended because they push one to pursue liberation instantaneously. In the Goad Sutta, specifically, *saṃvega* is paired with energy or striving. It is considered an emotion that provides one with a much-needed boost or burst of energy. In this sense, the concept of *saṃvega* points to the importance of gaining momentum and speed as one takes on the Buddhist path.

[501] Heim 2003: 548.

that this is not a case of "either-or." One does not have to consider the textual accounts of the Buddha's harshness as intended to either elicit fear or inspire tenderness.[502] *Saṃvega*, for that matter, is intended to generate both fear and sensitivity. The Buddha's harsh words elicit fear and shock, yet these emotional responses are often meant to help one become more sensitive. As Heim puts it, "for the Buddhists, though, fear and awe communicate when we are in the presence of something of immediate importance *in the world itself*." She further explains that these two emotions "make us aware of our dependence on things external to us, which is what it means to be sensitive."[503] As I will show later in this chapter, the Goad Sutta illustrates through the example of the tamed horse precisely how inducing fear can cause one to become more sensitive and docile.

Another important aspect of the dialogue between Kesi and the Buddha, concerns the idea that taking on the Buddha's path is a "high-stakes game." A person who hears the Dharma and benefits from the merit-making powers of the monastic community can eventually reach the highest goal, i.e., nirvāṇa. On the other hand, one who is denied an opportunity to receive the Buddha's teaching and engage with the monastic community is condemned to a dire and miserable existence. This dramatic display of what is at stake in hearing the Buddha's word falls under the broad conceptual scope of *saṃvega*. The Buddhist concept of *saṃvega* conveys the idea that when pursuing the Dharma, one should experience a fretful and anxious feeling on account of realizing the fatal consequences of missing out on the Buddha's teaching.

Lastly, the most curious feature of the dialogue between the Buddha and the horse trainer is the Buddha's initial answer to Kesi's question about how to deal with the type of person who would not submit to discipline. Why does the Buddha initially say, "I kill him," when asked about such a person.[504] The simplest answer is that the scripture is fully committed to creating a perfect structural symmetry between the Buddha and Kesi's methods of taming. Thus, since the horse trainer said he kills the untamable horses, the Buddha had to say the same about people who would not submit to discipline. Later in the text, as I have mentioned, the Buddha qualifies this statement by explaining what he truly meant when he said "I kill him."

Another possible explanation for the Buddha's killing statement is that there is an antinomian aspect to the Buddha's initial response. It might be excessive to claim that this is an early case of a Buddhist text encouraging a form of righteous violence or killing. Yet noticeably, in his conversation with Kesi, the Buddha does not admonish the horse trainer for killing untamable horses, despite the famous Buddhist precept that one should abstain from killing living beings (*prāṇātighātād viratiḥ*). Moreover, the Buddha's entire attitude towards killing in this scripture is uncanny, to say the least. Whether it is Kesi's horse-killing ways or the Buddhist rhetoric of "killing" undisciplinable monks, this canonical text suggests that the early Buddhist point of view on taking life is not as simple and clear-cut as it may seem.[505]

My last and most significant point on the Buddha's killing statement will tie this matter directly to *saṃvega*. When the Buddha initially gives the provocative answer, "I kill him," I believe

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[502] Throughout this chapter, I use "sensibility" when referring to a sentient being's emotional capacity to respond, and I use "sensitive" or "sensitivity" with respect to one who is easily affected or stirred.
[503] Ibid, 549.
[504] Unfortunately, the commentary does not make any remark on this controversial moment in the text.
[505] On the complicated attitude towards killing in early Buddhist scriptures and its relationship to early Buddhist Tantra, see Dalton 2011: 23-43.

he is trying to shock Kesi. Or, if we think of this text and its potential audience, I would say that the reason for having those words come out of the Buddha's mouth is to rattle the listener or the reader. One of the main claims I make in this dissertation is that early Buddhism appreciates lessons that hit hard. In the Pāli canon, the two most common Buddhist strategies for delivering such an emotional blow are articulating the Dharma provocatively and confronting one with a cold, uncompromising picture of reality. *Saṃvega* is the Buddhist term used to express the experience of being hit hard by the truth, which in this context, means being struck by the reality of impermanence and suffering. In this regard, the Goad Sutta, more than any other early Buddhist scripture, addresses the issue of how reality hits hard and why this is considered a beneficial and essential experience.

4. The four horses of *saṃvega*

The Goad Sutta begins with the claim that there are four types of thoroughbred horses in the world. The Buddha places these horses in a hierarchical order, starting with the finest type of horse. According to the Pāli version, this exceptional horse becomes distressed and faces *saṃvega* when it sees the shadow of the goad.[506] The sutta briefly states that the mere shadow of the driving stick is enough to trigger the first horse's *saṃvega*. The Pāli commentary fills in the details of this scene, explaining that what the horse sees is the shadow of the goad being lifted in the air for the sake of striking it.[507] In this description, it seems that a rider or a trainer has mounted the horse, and as he raises the goad stick in the air, the horse catches a glimpse of the stick's shadow on the ground. Even before the goad physically makes contact with its body, this extremely sensitive horse already begins to experience *saṃvega*. The Pāli commentary specifically says that the horse "enters *saṃvega*" (*saṃvegaṃ paṭipajjati*), indicating that it passes into some kind of state.

Next, the Buddha explains that the horse's *saṃvega* is tied to its disciplined demeanor. In the Pāli version, amidst its *saṃvega*, the horse tries to figure out what the horse trainer needs from it and how it can serve him. The commentary even explains that what causes the horse to experience *saṃvega* is not just the fear of being hit by the goad but also the understanding that the rider expects it to go faster.[508] While there is clearly a distressing component to the horse's fearful anticipation as it sees the goad's shadow, this fear does not paralyze the horse but galvanizes it to accelerate its speed. This analogy explains well the workings of *saṃvega*. There is nothing pleasant about the threat of being struck by a stick. Yet under the right circumstances, such a threat can push one to go faster and eventually reach the desired destination quicker. In the same way, although *saṃvega* is an unpleasant experience, it can accelerate one's progress on the path to liberation.[509]

The description of the first type of horse in the SĀ and SĀ^2 is fairly similar to the Pāli. Having said that, one distinguishable feature of these two versions is the terminological distinction they make between a horse's *saṃvega* and a person's *saṃvega*. In the Pāli, the Buddha simply

[506] The scripture uses both the past-passive-participle of the root *sam-vij* as well as the noun *saṃvega,* which is derived from the same root. In other words, the text articulates the experience of *saṃvega* both in the passive and the active. This passive-active phrasing of *saṃvega* repeats itself several times in the Pāli canon. I elaborate on this phrasing in the next chapter (pp. 182-183).
[507] Catukkanipāta-aṭṭhakathā 113.
[508] Ibid.
[509] On *saṃvega* and speed, see n. 500.

uses the term *saṃvega* when speaking about horses and people alike. However, in the SĀ and SĀ^2, the Buddha uses "alarmed" (*jing* 驚)[510] when referring to a horse's *saṃvega*, as opposed to other words, like "distressed" (*bu-wei* 怖畏) or "disgusted" (*yan-wu* 厭惡), when talking about a person's *saṃvega*. As I will show later, the Pāli also distinguishes the human experience of *saṃvega* from the horse's experience of this emotional state, even though it never makes a terminological distinction between the two. Since the SĀ and SĀ^2 are early Chinese translations of Indic sources, it is worth asking whether this terminological distinction already existed in the Indic texts, or was it introduced by the Chinese translators. It seems more likely that the latter is the case because of the consistent use of *saṃvega* in the Pāli version. Yet one way or another, I consider these Chinese translations of this scripture to be tremendously valuable precisely because of their capacity to reveal the broad semantic range of *saṃvega* through the variety of words they use to articulate the different aspects of this emotion. For instance, when the SĀ and SĀ^2 versions describe the first horse as being alarmed, they consider this emotional state as one that enables the horse to run faster, and also carefully discern whether the rider wants it to go slower or faster, left or right. The horse's *saṃvega* gives it a power boost and at the same time strengthens its discipline and focus. The Chinese translations of the Goad Sutta present us with a positive notion of being scared or alarmed. In this saṃvegic state, energy is increased, the senses are sharpened, and there is a high level of attentiveness to one's surroundings. In the SĀ and SĀ^2, the scripture seems to welcome this positive way of interpreting the experience of being alarmed.

In the next part of the sutta, the Buddha mentions the second type of thoroughbred horse that exists in the world. This horse does not experience *saṃvega* when it sees the shadow of the goad; however, it enters this emotional state when the goad strikes its hair.[511] The overall description of the second horse's *saṃvega* is similar to the first one, except for the type of contact with the object that triggers the saṃvegic response. Instead of sight, in the case of the second horse it is touch that provokes *saṃvega*. The point here is that one's degree of saṃvegic sensibility is measured by two factors. The first is the subject's distance from the object that elicits *saṃvega*. The further one is from the distressing object, the more advanced his saṃvegic sensibility is. The second factor is the level of pain it takes to provoke this emotion. Ideally, one can enter a state of *saṃvega* while enduring as little pain as possible. As I have mentioned earlier, *saṃvega* is typically an unpleasant experience, nonetheless, the Goad Sutta indicates that this unpleasantness is not valued in and of itself.

As the trainer strikes the second horse's hairy tail with the goad, the triggering object inches closer to the horse's body and the painful sensation becomes more visceral. This trend continues with the third type of thoroughbred horse the Buddha addresses in this text. This horse only experiences *saṃvega* once the goad directly makes contact with its skin. The Pāli commentary explains that in the case of the third horse, the goad wounds the outer skin of the animal. The SĀ and SĀ^2 specifically mention that the third horse becomes alarmed only once the goad penetrates its skin and reaches its flesh.

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[510] In some cases, to convey the meaning of being alarmed the SĀ also uses *jing-su* 驚速 and the SĀ^2 uses *jing-song* 驚悚.

[511] The Pāli commentary explains that the horse does not actually experience any sensation in its hair. Yet when its hair is struck by the goad the horse feels it in its hair follicles (Catukkanipāta-aṭṭhakathā 113). The SĀ version also mentions that the horse feels the striking of the goad on its skin and hair. This version is more specific than the Pāli, as it mentions that the rider hits the horse on its hairy tail.

Lastly, the Buddha discusses the fourth type of horse. This horse experiences *saṃvega* only when the goad directly hits its bone. The commentary even goes as far as saying that this horse enters *saṃvega* only once the driving stick fractures its bone. The main reason the bone is highlighted in the description of the fourth horse is because when the goad penetrates the flesh and reaches the bone it clearly injures the animal in a more severe way. The fact that disciplining this horse requires beating it so hard is indicative of its relatively low level of saṃvegic sensibility.

Before proceeding to the other side of this analogy which focuses on what gives rise to a human's *saṃvega*, I would like to discuss two intriguing points Coomaraswamy makes about this emotion in the Goad Sutta. First, Coomaraswamy claims that this Buddhist scripture works with the resemblance between being physically hit by a goad and being struck by the feeling of *saṃvega*.[512] In other words, for Coomaraswamy, the horse's *saṃvega* highlights the shocking and violent aspects of experiencing this emotion. I think this is a shrewd observation; however, if one leaves the horse-human comparison at that, one may overlook the importance of the four different types of horses the Buddha discusses. In the sutta, the first horse experiences *saṃvega* without even being physically hit by the goad, while the fourth horse is brutally beaten with the driving stick. Thus, although the basic analogy here revolves around the similarity between being hit with a stick and experiencing *saṃvega*, the multiple facets of this analogy actually stress a different feature of *saṃvega*. Through the four types of horses, the Buddha establishes that there are varying degrees of saṃvegic sensibility. This is a point Heim underscores in her analysis of the Goad Sutta,[513] which I will revisit after I discuss the human side of the Goad Sutta's horse-person analogy.

The second point Coomaraswamy makes concerns what the example of the horse's *saṃvega* discloses of the classical Indian conception of an aesthetic experience. Coomaraswamy argues that "*saṁvega*, then, refers to the experience that may be felt in the presence of a work of art, when we are struck by it, as a horse might be struck by a whip. It is, however, assumed that like the good horse we are more or less trained, and hence that more than a merely physical shock is involved; the blow has a meaning for us, and the realization of that meaning, in which nothing of the physical sensation survives, is still a part of the shock."[514] Coomaraswamy's main claim here is that like a trained horse, a person is also trained to attach meaning to the disturbing blow that he or she experiences in *saṃvega*. This claim relates to Coomaraswamy's broader argument that the experience of *saṃvega* must include a "second phase," which is purely intellectual or cognitive. I address this argument elsewhere in this dissertation,[515] and therefore, I would like to briefly discuss here a different component of Coomaraswamy's understanding of *saṃvega,* which also comes up in this quoted passage. In Coomaraswamy's reading of the Goad Sutta, he sees the horse's *saṃvega* as an expression of the shock one might feel in the presence of a work of art.

As I reflect on Coomaraswamy's novel interpretation of the text, what seems to be lacking is the sutta's emphasis on *saṃvega* as an experience that helps to build one's discipline. In the Goad Sutta, the horse's shock is an impetus to act accordingly. However, for Coomaraswamy, the good horse is already trained to attach a special meaning to the blow it suffers from the goad. My contention is that if one considers the fact that this sutta comes after a conversation between the

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[512] Coomaraswamy 1943: 174.
[513] Heim 2003: 546-547.
[514] Coomaraswamy 1943: 178.
[515] See pp. 125-126.

Buddha and Kesi about how to discipline horses and persons, it becomes apparent that the saṃvegic shock plays a crucial part in the process of becoming trained or tamed. The value of the shocking experience is tied to what it can reveal to the one who experiences it and how it can change one's conduct and view of the world.[516]

Coomaraswamy's commitment to analyzing *saṃvega* through the aesthetic prism of responding to a work of art opened up new and exciting avenues to think about the concept of shock in classical Indian thought. Nonetheless, what is left out of Coomaraswamy's analysis of the Goad Sutta is the question of the ethical dimension of *saṃvega*. This is precisely the dimension other contemporary scholars have chosen to underscore in their reading of this scripture. Moving forward, I will discuss the relationship between *saṃvega* and Buddhist ideals of morality, as I explore the human side of the sutta's horse-person analogy.

5. The four encounters with the reality of suffering

In an article on *saṃvega* and *pasāda* in Cambodian Buddhism, Trent Walker highlights three different dimensions that *saṃvega* covers: "trembling out of fear, being emotionally moved, and having an empathetic response to suffering."[517] The first two dimensions are the predominant ones we find in the Pāli canon. They come up time and again in this dissertation, whenever I discuss the distress and emotional upheaval the experience of *saṃvega* entails. As for the third dimension, Walker joins Hansen[518] in showing that *saṃvega* as empathy is a meaning this term acquires in Cambodian Buddhism. Thus, while in the Pāli canon, the feeling of *saṃvega* is primarily associated with the realization of one's own impermanent nature, in Cambodian Buddhism, *saṃvega* also stands for an empathetic response to the suffering of others. As such, this emotion "enters into a relational realm where realization is expressed through loving-kindness and compassion."[519] I think Walker and Hansen rightfully point out that in early Buddhist scripture, the concept of *saṃvega* is usually not articulated in ethical terms. The Cambodian sense of *saṃvega* as compassion is certainly uncommon in early Buddhist thought. Having said that, the Goad Sutta might be exceptional in this regard, for in this text, *saṃvega* seems to include an ethical dimension that is articulated as an empathetic response to the suffering of others.

The notion that the word *saṃvega* can have both the meaning of distress and empathy may seem confounding. Although the semantic range of *saṃvega* is quite broad, I do not think this is a case of a word that bears two conflicting meanings that are difficult to bridge. The Buddhist idea of a semantic overlap between empathy and distress is predicated on the understanding that one can face distress because of the distress of others. Feeling empathy or compassion for another sentient being can be an intense and even disturbing experience. With respect to this matter, Heim asserts that "compassion is of course regarded as a supreme moral and religious achievement in Buddhism, exalted in the most positive terms. Yet compassion is actually quite a painful upheaval because one feels, in a genuine way, the distress of others. In compassion, one is sensitive to the way the world is and how beings fit into it."[520] In this sense, the empathetic aspect of *saṃvega*

[516] Later in this chapter, I will address in more length the training process in which *saṃvega* plays a crucial role.
[517] Walker 2018: 280.
[518] Hansen 2003.
[519] Walker 2018: 279-280.
[520] Heim 2003: 550.

does not exclude its distressing nature but embraces it. Compassion and distress, at times, come together in the experience *saṃvega*, enabling one to genuinely embody the suffering of others.

5.1 Hearing about the suffering of others

The first type of fine person the Buddha discusses in the Goad Sutta is aligned with the first type of fine horse. Since this is the case, we can safely say that this person is placed highest in the hierarchy of varying degrees of saṃvegic sensibility. In the Pāli version, the Buddha does not merely describe what triggers this person's *saṃvega* but also how this distressing experience propels him to realize the ultimate truth:

> Here, monks, one type of fine thoroughbred person hears that in some village or town a certain woman or man is ailing or dead. Distressed by this, that person faces distress (*saṃvega*). Distressed, he strives properly. Strenuous, he realizes the ultimate truth with the body, penetrates [it] with comprehensive knowledge, and sees [it].[521]

In the first sentence of this passage, the Buddha addresses that which sets the first type of person apart, namely, the fact that hearing about the suffering of another human being is enough to provoke his *saṃvega*. This degree of emotional sensibility is considered remarkable because the mere mentioning of the agony of a distant stranger immediately causes this person distress. Being physically removed from those who are ailing or dead might lead some people to remain unperturbed or indifferent to the reality of suffering. Yet in the case of the first type of person the Buddha addresses, the suffering of others causes him distress even from afar. Like the first horse mentioned in this sutta, the extreme sensibility of this type of person is articulated in terms of his physical distance from the distressing object. In this regard, I think the act of hearing is stressed since it is the form of sensory perception that can maximize the subject's distance from the emotionally triggering object.

The other noticeable feature in the Buddha's description of the first type of fine person is this person's relationship to the individual that triggers his distress. According to the sutta, there are several factors that do not impact this fine person's capacity to experience *saṃvega* in response to the suffering of others. These factors include the other person's place of residence, that person's gender, and whether that person is still suffering or already dead. What is possibly being highlighted here is the astounding empathetic capacity of this type of person. Even the misery of a totally random human being provokes this individual's *saṃvega*, which the text later indicates is certainly not always the case.

The next part of the quoted passage succinctly lays out a series of steps that this person undertakes as he progresses on the Buddhist path. It begins with experiencing *saṃvega* and ends with seeing the ultimate truth. In the Pāli version of the Goad Sutta, this series of steps repeats itself in the Buddha's description of each one of the four types of persons. For the purposes of this discussion, the first important thing to notice about this sequence of steps leading to nirvāṇa is that it all begins with *saṃvega*. The Goad Sutta demonstrates that inhabiting the appropriate emotional framework is the first significant step a person must take in order to realize the ultimate truth.

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[521] *idha, bhikkhave, ekacco bhadro purisājānīyo suṇāti — 'amukasmiṃ nāma gāme vā nigame vā itthī vā puriso vā dukkhito vā kālakato vā'ti. so tena saṃvijjati, saṃvegaṃ āpajjati. saṃviggo yoniso padahati. pahitatto kāyena ceva paramasaccaṃ sacchikaroti, paññāya ca ativijjha passati.*

Saṃvega, here, is that which facilitates one's soteriological advancement, as it leads one to exert energy or strive in the proper way (*yonisso padahati*).

5.1.1 *Saṃvega* and *padhāna*

In his commentary on the Dhammasaṅgaṇī, Buddhaghosa quotes the aforementioned line on *saṃvega* and striving (*padhāna*) from the Goad Sutta in his discussion of the different meanings of the term energy (*viriya*).[522] Buddhaghosa states the following:

> It is said that "being distressed, one strives properly." Therefore, it (i.e., energy) has as its proximate cause distress (*saṃvega*) or the object that is the inception of energy. It should be recognized that right energy is the root of all attainments.[523]

Buddhaghosa claims here that the key element for making progress on the Buddhist path is "right energy," a notion he directly associates with the canonical emphasis on striving.[524] As Buddhaghosa tries to establish the essentiality of energy to the Buddhist practitioner, he addresses the question concerning what gives rise to one's energy. The first answer he provides is *saṃvega*.[525] By stating that *saṃvega* is energy's "proximate cause" (*saṃvega-padaṭṭhānaṃ*), Buddhaghosa is also acknowledging that there is a long causal chain of events that gives rise to one's energy. In this causal chain, *saṃvega* is the link that is closest to the genesis of energy.

Buddhaghosa therefore carves up an important place for *saṃvega* in his conception of the Path. Although he renders energy as the root of all attainments, he does not fail to specify that the emotional turmoil of *saṃvega* is the main cause that gives rise to energy. Regardless of whether one chooses to consider *saṃvega* or energy as the foundation of all attainments, the essential role of these two elements in Buddhist doctrine could not be overstated. In this regard, the Goad Sutta is an example of a text that underscores the significance of pairing the distressing feeling of *saṃvega* with the energetic striving of *padhāna*. The pairing of these two elements appears in a few early Buddhist suttas,[526] the most elaborate among them is a Pāli scripture called the Happiness Sutta (Somanassasutta).[527]

5.1.2 *Saṃvega* and *padhāna* in the Happiness Sutta

The popular image of a Buddhist disciple as one who must always remain calm and unperturbed can be quite misleading.[528] The strong emphasis on distress and energy in early Buddhist doctrine reveals a different side of what the Buddhist path entails. The Goad Sutta illustrates this through

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[522] In the Dhammasaṅgaṇī commentary, this Pāli term is spelled *vīriya*.

[523] *'saṃviggo yoniso padahatī'ti vacanato saṃvegapadaṭṭhānaṃ, vīriyārambhavatthupadaṭṭhānaṃ vā. sammā āraddhaṃ sabbāsaṃ sampattīnaṃ mūlaṃ hotīti daṭṭhabbaṃ* (Dhammasaṅgaṇī-aṭṭhakathā, Indriyarāsivaṇṇanā).

[524] For a brief and clear analysis of this passage by Buddhaghosa, see Liang and Morseth 2021: 220.

[525] The second answer, as I understand it, leaves the door open for some other thing (*vatthu*) or factor that can spark one's energy.

[526] Along with the Goad Sutta and the Happiness Sutta, the pairing of *saṃvega* and *padhāna* appears in DN 33.5 and AN 1.331-332. Among these scriptures, the Happiness Sutta includes the richest discussion of *saṃvega* and *padhāna*.

[527] KN 4.37.

[528] As David Webster observes, the role of *saṃvega* in early Buddhist doctrine poses a certain challenge to the Buddhist ideal of calmness (Webster 2005: 102-103).

the terminology it uses, as well as through the comparison it draws between a Buddhist disciple and a thoroughbred horse that is galvanized by fear and distress. Another Pāli sutta that uses the terminology of *saṃvega* and *padhāna* to characterize the ideal Buddhist disciple is the Happiness Sutta. In this scripture, the Buddha speaks of two things that are essential for the monk who wishes to live peacefully and focus on eliminating suffering.

> A monk endowed with two things, monks, dwells in this very world with plenty of ease and happiness, properly bent on the destruction of the influxes. What two things? (1) Becoming distressed (*saṃvejana*) when conditions are distressing, and (2) striving (*padhāna*) properly when being distressed. Indeed, monks, endowed with these two things a monk dwells in this very world with plenty of ease and happiness, properly bent on the destruction of the influxes. The Blessed One spoke on this matter. On this [matter], thus was spoken:
>
> A wise person should be distressed
> when conditions are distressing.
> An ardent and prudent monk
> should investigate [phenomena] with wisdom.
>
> Dwelling thus, the ardent [monk]
> is peaceful and balanced.
> Practicing calmness of mind
> he can destroy suffering.[529]

The Aṭṭhakathā commentary unpacks this sutta while specifically focusing on the text's notion of *saṃvega* and *padhāna*. For starters, the commentary tends to what it means that one should experience *saṃvega* when conditions are distressing. The point is that the basic conditions of existing in *saṃsāra* warrant a feeling of deep distress. These conditions are broken down in the exegetical literature into a scheme of eight distressing objects (*vatthus*),[530] namely, birth, old age, sickness, death, the suffering of hell, and the suffering rooted in the past, present, and future. According to the Aṭṭhakathā, when one perceives these basic conditions of saṃsāric existence as distressing, the world appears as if on fire, and one realizes that nothing is stable and there is no

[529] *dvīhi, bhikkhave, dhammehi samannāgato bhikkhu diṭṭheva dhamme sukhasomanassabahulo viharati, yoni cassa āraddhā hoti āsavānaṃ khayāya. katamehi dvīhi? saṃvejanīyesu ṭhānesu saṃvejanena, saṃviggassa ca yoniso padhānena. imehi kho, bhikkhave, dvīhi dhammehi samannāgato bhikkhu diṭṭheva dhamme sukhasomanassabahulo viharati, yoni cassa āraddhā hoti āsavānaṃ khayāyāti. etamatthaṃ bhagavā avoca. tatthetaṃ iti vuccati:*

saṃvejanīyaṭṭhānesu, saṃvijjetheva paṇḍito.
ātāpī nipako bhikkhu, paññāya samavekkhiya.

evaṃ vihārī ātāpī, santavutti anuddhato.
cetosamathamanuyutto, khayaṃ dukkhassa pāpuṇeti.
(I have not included in this translation the opening and closing lines of the Happiness Sutta, for these lines simply state repeatedly that this discourse was spoken by the Buddha).
[530] This scheme of eight objects appears in several other Pāli commentaries. For my translation of the passage on the eight objects of distress, see n. 43.

refuge to be found anywhere. Realizing this, one is motivated to retire from the everyday world and take on the path of renunciation.[531]

Next, the commentary addresses the *padhāna* element, explaining that the person who is thus distressed on account of *saṃsāra* should "strive properly," that is, exert his energy in the right way. The first step involved in putting this into practice is avoiding misconduct and practicing good conduct. Following that, one should rely on the saṃvegic feeling that the world is devoid of shelter to set one's mind on the attainment of nirvāṇa. Next, one should begin the practice of "calmness and insight" (*samatha-vipassanā*), which leads to "bodily ease" (*kāyikam sukham*) and "mental happiness" (*cetasikam somanassam*). The Aṭṭhakathā adds that this second sequence of steps marks the beginning of destroying the influxes.

Looking at the Happiness Sutta through the lens of the Pāli commentary presents us with a traditional Buddhist understanding of the relationship between being distressed and living in peace. On the face of it, feeling upset and attaining tranquility seem strongly opposed to each other. Yet what this scripture sets out to demonstrate is that becoming perturbed by the facticity of the human condition is necessary if one wishes to attain tranquility, and eventually put an end to suffering. This idea is linked, among other things, to the paring of *saṃvega* and *pasāda* (serene confidence) that becomes prominent in later Theravāda literature.

One noteworthy feature of the Happiness Sutta, which the commentary does not elaborate on is the fact that the scripture refers to *saṃvega* (and *padhāna*) as a *dhamma* (Skt. dharma), a word that I translate here as "thing," but could also be translated in this context as "quality." The text, more precisely, refers to the habit of "becoming distressed when conditions are distressing" as a particular dharma. Throughout this chapter, what I am calling "one's saṃvegic sensibility" closely resembles this dharma of becoming disturbed by the conditions of *saṃsāra*. In early Buddhist scripture, *saṃvega* is usually not considered a quality that one can possess, and is not included in the lists of different dharmas. I highlight this since in the Buddhist Abhidharma and Pātañjala Yoga traditions, *saṃvega* is widely considered to be a kind of quality that one can and should possess.[532] Interestingly enough, however, in these later philosophical traditions, *saṃvega* is not predominantly the quality of being distressed by saṃsāric existence, as it is in the Happiness Sutta. Instead, it often stands for the necessary fervor or urgency one needs in order to succeed in mediation practice.[533] Nevertheless, the concept of *saṃvega* as articulated in scriptures like the Goad Sutta and the Happiness Sutta, leads me to believe that the application of *saṃvega* in Abhidharma and Pātañjala Yoga is largely predicated on the pairing of *saṃvega* and *padhāna* in the early Buddhist scriptures.[534]

5.1.3 From *saṃvega* and *padhāna* to the ultimate truth

Returning to the Goad Sutta, after the Buddha addresses the importance of becoming distressed and leveraging this feeling for the sake of exerting energy, he continues to discuss how one

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[531] On the notion of *saṃvega* as both fear and knowledge, see chapter two.

[532] Even in the large corpus of Abhidharma literature, to my knowledge, *saṃvega* is never included in the different lists of dharmas.

[533] On this use of *saṃvega* as a quality, see pp. 57-58.

[534] If this is the case, then the explication of this paring in the commentary on the Happiness Sutta can help us better understand why and how exactly *saṃvega* and *padhāna* are necessary for the practice of meditation.

progresses on the Path. The sutta states that the result of pairing *saṃvega* and *padhāna* is becoming resolute or strenuous (*pahita*).[535] That is to say, distress and energy are necessary for gaining the proper resolve required to pursue the Path. Next, the Buddha says that having become strenuous, one realizes the truth with the body, penetrates it with comprehensive knowledge,[536] and sees it. This particular formulaic phrasing raises a few exegetical issues, such as what does it mean to "realize the truth with the body?" The Pāli commentary explains that when the text says that one knows "with the body," it actually means "with the body and mental faculties" (*nāma-kāya*).[537] In so doing, the commentary downplays the notion of having some sort of bodily recognition, as it claims that in this context, the word "body" simply means the psychophysical aggregates that make up a sentient being. This explanation is somewhat underwhelming, for the sutta itself seems to make a different claim, namely that realization of the truth begins on a corporal level, then deepens through knowledge, and in its final stage, is perceived through vision. Among other things, this progressing model complements the idea that realization begins with *saṃvega*, an emotional experience that has a strong physiological component to it.[538]

5.1.4 Hearing about suffering of others in the SĀ and SĀ² versions

In the SĀ version of the Goad Sutta, the Buddha describes the first type of fine person similarly to the Pāli, but with a few slight wrinkles. The text says that having heard that someone died of illness, the first fine person "is able to give rise to dread and rely on right thought."[539] One noticeable feature here is that the element following *saṃvega* is not striving or "right energy" but the appropriate mental activity.[540] The SĀ's pairing of *saṃvega* with "right thought" clarifies that simply giving rise to dread is not necessarily useful in and of itself. One must pair this feeling of angst with the appropriate contemplative practice.

In the SĀ², the experience of *saṃvega* is articulated in a way that clearly differs from the two other versions of this scripture. The text states that upon hearing about a man or woman who

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[535] Since *pahita* is etymologically related to *padhāna* (striving), I prefer to translate it as strenuous, so that the etymological relationship is preserved in the English translation. Bodhi (2012: 495) prefers to translate *pahita* as "resolute."

[536] The commentary explains that penetrating the truth with "comprehensive knowledge" (*paññāya*) means "with insight (*vipassanā*), which is the comprehensive knowledge of the path" (Catukkanipāta-aṭṭhakathā 113).

[537] Catukkanipāta-aṭṭhakathā 113.

[538] As I have argued in the previous chapter, I prefer to think of *saṃvega* as an existential state, which is neither strictly mental nor physical. Having said that, it is important to acknowledge the physicality of this distressing state. Moreover, the Pāli commentary glosses the word "realizes" (*sacchikaroti*) with "sees" (*passati*). This is a bit peculiar, for in the sutta, the sequence of understanding the ultimate truth begins with a bodily realization (*sacchikaroti*) and ends with seeing (*passati*). In other words, given that the sutta seems to use the words *sacchikaroti* and *passati* as distinct from one another, I wonder why the commentary takes them as synonymous. One possible way of making sense of the commentary's double use of "seeing" here, would be to claim that realization begins with one type of visual perception, which after acquiring knowledge, turns into a different type of seeing. For example, first one has the saṃvegic vision that reveals the world as a chaotic place on account of the impermanent and unstable nature of things. Later, however, through gaining insight into the nature reality one no longer sees the world as a source of deep distress.

[539] 能生恐怖. 依正思惟.

[540] The expression *zheng si wei* 正思惟 (right thought) may also refer to the right intention or contemplation. On the meaning of 正思惟, see Nakamura 1975 (*Bukkyōgo daijiten*): 699c; Soothill 2014: 193; Hirakawa 1997: 685; and Muller 2007: DDB's entry on 正思惟.

was tormented by a severe illness,[541] the first type of person "profoundly realizes [what is] disgusting about worldly things. Because of this disgust, that person wholeheartedly cultivates the good."[542] While the SĀ² clearly states that the first fine person is like the first fine horse, in this early Chinese translation of the scripture, there is very little in common between the horse's *saṃvega* and the person's experience of this emotion. While the horse is described as being alarmed by the shadow of the goad, the person is depicted as being disgusted with *saṃsāra* after hearing about another human's suffering. That being the case, one might say that the horse-person analogy does not pan out seamlessly in the SĀ². Nonetheless, I think the critical point to take away from this parallel version of the Goad Sutta is the interpretation of *saṃvega* as a feeling of disgust or revulsion. This way of understanding *saṃvega* is prevalent in Pāli Buddhist literature, as well as in non-Buddhist classical Indian literature.[543] The SĀ², in particular, captures a key feature of the Buddhist interpretation of *saṃvega* as disgust. The text articulates *saṃvega* as a feeling of revulsion that is not directed at a specific object, but instead, pertains to every worldly thing. To put it differently, the saṃvegic disgust takes the whole world as its object. Katz addresses this matter, explaining that "*saṃvega* is a type of spiritually productive emotion, which Buddhaghosa interprets as something like the feeling of disgust at the misery of the world, which is to say a feeling of being disgusted with that which we experience as a world."[544] While Katz relies on Buddhaghosa in his explanation of *saṃvega* as disgust, the SĀ² version of the Goad Sutta provides us with an early canonical example of this specific meaning of *saṃvega*.

Furthermore, the Chinese term used here for saṃvegic disgust, *yan-wu* 厭惡 has an additional meaning worth considering, which is "to get sick of something."[545] In this context, I would say that what the first type of person "gets sick of" is *saṃsāra* or the entire world. It is worth pointing out that this person's reaction to the news about a stranger who has fallen ill is to feel sick himself. This is another possible expression of the empathetic aspect of *saṃvega*, as the type of person that is praised here seemingly faces distress on account of the distress of others.

5.2 Seeing the suffering of others

The second type of person the Buddha discusses does not experience *saṃvega* after hearing about a stranger's suffering, yet when he sees for himself another person who is ailing or dead, he becomes distressed. The shift that takes place here from hearing to seeing alludes to the significant role these two forms of perception play in experiencing *saṃvega*. This moment in the text is a good opportunity to address the discrete ways in which hearing and seeing function in giving rise to *saṃvega*.

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[541] In this version of the sutta, only the first type of person is able to give rise to *saṃvega* after hearing about an ailing person who has not yet died of their illness. In the case of the other three types of persons, we are specifically told that the ailing person who suffered an agonizing illness has also died from it.
[542] 於世俗法. 深知厭惡.
[543] *Saṃvega* is often closely associated with a specific classical Indic term for "revulsion" or "disgust" (P. *nibbidā*, Skt. *nirveda*). On *saṃvega* and disgust in early Buddhism, see Evmenenko 2021. On *saṃvega* and disgust in a broader classical Indian context, see Acri 2015.
[544] Katz 2010: 156.
[545] On the meaning of *yan-wu* 厭惡, see Nakamura 1975 (*Bukkyōgo daijiten*):116c; Hirakawa 1997: 224; and Muller 2007: DDB's entry on 厭惡.

In early Buddhism, hearing the Dharma is typically that which triggers one's *saṃvega*. In the Lion Sutta, for example, the Buddha's preaching of the four noble truths causes the gods to experience distress. In other scriptures, like the Isolation Sutta, a certain forest deity also displays the ability to steer a monk into a state of *saṃvega* by reminding him of the Buddha's teaching. Taking this into consideration, the Goad Sutta stands out since unlike most Buddhist scriptures, it is not the act of hearing the Dharma that elicits *saṃvega* here, but simply hearing about the reality of suffering. In this regard, the Goad Sutta foreshadows a later development in the Buddhist world, which expands the relationship between hearing and experiencing *saṃvega* beyond the act of listening to the Buddha's word. In the Theravāda tradition, for example, eliciting *saṃvega* is considered the goal of many Dharma songs and other forms of Buddhist auditory art.[546] Moreover, Buddhist chronicles like the Mahāvaṃsa also proclaim that upon hearing them one should experience *saṃvega* (as well as *pasāda*).[547]

The relationship between seeing and eliciting *saṃvega* is predominantly articulated in early Buddhist literature in two different ways. The first involves witnessing something extraordinary. For example, in the Moggallāna Sutta,[548] the Buddha notices that a few monks are acting inappropriately. Wishing to set the monks straight by shocking them to their very cores, the Buddha sends the venerable Moggallāna to exhibit his magical powers in their presence. Using nothing but his toe, Moggallāna shakes the house in which these monks were dwelling. Awestruck by this amazing display of powers, the monks experience *saṃvega*. The point of the Moggallāna Sutta is that witnessing something extraordinary can tantalize and also inspire one to focus on what is truly important, which in this context, is properly following the Buddhist path.

The relationship between seeing something extraordinary and experiencing *saṃvega* is widespread in the Buddhist world. Typically, the Buddha's image is the extraordinary object that provokes *saṃvega* in this fashion.[549] The Buddha's special bodily marks and his supernormal powers are often regarded a source of this productive feeling of awe or bewilderment.[550] In addition, there are sites of pilgrimage, especially ones that are associated with the Buddha, which are expected to elicit *saṃvega* from a devout practitioner.[551] In the Mahāparinibbāna Sutta, the scripture mentions four of these auspicious sites, stating that "there are four places the sight of which should arouse emotion (*saṃvejanīya*) in the faithfu1. Which are they? 'Here the Tathāgata was born' is the first. 'Here the Tathāgata attained supreme enlightenment' is the second. 'Here the Tathāgata set in motion the Wheel of Dharma' is the third. 'Here the Tathāgata attained the Nibbāna-element without remainder' is the fourth."[552] Notice that the scripture specifically mentions that these places should give rise to *saṃvega* upon sight.

The second way of electing *saṃvega* through vision involves having a strong emotional response to what is considered an ordinary phenomenon. Take for example the Buddha's first encounter with old age. As the young prince saw an old man outside the palace walls, this quotidian display of the transient and fragile aspect of human life was enough to provoke his *saṃvega*. The

[546] Walker 2017.
[547] Trainor 1997: 84; Collins 2003: 652; and Scheible 2016.
[548] SN 51.14.
[549] Trainor 1997: 178.
[550] Anālayo 2017.
[551] On the role of *saṃvega* in Buddhist pilgrimage see Strong 2014: 54; and Geary and Shinde 2021:102.
[552] DN 16.19 (tr. Walshe 1987: 263). The same list of places, which should give rise to *saṃvega* upon sight, also appears in AN 4.118.

case of the second type of person in the Goad Sutta also belongs to this category, as the mere sight of an ailing stranger jolts this person into a state of deep distress. These examples of *saṃvega* triggered by visual perception are part of a larger process of learning to see the ordinary as extraordinary. I call this "a process" since in the Buddhist context, perceiving the quotidian as astonishing or uncanny often takes training. This is a notion that I believe is invoked in the Goad Sutta's horse-person analogy. The scripture illustrates that just as a horse can be trained to experience *saṃvega* when the goad merely touches its hairy tail, so can a person be trained to enter this emotional state when merely seeing a stranger in agony.

In my reading of the Goad Sutta, I place serious stock in the context in which this sutta appears, namely, the conversation between the Buddha and Kesi about training horses and persons. I raise this here, for I think the sutta shows that training is involved in achieving the different degrees of saṃvegic sensibility. This pertains to both horses and persons. A horse, for example, after being struck by the goad a few times may develop the extreme level of sensibility that causes him to experience *saṃvega* immediately upon seeing the shadow of the goad. Similarly, a certain person may develop the emotional sensibility that makes him feel distress after seeing a stranger who is ailing or dead. In this sense, I see the different types of horses and persons described in this scripture as representing different levels or degrees of sensibility one can or should strive to attain. However, there is another plausible way of reading the Goad Sutta, which considers the Buddha's speech about the different horses and persons simply as "a theory of types." If that is the case, then the Buddha is simply mapping out here the different kinds of horses and persons according to their "innate" saṃvegic sensibility. These different types of beings are all karmically predisposed to react in different ways to that which triggers their *saṃvega* and perhaps nothing they will do in this life can ever change that. In other words, one is already born as a certain type of person or horse and that determines what causes one to experience *saṃvega*.[553] There is, of course, also a middle ground between these two readings of the sutta, according to which, the Buddha does indeed speak here about different types of persons and horses that are innately predisposed to experience *saṃvega* in certain circumstances; however, through training one can develop an extreme level of saṃvegic sensibility despite not being born as the first type of fine horse or person.[554]

Before moving on, I will point out that when comparing the description of the three versions of the Goad Sutta, one feature that stands out is the location where one sees another person who is ailing or dead. In the Pāli, it says this encounter happens in "some village or town" and similarly in the SĀ, it says this happens in "another village." However, in the SĀ[2] version, the text states that having seen a man or woman in "his own village" die of illness, the second type of person becomes disenchanted (厭患). [555] The significant change here in the location from a random place to one's own village segues to the next aspect of the saṃvegic encounter on which the Goad

[553] This possible reading of the text was pointed out to me by Robert Sharf (personal communication: 4/14/2022).
[554] Much of this discourse concerns the role one's karmic makeup plays in the experience of *saṃvega*. On this topic, see pp. 44-45.
[555] The SĀ[2] continues to develop the notion of *saṃvega* as disgust by using the term disenchantment (*yan-huan* 厭患), which expands this particular interpretation of *saṃvega*. The SĀ version also uses a different term to describe the *saṃvega* of the second type of person. After using dread (*kong-bu* 恐怖) to describe the first type of person it uses distress (*bu-wei* 怖畏) for the second type.

Sutta focuses. In the third encounter with suffering, there is a personal element involved, as the relationship with the dying person becomes more intimate.

5.3 A death in the family

The third type of person the Buddha discusses in the Goad Sutta only experiences *saṃvega* when a relative or a close friend is ailing or dead. What is being emphasized here is not the form of sensory perception that is involved in eliciting *saṃvega* but the subject's relationship to the person who is suffering.[556] This condition for eliciting *saṃvega* shows the Goad Sutta's willingness to seriously contemplate the experience of the dying of others.[557] Earlier in this chapter, I mentioned the distinction between one's relationship with one's own suffering and one's attitude towards the suffering of others. I would like to narrow this down now and focus on one's relationship with his or her own mortality as opposed to the mortality of others. With this in mind, the first thing I will point out is that the Goad Sutta maps out a gray area that exists between the experience of one's own dying and the experience of the dying of others. This area is preserved for the dying of a family member or a "significant other." While to some degree, it seems obvious that a death in the family belongs in its own category, I think this is a significant feature of the text worth discussing.

As I will show later, in the final part of the Goad Sutta, the Buddha addresses the emotional impact of directly facing one's own death. In so doing, the Buddha never makes a fundamental distinction between the experience of one's own dying and the experience of the dying of others. This raises the question of what should we make of the fact that the Buddha does not create such a distinction. One reason I find this question particularly interesting is because from an existential standpoint, refraining from distinguishing between the event of one's own dying and the dying of others is not at all trivial. To give an example of a modern philosopher who has a different view on this matter, Heidegger claims that "the dying of Others is not something which we experience in a genuine sense; at most we are always just 'there alongside'."[558] Heidegger's position is that only the experience of one's own mortality has the power to disclose what is essential to one's being.[559] The Goad Sutta seemingly provides us with a different understanding of one's relationship with the dying of others. Not only is the transformative experience of *saṃvega* possible through an encounter with the dying of another person, but it is considered the preferable form of provoking this emotion. The hierarchy of degrees of emotional sensibility we find in the Goad Sutta favors the capacity to face death through the dying of others. Ideally, these others are total strangers, yet even the dying of a relative is deemed a better opportunity than one's own dying to come to terms with the facticity of mortality.

I would like to address now the question of why exactly the Goad Sutta considers the dying of others to be a preferable form of eliciting *saṃvega*. One possible way of answering this question

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[556] In the Pāli version, the text does not even specify whether one sees or hears that "a relative or a kinsman" is ailing or dead. The sutta simply says that the third type of person experiences *saṃvega* when an acquaintance of some sort is suffering. The SĀ and SĀ², on the other hand, mention that the third type of person sees a relative, attendant, or friend who has has died of an illness.

[557] I use here the term "dying" because the Pāli version speaks of a relative who suffers from an illness or has died. The point is that the suffering of the other is tied to the possibility of his demise. In the SĀ and SĀ², the text is even more explicit about the fact that this family member was sick and eventually died.

[558] Heidegger 1962: 282.

[559] To put this in Heideggerian terms, there is an authentic "possibility-of-Being" that opens up only through the relationship with one's own death.

gravitates towards the ethical dimension of *saṃvega*, which scholars like Heim, Hansen, Walker, Liang, and Morseth highlight in their work on this concept. From a moral perspective, it seems the Goad Sutta favors this form of eliciting *saṃvega* precisely because it incorporates Buddhist ideals of empathy and compassion, or what some might call expressions of selflessness. For that reason, the Buddha praises the type of person who becomes deeply disturbed by the reality of suffering, not due to his own pain but because of the pain of others. This ethical interpretation also leaves the door open to consider the possibility that the dying of another person, whether a family member or a stranger, can actually be more impactful and transformative than one's own dying.

Another possible way of answering the question concerning the dying of others pivots towards an existential position that emerges from Buddhaghosa's writing on *saṃvega*. According to Buddhaghosa, it is better to intentionally meditate on death for the sake of provoking *saṃvega* than to wait until one is ill or dying to finally experience this primal emotion. Brons encapsulates Buddhaghosa's position on this issue with the phrase "facing death from a safe distance."[560] The crux of this position is that one should strive to always remain mindful of one's own death, and thus, any manifestation of the suffering and dying of others presents an opportunity to contemplate the gravity of one's own existential situation. That being so, the emphasis here is not necessarily on feeling deep compassion for the dying of others, but on the notion that upon encountering a person on the brink of death, one should feel perturbed by the realization that eventually one will end up in the same dreadful state.

As I argue throughout this dissertation, I understand *saṃvega* as predominantly an existential concept. Yet, regardless of whether one views the emphasis on the dying of others through an ethical prism or an existential one, what stands out in the Goad Sutta is the preference to face death from a distance. This is true both figuratively and literally. In a figurative sense, the feeling of deep distress one experiences upon encountering the dying of others is a way of facing death from a "distance."[561] The meaning of "distance" here entails the possibility of not having to confront the reality of dying by personally undergoing a near-death experience or feeling first-hand the pain of one's fragile body. The Goad Sutta also includes a more literal way of thinking about facing death from a safe distance. As I have argued earlier in this chapter, one's saṃvegic sensibility is measured in this scripture by the subject's physical distance from the distressing object. The furthest one can be from the dying person, for example, and still experience *saṃvega* the better. That is why at the top of the Buddha's hierarchy is the type of person who faces distress after merely hearing about another person who died of illness in some random village far away.

Now, before moving on to the fourth and final encounter with suffering, there is one final aspect I would like to highlight pertaining to the Goad Sutta's notion of responding to the suffering of others. Even if one thinks *saṃvega* is regarded in this sutta as an empathetic response to another human's misery, it is worth keeping in mind that the scripture considers this ethical response as a step towards the higher goal of understanding the ultimate truth. In other words, in this scripture, the ethical dimension is rendered valuable primarily because it facilitates one's progress on the path to nirvāṇa. The idea that moral ideals and practices are a prerequisite for making soteriological advancements is prevalent in Buddhist thought.[562] The interpretation of *saṃvega* as empathy is no

[560] Brons 2016: 118.
[561] The same could be said about the Buddhist meditation practice of concentrating on a skeleton or corpse.
[562] Lopez 2007: 32.

exception to that, and therefore, the Goad Sutta underlines precisely how this type of response is conducive to liberation.

5.4 Facing one's own mortality

The fourth and final type of person the Buddha discusses in the Goad Sutta only experiences *saṃvega* when he is painfully confronted with his own mortality. The SĀ version articulates the shift from eliciting *saṃvega* through the suffering of others to one's own suffering in a clear and concise way. The text states that only "with regard to his own suffering of old age, sickness, and death, [the fourth type of person] is able to generate anxiety (*yan-bu* 厭怖)[563] and rely on right thought."[564] In the Pāli and the SĀ² versions, the fourth person only experiences *saṃvega* after he is affected by unpleasant bodily sensations that are painful and even life-threatening. These two versions are much more graphic in the manner they describe the pain that elicits this type of person's *saṃvega*.

It is glaring how similar the description of what provokes the fourth person's *saṃvega* is to what provokes the fourth horse's *saṃvega*. The horse-person analogy becomes here a close comparison of two similar cases, as both the horse and the person must endure considerable physical pain to experience *saṃvega*. Perhaps the text is critiquing the fourth person's level of saṃvegic sensibility by showing him to be not much different than a beast. Having said that, we should be mindful of the fact that the fourth horse's pain is specifically inflicted by the trainer who hits it with a stick. In other words, for the horse, the cause of its anguish is part of the training it undergoes, while in the case of the person, it is simply the reality of his aging, sickness, and death that causes him agony. This aspect of the horse-person comparison indicates that the Goad Sutta focuses primarily on the comparison between the horse and the Buddhist disciple, in contrast to the Kesi Sutta,[565] for example, which centers on the similarities between the Buddha and the horse trainer.[566]

In a broader sense, the appearance of the fourth type of person, for whom *saṃvega* is only provoked by his own horrible suffering, may indicate that the previous three encounters with the suffering of others function primarily as a mirror into one's own existential situation. If this is the case, then feeling distressed on account of the distress of others in this scripture has little to do with the radical Buddhist notion of compassion. The suffering or death of another person does not give rise to a form of selfless empathy, it simply confronts one with the gruesome reality of one's own saṃsāric existence. The appeal of interpreting the three previous types of persons in light of the fourth type is a main reason why I lean towards an existentialist reading of the Goad Sutta rather than an ethical one.

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[563] 然於自身老病死苦能生厭怖依正思惟.

[564] The term *yan-bu* 厭怖, which I have translated as anxiety, is used in the SĀ only when the text speaks about the *saṃvega* of the fourth type of person.

[565] Kesisutta (AN 4.111).

[566] The role of the disciplinarian, which in the Kesi Sutta was preserved for the Buddha, is simply missing from the human side of the Goad Sutta's horse-person analogy. Liang and Morseth claim that the Goad Sutta "compares training horses to the way the Buddha trains his monastic disciples" (Liang and Morseth 2021: 217). I think this way of characterizing the Goad Sutta is slightly misleading, for in this sutta, the Buddha never places himself in the role of the disciplinarian as he does in the Kesi Sutta. Instead, he focuses on the different types of persons to be trained, comparing them to the different types of horses to be tamed.

6. Conclusion: The different aspects of the Goad Sutta's analogy

After unpacking the Goad Sutta's multifaceted horse-person analogy, I would like to wrap up this chapter by discussing the question of what this analogy aims to convey. Before tackling this question myself, I will first address two contemporary treatments of the Goad Sutta's analogy.[567] The first one belongs to Heim, who focuses on two aspects of this sutta. Heim begins by ascertaining that the horse-person analogy shows that "some fear is valuable, in that it can replace complacency with urgency. *Samvega* is like a goad to beasts of burden, as when the steed sees the shadow of the goad stick and feels agitation to wonder what work he must do for his master."[568] This initial point Heim makes here ties the Goad Sutta's analogy to the larger Buddhist notion that fear is crucial for attaining the necessary fervor required to pursue the Buddhist path.[569]

Furthermore, Heim claims that the Goad Sutta's analogy reveals that "like animals, humans have varying degrees of sensitivity and will respond to different measures of prodding before they are stirred to action."[570] This is an important point, which takes into account the multilayered structure of the sutta's analogy. The full and complex picture of the conditions for experiencing the emotion of *saṃvega* only emerges once we consider the two sets of four different scenarios the Buddha discusses in this sutta.

Liang and Morseth give the following analysis of the Goad Sutta's analogy: "Like the thoroughbred horse stirred by the whip, a thoroughbred monk is stirred and acquires a sense of urgency (*saṃvega*) by encountering illness and death at various levels of intimacy. The same can be said for the arising of *saṃvega* despite the degrees of removal separating us from the existential threats already mentioned. We should strive to become like the thoroughbred horse, who, even at the mere sight of the whip, is stirred by a sense of urgency (*saṃvega*) to reform its conduct."[571] This analysis of the scripture includes at least a couple of points that are worth highlighting and unpacking. First, Liang and Morseth claim that the horse-person analogy can help us understand the arising of *saṃvega* in response to "the existential threats already mentioned." In a previous segment of their article, Liang and Morseth explain that those "existential threats" include various modern "threats spanning environmental, economic, and epidemiological scales."[572] Thus, Liang and Morseth take the Goad Sutta's notion of varying degrees of saṃvegic sensibility and apply it to the different degrees of being conscientious and aware of the perils that plague the modern world.[573]

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[567] Both of these treatments of the Goad Sutta take into consideration only the Pāli version.

[568] Heim 2003: 546. Heim's point concerning the possible value of fear as a source for acquiring urgency seems valid and fairly clear to me; however, her claim that "*saṃvega* is like a goad to beasts of burden" is one I would slightly contest. According to the Goad Sutta's analogy, both horses and persons experience *saṃvega*, but while the goad triggers this emotion for the horse*,* suffering does the same for the person. Therefore within the logic of the analogy, it is suffering that is like the goad, not *saṃvega*. Simply put, the text uses the horse-person analogy to convey that *saṃvega* feels like being struck by a goad, a feeling that should encourage one "to replace complacency with urgency."

[569] This is a topic I elaborate on in chapter three.

[570] Heim 2003: 546-547.

[571] Liang and Morseth 2021: 217.

[572] Ibid: 208.

[573] I believe this is Liang and Morseth's way of interpreting the ethical dimension that can be attributed to *saṃvega*. The two authors seemingly stretch the notion of *saṃvega* as an empathetic response to the other's suffering, by

Liang and Morseth's second point of emphasis concerns the role of *saṃvega* as an incentivizing force that can reform or correct one's behavior. This point relates to the matter of *saṃvega* and discipline. The SĀ and SĀ^2 versions are even more explicit than the Pāli about this matter. These versions state that like the four good horses, the four persons are considered to be good on account of their discipline and self-restraint. The feeling of *saṃvega* boosts the horse's energy and focuses its attention on the task at hand. The same goes for the Buddhist disciple, whose *saṃvega* invigorates and propels him to attain the ultimate goal.[574]

Finally, I would like to briefly reflect on the four main facets of *saṃvega* I underscored in my reading of the Goad Sutta. The first is the saṃvegic aptitude or skill to confront one's own mortality. The different types of persons the Buddha describes in this scripture are rated according to their ability to face death from a distance. One's saṃvegic sensibility is measured here by the kind of encounter required to make one feel the existential distress of coming to terms with impermanence. For the ideal type of person, hearing about the death of a stranger is enough to provoke *saṃvega*, while for the least sensitive person, only his own excruciating pain can elicit the anxiety of being subject to death. By laying out these different types of persons and the means to provoke their *saṃvega*, the Goad Sutta provides a nuanced account of the different conditions for experiencing this transformative emotion. This text is the only early Buddhist scripture in which we find this classification of persons in terms of their saṃvegic sensibility; however, in later Abhidharma literature, the notion of different degrees of *saṃvega* becomes an analytical convention. This is not surprising since, as I suggested in this chapter, the Goad Sutta likely played a vital role in the development of *saṃvega* into the technical term we find in later Buddhist and non-Buddhist philosophical literature.

The second facet of *saṃvega* the scripture reveals is the shock value of this experience. In early Buddhist thought, shock is not considered useful in its own right, yet when placed in a certain context or framework, shock can prove to be extremely valuable. For example, the horse's feeling of shock when it is struck by the goad is useful in the process of taming it.[575] When looking at the other side of the analogy, the Goad Sutta shows that saṃvegic shock has value for human beings in several different frameworks. Like in the horse's case, the basic framework that renders *saṃvega* fruitful for humans is that of discipline. According to this scripture, shock is considered essential in the process of training and developing the type of resolve a person needs to attain the fruits of the Buddhist path. This idea relates directly to the Goad Sutta's claim that saṃvegic shock has soteriological value. The text establishes this by stating that being shocked by the reality of suffering is a crucial step towards understanding the ultimate truth. In addition, Coomaraswamy's

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asserting that this emotion can or should be considered an expression of deep concern for the fate of the planet and the human race.

[574] *Saṃvega* can also work as a force that reforms one's conduct. It can help one who engaged in misconduct return to the Path. If this is how Liang and Morseth interpret the role of *saṃvega* in the Goad Sutta, then I slightly disagree with their interpretation. In this sutta, we are never told that the horses or the persons were steered into a state of *saṃvega* because they misbehaved and required assistance to correct their conduct. While *saṃvega* does have this type of function in several Buddhist scriptures, the Goad Sutta is not one of them. In the next chapter, I will discuss at some length this function of *saṃvega* through different examples from the Vanasaṃyutta, where forest monks that misbehave are driven into a state of *saṃvega* for the sake of reforming their wrongful conduct.

[575] Shock might indeed be valuable for the person who wishes to train the horse to serve him; however, from the horse's perspective, it is not necessarily clear if and how experiencing shock after being struck by a goad is valuable. Having said that, in the classical Indian context, the process of training or taming the horse is considered immensely valuable for the horse, not only for the horse trainer.

reading of the Goad Sutta attributes value to *saṃvega* in the framework of an aesthetic experience. For Coomaraswamy, the saṃvegic shock articulated in this scripture is a blueprint for the profound expression of being intensely moved by a work of art.[576] Lastly, I discussed in this chapter the Goad Sutta's relevance to the discourse on the value of *saṃvega* in an ethical framework. The scripture's depiction of one's experience of shock and distress can be construed as a genuine expression of empathy for the suffering of other sentient beings.

While in Buddhist literature there is a strong emphasis on the different frameworks in which saṃvegic shock is considered a positive experience, there are plenty of examples in classical Indian literature that paint a radically different picture. In the Mahābhārata, for example, the shock one undergoes on the battlefield when encountering a fearless enemy or the sock of hearing the sound of people being slaughtered during warfare is also articulated as an experience of *saṃvega*.[577] In these scenes from the great epic, nothing indicates that experiencing saṃvegic shock is beneficial in any way. In fact, the opposite is the case. These episodes of shock and terror leave the epic heroes extremely disturbed and emotionally scared. Therefore, to understand what distinguishes the Buddhist use of *saṃvega*, it is vital to consider the specific frameworks within which Buddhists have interpreted saṃvegic shock as favorable and meaningful.

The third facet of *saṃvega* the Goad Sutta highlights is the physicality of this emotion. The horse-person comparison is predicated, to a large degree, on the similar physiological nature of the experience of *saṃvega*, that is, the useful stress and pain that both horses and persons endure. Specifically, when it comes to the person's *saṃvega*, it is true that this emotion is eventually tied to an intellectual realization of the ultimate truth;[578] nevertheless, even this realization begins with a strong emphasis on the body. Although one might be tempted to jump right into what Coomaraswamy calls "the second phase" of *saṃvega*, which he claims is purely intellectual, the Goad Sutta seems focused on the embodied aspect of this emotional experience.

The fourth facet of *saṃvega* the Goad Sutta illuminates is the relational structure of this emotion. There is a certain tension throughout the sutta pertaining to the arising of *saṃvega*. On the one hand, it seems *saṃvega* is provoked by sensory contact with an object. The goad that strikes the horse or the ailing woman that a person sees are given as examples of contact with an object that triggers the experience of *saṃvega*. Since these external conditions give rise to *saṃvega,*

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[576] Coomaraswamy 1943: 178. Referencing Coomaraswamy's work, Kuspit makes the argument that aesthetic shock, which is his interpretation of *saṃvega,* "makes one aware that there is a world of extraordinary meaning and vitality beyond ordinary meaning and drive." Kuspit further argues that "aesthetic shock, then, is the shock of passing from the world of practical perception into a world of seemingly purposeless perception—oddly timeless and spaceless yet peculiarly timely in seemingly infinite space and also uncannily precise compared to ordinary perception in time and space" (Kuspit 2006: 348). For Kuspit, one way in which art "works its magic" is precisely by provoking this form of aesthetic shock that shifts one's perception of the world from a practical and ordinary mode to purposeless and extraordinary one.

[577] See for example, Mahābhārata 7.83.31: "With intense distress, the Pāṇḍavas witnessed his valor, [as] he was roaming around fearlessly on the battle-field." (*taṃ tathā samare rājan vicarantam abhītavat, pāṇḍavā bhṛśasaṃvignāḥ prāpaśyaṃstasya vikramam*); and Mahābhārata 7.167.23: "Those riding elephant-chariots were shocked, the hairs on their skin bristling, Dhananjaya, having heard the intense and horrifying sound there." (*prahṛṣṭalomakūpāḥ sma saṃvignarathakuñjarāḥ, dhanaṃjaya guruṃ śrutvā tatra nādaṃ subhīṣaṇam*). For more on the use of *saṃvega* in the Mahābhārata, see pp. 28-34.

[578] The SA2 even speaks of giving rise to a "mind of disgust" (*yan wu zhi xin* 厭惡之心), an expression that might indicate that the translator considered *saṃvega* to be a mental state first and foremost.

one might say that *saṃvega* is simply a way of being affected or moved by an object. On the other hand, the strong emphasis the scripture places on the varying degrees of saṃvegic sensibility shows that there is a subjective component that shapes one's contact with the triggering object. The emotional predisposition of the horse or the person is also a condition for experiencing *saṃvega*. In this sense, it is the subject's predispositional orientation towards the object, to use Sara Ahmed's terminology,[579] which gives rise to *saṃvega*. The crucial question is what to make of this double perspective, which accounts for the arising of *saṃvega* both from the side of the subject and the object.

In my view, any attempt to analyze the arising of *saṃvega* by working strictly from the outside in or from the inside out is destined to fail. *Saṃvega* is not just a certain way an object affects the subject nor is it merely a predisposition that shapes the subject's contact with any given object. This being the case, to understand *saṃvega* it is helpful to embrace a phenomenological approach which hones in on the relational structure of emotions. In the context of the Goad Sutta, this would mean that when contemplating the conditions for experiencing *saṃvega* it is necessary to give priority to the encounter, rather than the subject or the object. From a phenomenological perspective, the distressing object and the distressed subject are the effects of the encounter between the two.[580] This does not mean there is no point in breaking down the experience of *saṃvega* into a subject-object structure. Personally, I believe the opposite is true. Looking at *saṃvega* both from the side of the subject and the object reveals that neither of these provides us with a sufficient account of the machinations of this emotion. The Goad Sutta is especially edifying because it tends to the different permutations of the encounter that gives rise to *saṃvega*. The sutta presents a dynamic picture of the relationship between the distressing object and the distressed subject. In this sense, I would argue that the Buddhist concept of *saṃvega* brings to light the relational nature of experience as a whole, or in Buddhist philosophical terms, the principle of dependent origination (*pratītyasamutpāda*).[581]

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[579] Ahmed 2004: 8
[580] On the relational structure of emotions, see Ahmed 2004: 7-8.
[581] For a modern Buddhist perspective on *saṃvega* and dependent origination, see Nguyen 2019.

The Isolation Sutta: The Function of *Saṃvega*

1. Introduction:

In classical Buddhist literature, the experience of *saṃvega* typically marks an existential and spiritual turning point in one's life. In Aśvaghoṣa's Saundarananda, for example, the seminal moment in the life story of Nanda occurs when he feels *saṃvega* for the first time after realizing that even heaven does not last forever.[582] The early Buddhist scriptures include several similar instances discussed in the previous chapters, where *saṃvega* functions as the initial eye-opening moment that orients one in the direction of nirvāṇa. The question I am concerned with in this chapter is whether the experience of *saṃvega* is restricted specifically to that moment when one first comes to terms with the reality of impermanence and suffering, or, whether it can assume a broader, recurring role in the life of a Buddhist. The Isolation Sutta (Vivekasutta) presents us with an intriguing textual case in which *saṃvega* is integrated into the rigorous practice of a Buddhist monk.

The Isolation Sutta tells the tale of a secluded forest monk whose mind, all of a sudden, started veering away from the Dharma. As the monk was thus losing his focus, a deity inhabiting the forest where the monk was dwelling noticed his struggles and decided to intervene. Wishing to help the monk shift his attention back to more wholesome thoughts, the deity chided the monk with a few dharmic verses, immediately steering him into a state of *saṃvega*. In this canonical text, the experience of *saṃvega* functions primarily as that which allows the monk to regain concentration. Yet, this is not all *saṃvega* does in the Isolation Sutta. Through the encounter between the secluded monk and the forest deity, this scripture reveals a side of *saṃvega* that I have yet to touch on in this dissertation. The Isolation Sutta grants *saṃvega* a therapeutic, edifying, and even liberating character, as the experience of this emotion works like a kind of shock treatment that enables one to shake off the "dust of desire."

The Pāli version of the Isolation Sutta[583] is the opening text in a collection of Buddhist scriptures called the Vanasaṃyutta (Suttas Connected to the Forest). In this collection, we find nine Buddhist suttas that include the term *saṃvega*. As Bodhi observes,[584] the Vanasaṃyutta consists of a total of fourteen short scriptures, most of which are constructed according to a stereotyped pattern that goes as follows: A certain monk dwells alone in a forest thicket for the purpose of zealously practicing meditation. At one point in time, the monk's desires and attachments get the better of him, causing the monk to deviate from the Buddhist path. Then, a deity inhabiting that forest thicket appears before the monk and out of compassion harshly reminds him of the Dharma and his duties for the sake of provoking *saṃvega*. The Isolation Sutta clearly fits this stereotypical pattern, and since it is the opening text of the Vanasaṃyutta it serves as a prototype for the ensuing suttas of this collection.

[582] Saundarananda 12.4.
[583] SN 9.1
[584] Bodhi 2000: 85.

The Isolation Sutta is scarcely mentioned in the contemporary scholarship on the Buddhist concept of *saṃvega*.[585] This scripture includes two layers of traditional Pāli commentary,[586] as well as two early Chinese translations of parallel versions (which I will refer to as the SĀ and SĀ^2).[587] Furthermore, this scripture bears many similarities in both structure and content to some of the other suttas in the Vanasaṃyutta, which allows for a fruitful comparative outlook on this collection of early Buddhist texts. In my close reading of the Isolation Sutta, I will draw on all of these different sources in order to present the notion of *saṃvega* that emerges from this scripture.

The Isolation Sutta and the other accounts of forest encounters between monks and deities in the Vanasaṃyutta, all deal with the functionality of *saṃvega*. These texts address a variety of questions, such as to whom *saṃvega* can prove useful and to whom not? What is the relationship between the feeling of *saṃvega* and the isolated life of a forest-dwelling monastic? How does the forest environment shape one's experience of *saṃvega*? And what type of impact can *saṃvega* have on one's meditation practice? In this chapter, I will pay close attention to the particular role the Isolation Sutta assigns to *saṃvega* and how this scripture incorporates the experience of this disturbing emotion into the ascetic practice of a Buddhist monk.

My analysis of the Isolation Sutta divides the text into three segments—the beginning part of the scripture composed in prose, the middle part composed in verse, and the concluding statement that closes the text. Keeping in mind the narrative structure of the scripture, one could also characterize these three segments as follows: (1) The monk's struggles with the forest-dwelling practice, (2) the deity's saṃvegic intervention, (3) and the outcome of the encounter between the monk and the deity.

2. Translation[588]

Thus have I heard. One time, a certain monk was dwelling among the Kosalans in a certain forest thicket. At the time, as the monk had gone for his midday rest, he kept on thinking bad and improper thoughts concerning the household life. Then, the deity inhabiting that forest thicket, out of pity for the monk, desiring his benefit and desiring to stir up that monk, approached him and spoke these verses:

"Desiring isolation you enter the forest,
but your mind goes outwards.

[585] Two secondary sources that do acknowledge the importance of the Isolation Sutta (and the Vanasaṃyutta more generally) to the study of *saṃvega* are Bodhi's introduction to the SN (Bodhi 2000: 85) and Liang and Morseth 2020: 216.
[586] The first layer of commentary is the Vivekasutta-vaṇṇanā, which is located in the sagāthāvagga-aṭṭhakathā. For my complete translation of this commentary, see Appendix B. Henceforth, I refer to this commentary as the Aṭṭhakathā. The second layer of commentary is also called the Vivekasutta-vaṇṇanā. Moving forward, I refer to this commentary as the Ṭīkā.
[587] One early Chinese translation of the Isolation Sutta is located in the completely preserved Saṃukta Āgama (SĀ). On the sectarian affiliation of the SĀ, see n. 490. Henceforth, I refer to this version as the SĀ (T.99, 368a12-368b21). For a complete translation of the SĀ version, see Appendix A. The second early Chinese translation of the Isolation Sutta is found in the partly preserved Saṃukta Āgama (SĀ^2). On the sectarian affiliation of the SĀ^2, see n. 490. Henceforth, I refer to the version of the scripture located in the T.100 Saṃukta Āgama as the SĀ^2 (T.100, 490a03- 490a23). For a complete translation of the SĀ^2 version, see Appendix A. For more information on the Chinese translations of scriptures that have close parallels in the Samyutta Nikāya, see Bodhi 2000: 28-31.
[588] Below is a translation of the Pāli version of the Isolation Sutta.

Give up, man, [your] longing for people,
then you will be happy and free of passion [1].

Let go of discontent and be mindful;
we shall remind you to be mindful.
The dusty abyss is difficult to cross;
don't let the dust of desire bring you down [2].

Just as a bird covered with dirt
shakes off the sticky dust,
so a strenuous and mindful monk
shakes off the sticky dust [3]."

Then, stirred up by that deity, the monk faced distress (*saṃvega*).

3. Framing the Isolation Sutta: The early Buddhist notion of isolation

The Isolation Sutta begins with a focus on a Buddhist monk dwelling in a forest thicket in the kingdom of Kosala.[589] The Aṭṭhakathā contextualizes this event by filling in the details of what the monk was doing before he entered the forest and why he chose to dwell specifically in the region of the Kosala people.

> In the first sutta of the Vanasaṃyutta, the text says: "**A certain monk was dwelling among the Kosalans [in a certain forest thicket]**." Having taken on a meditation subject from a teacher, [the monk] went to dwell there for the sake of easily collecting alms in that country.[590]

The commentary also informs us about the objective of the monk's forest-dwelling practice, that is, to attain isolation. In the sutta, the deity specifically describes the monk as "one who desires isolation" (*viveka-kāmo*), and the Aṭṭhakathā expounds on this by stating that the monk entered the forest seeking the "three isolations" (*tayo viveke*). Here, the commentary refers to the technical threefold isolation scheme found, among other places, in Theravāda scholastic literature. This scheme consists of three forms of isolation (*viveka*), namely, isolation of the body, isolation of the mind, and isolation from the substrate. As Steven Collins explains, these three forms of isolation also mark different stages of one's progression on the path to nirvāṇa.[591]

In the Isolation Sutta and its exegetical literature, these three forms of isolation all play a prominent role. More importantly, the Pāli commentators indicate that understanding the crux of this sutta involves paying close attention to the relationship between *viveka* and *saṃvega*, two emotions that permeate the Buddhist monk's forest-dwelling practice. Thus, to begin this

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[589] The Pāli version and the SĀ place the monk in the Kosala kingdom while the SĀ[2] version locates him in a forest belonging to the Salava kingdom. The Kosala and Salava kingdoms are both mentioned in classical Sanskrit literature among the well-known western kingdoms of the ancient Indian subcontinent.
[590] *vanasaṃyuttassa paṭhame* ***kosalesu viharatī****ti satthu santike kammaṭṭhānaṃ gahetvā tassa janapadassa sulabhabhikkhatāya tattha gantvā viharati* (Sagāthāvagga-aṭṭhakathā 221).
[591] Collins 1982: 171.

exploration of *saṃvega* in the Isolation Sutta, I will first expound on the concept of *viveka* and the three forms of isolation.

The term "isolation of the body" (*kāya-viveka*) originally referred to the monastic practice of renouncing the household life, putting on the saffron robes, and going forth from home to homelessness. Collins points out, however, that "later, when matters had become more complex, and the distinction between village- and forest-dwelling monks had become a socially and symbolically accepted fact, the term 'seclusion of body' came to refer, in a technical sense, to the forest life as the ideal type of active renunciation."[592] Within the threefold isolation scheme, the isolation of the body is considered a preliminary stage on the Buddhist path. Although the physical reality of living alone in the forest may put one in the ideal position to pursue nirvāṇa, that alone is not enough to reach the ultimate goal. In the Pāli canon, there is a strong emphasis on the notion that there is much more to perfecting the solitary life than simply being alone. In some scriptures, like the one I explore in this chapter, desire is considered a companion that one must learn to part ways with in the process of adopting an isolated existence.[593] Therefore, to progress on the Path one must master a form of mental seclusion, which is the core of Buddhist practice.

In Buddhist thought, the "isolation of the mind" (*citta-viveka*) is a technical term for the gradual process of purifying the mind through various levels of meditative absorption and contemplation exercises aimed at eliminating mental afflictions. In this sense, the isolation of the mind becomes a metaphor for the entire orientation of Buddhist practice.[594] In classical Indian philosophy, through metaphorical extension, the term *viveka* gained the added meaning of "discernment" or "discrimination." Eckel notes that the Buddhist concept of mental seclusion involves both the withdrawal of the mind from the phenomenal world, as well as the process of mentally discerning the elements of experience and identifying them.[595] The isolation of the mind therefore combines the arduous procedure of severing one's attachments to the world with the practice of gaining insight into the nature of experience. In this way, the term *citta-viveka* comes to signify a more advanced stage on the Path, one that within this threefold scheme, precedes the third and final form of isolation.

The term "isolation from the substrate" (*upadhi-viveka*) refers to the ultimate goal of the Buddhist path. When one fully realizes the gravity of the no-self doctrine, one attains the third and final stage of homelessness, namely, isolation from the substrate of conditioned existence. In this particular context, Collins remarks that "the term 'substrate' refers to any and all of the things which form the basis of rebirth — desire, attachment, *karma,* the five *khandhā;* and the 'rejection' or 'absence' of substrate is a synonym for *nibbāna.*"[596] In other words, isolation from the substrate stands for the cessation of all conditioned phenomena and the end of saṃsāric existence.

This Buddhist threefold isolation scheme extends beyond the vast corpus of Pāli literature.[597] For example, Tzohar traces the use of the three forms of *viveka* in the Saundarananda.

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[592] Ibid, 172.
[593] Ibid.
[594] Ibid.
[595] Eckel 1998: 285-286.
[596] Collins 1982: 175.
[597] The SĀ and SĀ[2]'s parallel versions of the Isolation Sutta are examples of non-Pāli texts that draw on the aforementioned forms of isolation.

More specifically, his analysis of the concept of solitude in Aśvaghoṣa's poetry highlights certain dimensions of *viveka* that are particularly germane to my discussion of *saṃvega* and the Buddhist conception of emotions. Tzohar claims that in the Saundarananda, "solitude and the process of its cultivation is all about ways of experiencing the world, a matter of perceptual modes and what they pick and leave out. Within this framework, for whose description poetry becomes the ideal vehicle, solitude, far from standing for a withdrawal from the world (into an interior space, etc.) is primarily a mode of engagement with the world, though radically different from the ordinary one."[598] When contemplating the broad question concerning the nature of emotion, Tzohar explains that the Buddhist concept of solitude encourages us to avoid approaching this question through binary categories such as affective vs. cognitive or somatic vs. evaluative. Like *saṃvega*, *viveka* is another Buddhist case study that reveals the limitations of reducing emotions to mere physiological phenomena or psychological processes. Tzohar suggests thinking of *viveka* as a form of practice that shapes one's interaction with the world. Addressing the philosophical relevancy of his work on *viveka* to the study of emotions in classical Buddhism, Tzohar concludes that "From seemingly instinctive reactions, emotions thus turn into highly controlled techniques of the self—vehicles for change, under the Buddhist view of subjectivity as capable of radical transformation."[599]

Within the context of Buddhist ascetic practice, *saṃvega* can certainly be characterized as a "vehicle for change," as this emotion often plays a crucial role in bringing about self-transformation. Broadly speaking, the apposition of *saṃvega* and *viveka* in the Isolation Sutta betrays the similarities of these two transformative emotions that overlap both in theory and in practice. Nevertheless, in this sutta and throughout early Buddhist scripture, the function of *saṃvega* and the responsive character of this emotion seem to distinguish it from *viveka* in a meaningful way. *Saṃvega* is mainly a dialogical emotion that arises in reaction to the speech or image of another being. Having briefly discussed how contemporary scholars introduced and established the value of *viveka* to the study of emotions in classical Buddhist thought, I will move the spotlight now to *saṃvega* and its unique contribution to this field of study.

4. Part one: It is a hard life in the forest

The suttas of the Vanasaṃyutta highlight the struggles of the isolated, lonely monks dwelling in the forest. A good example of this is seen in the ninth scripture of the Vanasaṃyutta, called the Son of the Vajjians Sutta (Vajjiputtasutta).[600] This scripture speaks of a monk belonging to the Vajji clan, who while dwelling in the forest, heard from a distance the joyful sounds of an all-night festival taking place in a nearby city. Lamenting over his isolated existence, the forest monk uttered the following verse:

> We dwell alone in the wilderness,
> like a log discarded in the forest;
> on a night such as this,
> who has it worse than us?[601]

[598] Tzohar 2021: 294.
[599] Tzohar 2021: 294-295.
[600] SN 9.9.
[601] *ekakā mayaṃ araññe viharāma,*
apaviddhaṃva vanasmiṃ dārukaṃ.

As the monk was thus voicing his despair, a forest deity heard his lonely cry and decided to intervene. Desiring to help the monk abandon his self-pity by making him experience *saṃvega*, the deity approached the monk and spoke this verse.

> [While] you dwell alone in the wilderness,
> like a log discarded in the forest,
> there are many who envy you,
> as the inhabitants of hell envy the one going to heaven.[602]

The deity reminds the monk how extremely fortunate he is to have taken birth as a human being with a chance to hear the Buddha's word.[603] In the following segment of the sutta, the text informs us that the deity's cosmological wake-up call was enough to steer the monk into a state of *saṃvega*. This scripture exemplifies the use of a common strategy for provoking *saṃvega*, namely, turning one's attention to the horrible agony that others are suffering in hell at this very moment in time.[604]

As a whole, the Son of the Vajjians Sutta captures a certain ambivalence or incongruity that characterizes the classical Indian image of the forest. In early Buddhist literature, the forest is often considered a terrifying and difficult dwelling place,[605] yet also a serene, beautiful, and wholesome abode. The fact that the sutta ends by invoking heaven and hell is emblematic of these two contrasting views of the forest. The Vajji monk wonders whether his isolated dwelling in the wilderness can be rendered the lowest of lows, yet the deity tries to help him realize that he is actually at the peak of existence. To put it differently, in his solitary state, the monk sees the forest as a kind of hell, while the deity considers it a type of heaven. These two views of the forest are indicative of how this natural landscape is perceived in early Buddhist scripture. Addressing this matter, Collins explains that "the association of religious life with the forest is ancient and ubiquitous in South Asia. Forests are seen both as difficult places where a harsh ascetic life must be endured, but also as places of natural beauty enabling a life of simplicity and ease. Frequently it is the very practice of asceticism which transforms the forest from the first to the second."[606]

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etādisikāya rattiyā,
ko su nāmamhehi pāpiyoti.

[602] *ekakova tvaṃ araññe viharasi,*
apaviddhaṃva vanasmiṃ dārukaṃ.
tassa te bahukā pihayanti,
nerayikā viya saggagāminanti.

[603] In the SĀ^2 version of this scripture, the last two legs of the verse spoken by the deity place an even stronger emphasis on the monk's good fortune: "The inhabitants of hell envy those in heaven, and the gods in heaven are jealous of you" (地獄羨忉利, 天慕汝亦然).

[604] For more on the use of this strategy for eliciting *saṃvega,* see pp. 54-55.

[605] Finnigan (2021: 917-919) pinpoints the different ways in which Buddhist scriptures understand the dangers involved in practicing asceticism in the forest. In the Pāli canon, the threat of being killed by a wild animal, for example, is considered to be a source of fear and distress that obstructs the forest-dwelling monk in his practice of *viveka*. Thus, in order to attain nirvāṇa, the monk must learn to overcome these types of fears that are endemic to life in the forest. However, the threat of being killed by a wild animal is also an object that the monk is encouraged to meditate on for the sake of attaining a "keen perception of danger" (*bhata-saññā*). In this regard, the Nikāyas speak favorably of a form of fear that the monk should experience with respect to the dangers of forest life. This appropriate form of fear is considered to be conducive to liberation. For more on this topic and the "paradox of fear" in the Pāli canon, see pp. 108-109.

[606] Collins 1998: 229.

Collins goes on to show that some Pāli texts even depict the forest as a natural paradise on earth.[607] The Buddhist conception of the ascetic's idyllic life in the forest is nicely articulated in the following poem from the Visuddhimagga:

> He lives secluded and apart,
> Remote abodes delight his heart;
> The Saviour of the world, besides,
> He gladdens that in groves abides.
>
> The hermit that in woods can dwell
> Alone, may gain the bliss as well
> Whose savour is beyond the price
> Of royal bliss in paradise.
>
> Wearing the robe of rags he may
> Go forth into the forest fray;
> Such is his mail, for weapons too
> The other practices will do.
>
> One so equipped can be assured
> Of routing Māra and his horde.
> So let the forest glades delight
> A wise man for his dwelling's site.[608]

In the Son of the Vajjians Sutta, it is *saṃvega* that specifically plays a crucial role in helping the monk transform the secluded forest from a hell to a heaven. The riveting experience of *saṃvega* fuels the monk's ascetic practice, thus bringing about a radical change in his relationship with the secluded environment in which he is situated.

This sutta also discloses that while the forest is a lonely dwelling place, it frequently features many interactions with other beings. Unlike the desert in the Judaic tradition, for example, which is often represented as a lifeless spiritual landscape, the forest in South Asian literature is a place filled with wild animals, ascetics, hunters, and an array of demons, spirits, and deities. In this regard, the Buddhist notion of an isolated life in the forest entails a form of being alone with others. The constant urge to interact with some of the characters that roam the forest plains is one strong temptation the monk is expected to avoid and eventually overcome. This is the main theme of the third sutta of the Vanasaṃyutta, called the Kassapagotta Sutta.[609] In this scripture, a monk by the name of Kassapagotta decided to teach the Dharma to a hunter whom he happened to encounter in the wilderness. A forest deity that witnessed this event, harshly scolded Kassapagotta for attempting to instruct such a violent and ignorant person. What Kassapagotta failed to understand is that there are forms of interaction with those who enter the forest that are inappropriate, especially interactions that involve sharing the Buddha's word with one who is deemed unworthy of hearing it. After being reprimanded by the deity, we are told that

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[607] Ibid, 230.
[608] Ñāṇamoli 2010: 68.
[609] SN 9.3. Another sutta in the Vanasaṃyutta that underscores the importance of avoiding interactions with others while dwelling in the forest is the Nāgadatta Sutta (SN 9.7).

Kassapagotta faced *saṃvega*. Ashamed and distressed, the monk realized he had violated the code of the isolated forest life. According to the SĀ's parallel version of the Kassapagotta Sutta, after the deity's saṃvegic intervention the forest monk proceeded to abide in silence. *Saṃvega* here takes on the role of a "correctional tool" meant to help the monk reform his conduct.[610]

The various suttas of the Vanasaṃyutta, reveal many of the intricacies of the forest monk's life in the Buddhist *imaginaire*. In the course of the forest-dwelling practice, the monk is expected to reap the benefits of a solitary existence in the wilderness, yet this by no means is an easy or seamless process. The Vanasaṃyutta highlights the crises and challenges the forest monks face as they learn how to transform themselves and their habitat. These suttas also focus on the various forest figures that either aid or impede the monks during their difficult time in the wilderness. Taking all this into account, one central aspect I am concerned with in this chapter is the forest's impact on the monks' emotional disposition. As I will show, in the Vanasaṃyutta, the forest functions as a "locus of affects,"[611] a site in which feelings and emotions are necessarily intensified.

4.1 The forest of desire

The Sanskrit and Pāli word for forest, *vana*, could also mean desire.[612] The main challenge of the Buddhist forest-dwelling practice is to live in the forest (*vana*) free from desire (*vana*).[613] The Isolation Sutta begins with a certain monk who was thinking about worldly objects of desire while dwelling in the forest. To be more precise, the Pāli version of the sutta states that "as the monk had gone for his midday rest, he kept on thinking bad and evil thoughts concerning the household life."[614] The SĀ version is even more explicit about the monk's difficulty in overcoming his primal passion, stating that his bad thoughts "have originated from craving" (依於貪嗜).[615]

The scene presented in the Isolation Sutta revolves around a dissonance between the monk's isolated existence in the secluded forest and his mental preoccupation with the social life of a householder. Using the threefold isolation scheme, one can say that while the monk is actively practicing the "isolation of the body," he is deeply struggling with the "isolation of the mind." This scene from the Isolation Sutta is reminiscent of a famous episode from the Saundarananda that portrays Nanda's failure to calm his mind while meditating in a forest grove. According to Aśvaghoṣa's poem, Nanda, who before his ordination was the epitome of a householder solely

[610] For examples of other Buddhist suttas where *saṃvega* functions as a shocking experience meant to reform one's conduct see SN 6.1 and SN 9.2.
[611] I burrow the term "locus of affects" from Foucault; however, it is worth mentioning that Foucault's characterization of the family as an "obligatory locus of affects" and a space in which emotions are intensified has a strong critical sense (Foucault 1990: 108). In my use of "locus of affects," this critical sense of the term does not carry over.
[612] Monier-Williams 1899: 917; and Rhys-Davids and Stede 1921: 600. The PTS Dictionary also notes that the world *vana* literally means "forest" and figuratively "desire." In Sanskrit, there is also the word *vanas* for desire (Monier-Williams 1899: 918).
[613] That traditional Pāli exegesis also "takes *vāna/vāṇa* to be the same as *vana,* desire, and so construes *nirvāṇa/nibbāna* as 'without desire.' Since *vana* can also mean forest, and *vana* sewing, further plays on words are possible" (Collins 1998: 193).
[614] *so bhikkhu divāvihāragato pāpake akusale vitakke vitakketi gehanissite*.
[615] The theme of a saṃvegic intervention prompted by a monk who was thinking bad thoughts also appears in SA 9.11.

concerned with lovemaking, tries to meditate in the forest yet every tree or bird he perceives reminds him of his beloved wife Sundarī.[616]

One might consider such literary accounts involving an isolated forest monk who fantasizes about the householder's life as simply classic cases of "absence making the heart grow fonder," or as examples of how passion is enhanced by the distance created between the subject and his objects of desire. While there is some truth to that, in these literary depictions of the forest-dwelling monks, it appears the forest itself plays a vital role in intensifying the monks' emotional state. In Nanda's case, for instance, he perceives the forest habitat as an erotic landscape that brings to life memories and sentiments from his lovemaking days.[617] Similarly in the example of the Vajji monk I discussed earlier, he compares his lonely and detached existence to a piece of wood he sees discarded in the wilderness. The Vajji monk thus looks at the forest and sees a reflection of his loneliness. The Isolation Sutta, with which I am concerned here, is another example of this, as the monk who finds himself struggling in the secluded forest cannot help but think of the comforting household life he once renounced.

Later in this chapter, I will elaborate on the tension in the Isolation Sutta between the forest and the everyday world, as I will address how the forest deity mirrors to the monk the incongruity between his physical location and his current state of mind. Yet at this point, the main element I wish to highlight is the manner in which the Isolation Sutta is playing with the two distinct meanings of the word *vana*—forest and desire. The monk's predicament in this scripture has to do with dwelling in the "wrong" *vana*. Having entered the forest to pursue the solitary existence of a recluse, all of a sudden, the monk finds himself dwelling in lustful thoughts about the household life.

4.2 The forest deity

After depicting the forest monk's struggles to keep his mind on the Dharma, the Isolation Sutta shifts its attention to a deity that was abiding in the forest at the same time. According to the Pāli version, when the monk was dwelling in a forest thicket preoccupied with bad thoughts, "the deity inhabiting that forest thicket, out of pity for that monk, desiring his benefit and desiring to stir up (*saṃvejeti*) the monk, approached him and spoke these verses."[618] The phrasing here is significant, for the text takes measures to stress that the deity's intentions are good. One reason for doing so might be to clarify that although provoking *saṃvega* entails an unpleasant and distressing confrontation, in the larger scheme of things, it is tremendously beneficial.[619]

My decision to translate *saṃvega* as "distress" is partly based on the fact that there is nothing obvious about interpreting this term in a positive way. As I will show in the following pages, the deity in this scripture does not only instruct and encourage the monk but also scolds him. In fact, the deity's entire intervention is quite severe in both tone and content. Perhaps the

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[616] SN 7.1-7.12.
[617] Tzohar 2021: 287.
[618] *yā tasmiṃ vanasaṇḍe adhivatthā devatā tassa bhikkhuno anukampikā atthakāmā taṃ bhikkhuṃ saṃvejetukāmā yena so bhikkhu tenupasaṅkami; upasaṅkamitvā taṃ bhikkhuṃ gāthāhi ajjhabhāsi.*
[619] It is also worth keeping in mind that in a non-Buddhist Indian context, causing a person to experience *saṃvega* is typically rendered a bad thing. This may explain why the deity's desire to do good by the monk is deliberately emphasized in this instance.

Pāli version's specific phrasing intends to strike a balance between the harshness of the plan to shock the monk, and the deity's genuine pity (*anukampikā*) and desire to benefit (*attha*) him.

In the SĀ and SĀ²'s parallel versions of the Isolation Sutta, the first appearance of the forest deity in the scripture slightly differs from the Pāli. The SĀ², for example, describes the deity in the following way:

> At the time, a forest deity realized that the monk was giving rise to bad thoughts originating from craving. "[This] cannot be the dharmic practice of a recluse. Being situated in this forest and giving rise to bad thoughts is simply not good conduct. Now, I shall wake him up." Having brought this to mind, the deity went to the monk and spoke these verses.[620]

Here, the deity deems the monk's conduct unfitting of a mendicant or a recluse (*chu-jia* 出家) living in the wilderness. One issue that appears to bother the deity is that the monk's inappropriate thoughts are at odds with the proper behavior of an ascetic dwelling in the forest. The deity thus seems to assume here the role of an overseer of the forest itself, taking issue with the monk's violation of the forest-dweller's code. The deity is also clearly concerned with the monk's violation of the Dharma. This is articulated even more clearly in the SĀ version of the Isolation Sutta, as the forest deity notices the monk's misbehavior and immediately thinks: "This is not the dharma of a monk."[621] In this case the deity is being described as a protector of the Dharma, or more specifically, of the monastic code. Yet regardless of whether the deity is considered primarily a guardian of the forest or the Dharma, in both the SĀ and SĀ², the monk's mental lapse sparks the deity's desire to "wake him up" (開悟 *kai-wu*).[622]

One question I am intrigued by is what to make of the fact that in the early Chinese translations of this scripture, the deity's desire to cause the monk *saṃvega* (*saṃvejeti*) is translated or replaced by a desire to "wake him up" or "awaken him."[623] To begin with, I think the appearance of *kai-wu* in the place of *saṃvega* in the SĀ suggests that the Chinese translator of this scripture realized that *saṃvega* is functioning in this text in a slightly different way than it usually does. I believe that to be the case since in other early Chinese translations of Buddhist scriptures that also

[620] 時林天神 知 彼比丘起於惡覺，依於貪嗜。「不能稱可出家法式，是不善事，處此林中，起於惡覺。我於今者，當［寤－吾＋告］悟之。」作是念已，即往其所，而說偈言.

[621] 非比丘法.

[622] In the SĀ we find *kai-wu* 開悟 and in the SĀ² a similar word［寤－吾＋告］悟. I take these two words to have the same meaning here.

[623] One ought to consider the possibility that the Chinese translator is not actually translating the verb *saṃvejeti* or a different verbal form derived from *saṃ-vij*. With respect to this scripture, we know very little about the Indic texts with which the Chinese translator was working, and thus, we can only speculate about whether or not the Chinese translator was translating here some variation of the word *saṃvejeti* in a middle Indic language. One might even go a step further and raise the possibility that in earlier stages of the compositional history of the Isolation Sutta, the term *saṃvega* was absent from this scripture, and in its place there was a term closer in meaning to the Chinese *kai-wu*. In recent years, scholars have contested the presupposition that the Pāli suttas in the form we have them today necessarily represent the earliest stage in the compositional history of certain Buddhist scriptures that are available to us in a variety of languages (on this topic, see for example Anālayo 2017; Allon 2021). Regardless of whether the word found in the Isolation Sutta was originally *saṃvega* or not, from a thematic standpoint, we can safely say the three versions of this scripture reflect the Buddhist notion that there is soteriological value in steering a practitioner into a state of shock and distress.

have Pāli parallels, we find a variety of words[624] used to translate *saṃvega* that convey more closely the literal meaning of this Indic term.

More specifically, the use of the character *wu* 悟 ("to awaken" or "to understand") in this Chinese translation of *saṃvega* is worth addressing. The term "awakening" (*avabodha* or *wu*) is, of course, ubiquitous in Buddhist literature and one need not look any further than the Sanskrit word *buddha,* which literally means "awakened." In this context, I think translating the causative verb *saṃvejeti* as "to awaken" is perfectly plausible and perhaps even effective. There is nothing necessarily problematic or telling about substituting the deity's desire to cause *saṃvega* with a desire to awaken the monk. However, translating *kai-wu* as "to awaken" runs the risk of projecting onto the Isolation Sutta a later Zen interpretation of awakening (*satori* 悟り) that I would rather avoid in this context. I do not think the deity functions here as a kind of Zen master aiming to reveal to the monk his true nature or to make him confront the paradox at the root of his existence. Instead, the deity mainly wishes to shock and possibly frighten the monk in order to get him back on the right track. Thus I believe *kai-wu*, here, has the sense of getting a "wake-up call," more than encountering some form of profound awakening.

In the Isolation Sutta, *kai-wu* could also be translated as "to open one's eyes." [625] This translation is one that seriously considers the meaning of the first character that constitutes this binome. On its own, *kai* 開 means "to open" or "to disclose." [626] This etymology might be relevant here, for the deity is trying to open the monk's eyes and show him what he is doing wrong. In this sense, the use of *kai-wu* is less about making the monk experience some form of awakening and more about opening him up to the possibility of awakening. This interpretation is also closer to the way *kai-wu* is used in other early Chinese translations of Buddhist scriptures.[627] Thus, I find the Chinese text especially insightful in this case, for we can extract from it another useful definition of *saṃvega,* namely that which opens the possibility of awakening.

Finally, one last question that is worth raising about the forest deity's appearance in the Isolation Sutta is how exactly can this magical being notice the monk's mental lapse? Can this deity read the monk's mind? With this line of questioning, I wish to surface the broader issue of who or what exactly are these *devatās* that abide in the forest. Unfortunately, the identity of this deity figure, which appears in most of the suttas of the Vanasaṃyutta, remains a bit of a mystery. The scriptures themselves do not offer a clear answer to the question of who or what are these beings that inhabit the forest. Yet, based on the Pāli exegetical literature, Bodhi remarks that "apparently these *devatās* are not celestial beings, like those we meet in the Devatāsaṃyutta, but dryads or fairies, and they seem to be feminine."[628] Whatever gender and ontological category we

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[624] For example, *wei-bu* 畏怖, *jong-song* 驚悚, and *yan-bu* 厭怖.

[625] On the meaning of kai *kai-wu* 開悟, see Nakamura 1975 (Bukkyōgo daijiten):170a; Hirakawa 1997: 1198; and Muller 2007: DDB's entry on 開悟.

[626] On the meaning of *kai* 開, see Nakamura 1975 (Bukkyōgo daijiten): 168d; Soothill 2014: 393; Hirakawa 1997: 1197; and Muller 2007: DDB's entry on 開

[627] "Like a mad person whose mind is not open to awakening" (譬如狂人意不開悟, T.202 0618b14). For an example of another early Buddhist scripture where *kai-wu* is used in the sense of "opening one's eyes," "opening one to awakening" or more simply "making one understand," see T.100 423a08-423a09.

[628] Ibid.

ascribe to these beings, their presence in the Vanasaṃyutta is a good reminder that the forest is a lively "spiritual landscape" in the South Asian *imaginaire*.[629]

The inclusion of deities in the canonical Buddhist depiction of the forest is not surprising at all;[630] however, the different roles these magical beings play in the Vanasaṃyutta are remarkable. In the various suttas of this collection, we find forest deities functioning as teachers, disciplinarians, companions, and healers, who seem to possess some of the knowledge and pedagogical skills of a Buddhist master. For the most part, these deities are extremely effective in provoking *saṃvega* and eliciting the appropriate feelings of awe, fear, agitation, and shame that allow these Buddhist monks to make progress on the Path. This is evident, for example, in the SĀ version of the Isolation Sutta, where the deity's intervention ends up propelling the monk to attain arhatship.[631] Having said that, at times, these deities also inappropriately intervene in the forest-dwelling practice of certain monks. Undoubtedly, such instances reveal these magical beings in a less flattering light.[632]

In the Vanasaṃyutta, there is one particularly interesting example of a forest deity who misjudges a monk's integrity. The deity's poor judgment ends up leading to an unnecessary intrusion in the monk's forest-dwelling practice. This example is found in the eighth sutta of the Vanasaṃyutta, called the Family Mistress Sutta (Kulagharaṇīsutta).[633] In this scripture, we are told of a forest monk who was in close contact with a certain family living in a village near the forest. Rumors about an inappropriate relationship between the monk and the mistress of that family began spreading around the area. Finally, a deity inhabiting the forest where the monk was dwelling, out of a desire to steer him into *saṃvega*, appeared before the monk in the form of the mistress of that family. In an attempt to rattle the monk, the deity masquerading as the mistress brought up the rumors involving the two of them and tried to lure the monk to speak about their intimate relationship. However, the monk was unfazed by the allegations made against him and remained unmoved by the deity's attempt to lure him. Unlike most of the suttas in the Vanasaṃyutta, this forest encounter between a deity and a monk does not end with the monk experiencing a feeling of *saṃvega*. The Aṭṭhakathā explains what exactly went awry with this saṃvegic intervention. According to the commentary, this particular monk had already attained arhatship, and the family he was involved with was simply offering him food on a regular basis. The deity, who was unaware of the fact that this monk is an arhat, foolishly decided to intervene in his daily monastic routine for the sake of provoking *saṃvega*.[634]

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[629] There is nothing particularly surprising about the appearance of such magical beings in these suttas related to the forest. One possible way of interpreting these early Buddhist scriptures might lean towards considering the forest deities to be mere literary devices intended to animate the inner dialogues that the isolated forest monks were having with themselves. This possibility would remove some of the supernormal features from these texts, which some might find appealing. Nonetheless, the literal rendering of these magical beings as actual forest deities is the more obvious and plausible interpretation, especially when viewing the suttas of the Vanasaṃyutta against the vast backdrop of classical South Asian literature. Regardless of how one interprets the forest deities, I do not think the question of whether to interpret the forest deities literally or figuratively would have been salient to the audience at the time when these Buddhist scriptures were composed.

[630] An example of the many spirits and deities involved in the Buddhist conception of the forest is found in the Cūḷadhammasamādāna Sutta (MN 45). It so happens that in this sutta, the root *saṃ-vij* is used to describe the anxiety of a forest deity who realizes that the tree in which she dwells is about to die. The fact that these forest deities also experience *saṃvega* themselves reveals another side of these magical beings.

[631] T.99, 368b08.

[632] Bodhi (2000:85) also points this out in his remarks on this collection of Buddhist texts.

[633] SN 9.8.

[634] Sagāthāvagga-aṭṭhakathā 228.

From the perspective of the forest deity, the Family Mistress Sutta reveals that even these magical beings have their shortcomings when it comes to evaluating a monk's conduct. Yet more importantly, from the perspective of the monk, this sutta shows that some spiritually advanced individuals have no need for the intense experience of saṃvegic shock. The Aṭṭhakathā commentary indicates that there is no justification to stir up a monk who has already found peace. The productivity of a saṃvegic intervention, and perhaps of *saṃvega* in general, seems restricted to beings in less advanced stages on the Buddhist path. Of course, one might suggest that there is always a need for *saṃvega* since every time a Buddhist practitioner strays from the Path, the experience of this distressing emotion can help one get back on the right track. Nevertheless, the Aṭṭhakathā describes the monk from the Family Mistress Sutta as an elder (*thera*) whose influxes were destroyed (*khīnāsava*), clarifying that this seasoned monk no longer has the karmic propensity to give rise to suffering. Therefore in the case of an arhat, the Pāli commentary indicates that there is no reason whatsoever to elicit *saṃvega*.

5. Part two: The saṃvegic intervention

In the suttas of the Vanasaṃyutta, each time a deity intervenes in a monk's forest-dwelling practice for the purpose of provoking *saṃvega*, the text shifts from prose to verse. Like in the Attadaṇḍa Sutta, there is a poetic element added here to the speech that intends to elicit this emotional response. The shift from prose to verse is also consequential from a hermeneutical standpoint. The Isolation Sutta's verses demand more of the reader in terms of unpacking their meaning. This is confirmed by the fact that the Pāli commentaries pay most of their attention and effort to explicating the verse segment of the sutta.

When looking at the three versions of the Isolation Sutta, the starkest differences between the texts appear in the verse segment of the scripture. On some level, this is to be expected, for the SĀ and SĀ^2 versions exist only in Chinese translation, and it is undeniably harder to translate verse than prose. The fact that the verse segment is significantly longer in the SĀ and SĀ^2, to my mind, is emblematic of the difficulty of translating the Indic verses into Chinese. That said, it is actually the Chinese verses of the SĀ and SĀ^2 that include some of the most substantial differences in terms of content.[635]

Before looking closely at each one of the verses of the Isolation Sutta, I would like to address the Pāli commentary's explanation for what spurs the deity's poetic intervention. As I have mentioned earlier, the sutta describes the deity as "desiring to cause *saṃvega*" (*saṃvejetu-kāmā*). The Aṭṭhakathā provides an interesting gloss on this description, stating that the deity "has the desire to cause [the monk] to enter isolation" (*vivekaṃ paṭipajjāpetu-kāmā*).[636] The Aṭṭhakathā essentially substitutes *saṃvega* with *viveka*. The question is in what sense are these terms interchangeable and what claim is the commentary making in this instance? The Ṭīkā provides some clarification on the Aṭṭhakathā's gloss, explaining that the deity "desires to give rise to *saṃvega* for [the monk's] benefit. It is said that being of such nature, that deity is called one who desires to isolate [the monk] from the defilements, society, and so forth."[637]

[635] These differences might have nothing to do with translations, for perhaps they are a product of these scriptures being associated with distinct transmission lineages.
[636] Sagāthāvagga-aṭṭhakathā 221.
[637] *atthato saṃvegaṃ uppādetukāmā. tathābhūtā naṃ kilesasaṅgaṇikādito vivecetukāmā nāma hotīti vuttaṃ* (Sagāthāvagga-ṭīkā 221).

It seems that the Pāli commentary considers the deity's desire to cause *saṃvega* as a general wish to emotionally stir up the monk, a process which is vital for his attainment of the three forms of isolation. Thus, *saṃvega* is used in the commentary as a broader term that means "to affect" or "to stir,"[638] while the term *viveka* refers more specifically to the manner in which this forest monk is expected to be affected or emotionally attuned.

5.1 Inside-outside

The forest deity's first verse confronts the monk with the reality of his current situation and instructs him on what he should be doing differently. Provoking *saṃvega* typically involves a confrontation with the reality of impermanence and suffering (whether through a direct encounter or by hearing the Buddha's teaching of the Dharma). Yet, in this case, the deity initially wishes to elicit this distressing emotion by confronting the monk with the truth about his current state of affairs. In the Pāli version, the deity's intervention opens with the following verse:

> Desiring isolation you enter the forest,
> but your mind goes outwards.
> give up, man,[639] [your] longing for people;
> then you will be happy and free of passion.[640]

In the first leg, the deity reminds the monk that he entered the forest desiring isolation (*viveka*). The Pāli commentary clarifies that the monk came to the wilderness seeking the "three isolations" (*tayo viveke*),[641] thus stressing that simply attaining the "isolation of the body" by physically being in the forest is not enough. The second leg of this verse tends to the outward trajectory of the monk's mental activity. The deity seems to point to a tension or incongruity between entering the forest and allowing the mind to go "outwards." One question I am concerned with is the meaning of the expression "your mind goes outwards" (*te mano niccharatī bahiddhā*).

According to the Aṭṭhakathā, the sutta states that the mind "goes to the diversity of external sense-objects."[642] The Ṭīkā clarifies that this means that the mind moves towards objects "that exist outside of the internal field of experience."[643] In this sense, the Theravāda exegetes believe that the deity admonishes the monk mainly because his attention is directed towards external objects instead of his internal mental sphere. Nevertheless, notice that in the sutta itself, the deity does not necessarily make this kind of distinction between the inner and outer domains of experience when critiquing the monk's execution of the forest-dwelling practice. In fact, in the

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[638] Walker (2018: 275-276) addresses the merit of translating root *saṃ-vij* as "to stir." Also, Bodhi (2000: 249) uses "to stir up" and "to be stirred up" as translations of different forms derived from *saṃ-vij*. This translation seems to match the Pāli commentary's understanding of *saṃvega* in this instance, and later in this chapter, I will address this in greater length.

[639] I am taking *jano* in the sense of a vocative, even though it appears here in the nominative. As Bodhi mentions, this way of interpreting *jano* seems to be supported by the Aṭṭhakathā's gloss *tvaṃ jano* ("you, man"). On the challenges of interpreting and translating this verse see Bodhi 2000: 268, n. 532.

[640] *vivekakāmosi vanaṃ paviṭṭho,*
atha te mano niccharatī bahiddhā.
jano janasmiṃ vinayassu chandaṃ,
tato sukhī hohisi vītarāgo.

[641] Sagāthāvagga-aṭṭhakathā 221.

[642] *bāhiresu puthuttārammaṇesu carati* (Ibid).

[643] *gocarajjhattato bahibhūtesu* (Sagāthāvagga-ṭīkā 221).

first verse of the SĀ² version, the text makes it clear that the inside-outside binary here concerns the forest and what is external to it.

> A monk detests his fears and desires,
> therefore, he came to this forest,
> yet while his figure sits in the forest,
> his thoughts depart to the [world] outside the forest.[644]

Here, the forest is "the inside," and the everyday world is "the outside." This distinction between internal and external seems to flip the Pāli commentary's interpretation of the inside-outside binary. In this verse, it is clear that while the monk sits alone inside the forest, the world outside the forest, with which he is preoccupied, appears to him in his thoughts. Thus, one might say that for the isolated forest monk, the external everyday world exists only "inside" his own mind, while the "outside" is the forest in which the monk is currently situated. In this light, there is clearly some ambiguity here regarding what actually qualifies as "inside" and what is to be considered "outside." In the SĀ version, the forest is described as an "empty and quiet" (*kong-xian* 空閑) place. Thus, part of the monk's problem in this scripture is that he is missing out on the opportunity to take in, so to speak, the peaceful environment of the forest. Therefore, perhaps the deity critiques the monk for not properly engaging with the forest. Being physically situated in the wilderness while his mind travels elsewhere, the monk inappropriately indulges in a kind of "double life." Despite what the Pāli commentary claims, I believe the issue here is not so much the monk's attention to the outer experiential realm instead of the inner one, but his total lack of attention to the forest itself. It is this lack of attention that creates a discord between the monk's body and mind.[645]

The Pāli commentaries, especially the Ṭīkā, detect in the Isolation Sutta a strong emphasis on the "interior" space; nevertheless, the SĀ² is at odds with this way of reading the text. This tension between the inner and outer is of special interest to me because it is germane to the topic of emotions in early Buddhist thought. Much like in the case of the Pāli commentary's interpretation of *viveka* in this scripture, when it comes to *saṃvega*, we also find in the exegetical and scholastic literature an inclination to consider it as an inner, cognitive event, despite the fact that the suttas themselves paint a different picture of this emotional state. More broadly, as I argue throughout this dissertation, there is a view of emotions emerging from early Buddhist scripture that is not heavily reliant on the idea of a private, interior space. The introspective view of emotions as mental events, I would suggest, should be associated more specifically with the Buddhist exegetical and scholastic traditions.

Returning to the deity's first verse, in legs three and four of the Pāli version, the text shifts into a different mode of speech. The deity, at this point, implores the monk to renounce his longing for people, for only then will he be happy and free of passion. The fact that the deity hones in on the monk's "longing for people" is another indicator that in his loneliness the monk's thoughts

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[644] 比丘惡怖欲， 故來處此林.
形雖坐林間， 心意出林表.

[645] In the SĀ², the deity also states that as long as the monk "chases after external objects" (逐外塵), he will continue to give rise to evil thoughts. However, the strong distinction between the inner and outer domains of experience that we find in the Pāli commentary is absent from this text. Another aspect of the deity's criticism of the monk in these opening lines concerns how the monk's behavior is betraying the forest itself.

gravitate towards the social life that he renounced. It is also notable that the deity is not merely concerned with the prospect of the monk ridding himself of passion and desire, but also with his attainment of happiness or ease (*sukha*). In the SĀ version, this part of the scripture is articulated nicely, as the deity differentiates between the kind of joy the monk should avoid and the kind he should strive to attain.

> To tame the mind that rejoices in the world,
> constantly rejoice in the liberation of mind.
> You should let go of the unjoyful mind
> to maintain a peaceful and joyful dwelling.[646]

5.2 The dust of desire

In the deity's second verse, the classical Indian imagery of dust and its removal begins to play a pivotal role. In early Buddhist literature, the image of dust is ubiquitous. Dust commonly refers to that which pollutes the mind as well as to the impediment that prevents one from seeing things as they truly are. Yet dust is not used only figuratively. Étienne Lamotte explains, for example, that one traditional way of distinguishing buddhas from ordinary people, involves acknowledging that buddhas conform to the human custom of washing their feet even though dust never sticks to them.[647]

The dust imagery is also vital to the Isolation Sutta's notion of *saṃvega*. According to this scripture, the transformative experience of *saṃvega* is conveyed through the image of shaking off the dust that clings to the body. *Saṃvega* has the power to remove the dust that pollutes the mind and taints one's entire existence. To begin exploring the dust-shaking image associated with *saṃvega* in this scripture, I will first examine the use of the dust imagery in the second verse of the Pāli version.

> Let go of discontent and be mindful;
> we shall remind you to be mindful.[648]
> The dusty abyss is difficult to cross;
> don't let the dust of desire bring you down.[649]

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[646] 調伏樂世心， 常樂心解脫，
當捨不樂心， 執受安樂住.

[647] Lamotte 1988: 624.

[648] According to the Pāli commentary there are two possible interpretations of this second leg. The Aṭṭhakathā explains that the meaning [of this leg] is either "we shall remind you, i.e., the learned, to have mindfulness or, we shall remind you of the Dharma of the wise ones." (*satimantaṃ paṇḍitaṃ taṃ mayampi sārayāma, sataṃ vā dhammaṃ mayaṃ taṃ sārayāmāti attho*). The Ṭīkā expounds on these two possible meanings. "(1) In the doctrine (*sāsana*) leading to liberation, after going forth and taking on a meditation subject from a teacher, while dwelling in the forest, we shall remind the learned person to have mindfulness, i.e., dispel [improper] thought[s] as [they] arises. (2) Having taken on the Dharma of the wise ones, i.e., the righteous ones, which eliminates the defilements, we shall remind the one dwelling [in the forest] of the suffering of rebirth." (*niyyānikasāsane pabbajitvā satthu santike kammaṭṭhānaṃ gahetvā araññavāsena ca satimantaṃ paṇḍitaṃ taṃ mayampi yathāuppannaṃ vitakkaṃ vinodanāya sārayāma, sataṃ vā sappurisānaṃ kilesavigamanadhammaṃ paṭipajjitvā vasantaṃ taṃ sārayāma vaṭṭadukkhaṃ*). For more on the obscurity of this leg, see Bodhi 2000: 468, n. 533.

[649] *aratiṃ pajahāsi sato,*
bhavāsi sataṃ taṃ sārayāmase.
pātālarajo hi duttaro,

The first two legs of this verse consist of a common Buddhist instruction followed by a remark stating what the deity sets out to accomplish with this intervention, that is, reminding the monk to be mindful.[650] The Aṭṭhakathā suggests that the deity specifically wishes to remind the monk to be mindful of the Dharma. In other words, mindfulness (*sati*) here seems to be about keeping the Dharma in mind, rather than devoting one's full attention to the present moment. There is also a pun involved in the clause "we shall remind you to be mindful" (*sataṃ taṃ sārayāmase*), which points again to the relationship between memory and mindfulness. The words *sataṃ* ("mindful") and *sārayāmase* ("we shall remind") are both etymologically related to the Sanskrit root *smṛ* ("to remember"). The text thus seems to point out that mindfulness is directly tied to memory because one must constantly remember to be mindful. As one's focus and concentration regularly slip away, the challenge is to always remind oneself to retain awareness and concentrate on the Dharma.

In legs three and four of this verse, the dust imagery first appears in this sutta with the expression "the dusty abyss" (*pātāla-rajo*). The Aṭṭhakathā explains that the term abyss refers here to that which is groundless (*appatiṭṭha*), i.e., *saṃsāra*. There are at least two ways of understanding the groundlessness of *saṃsāra* in this context. One has to do with the idea that the cycle of rebirth has no beginning; the second concerns the characterization of existence in *saṃsāra* as being devoid of substance, stability, and a solid foundation.

On top of its groundless feature, what makes this abyss so difficult to traverse is its dustiness. In the picture that comes out of this verse, dust functions both as that which obstructs one from seeing the abyss for what it is, as well as the factor that makes it harder to eventually find the path leading out of the abyss. This metaphor suggests that dust prevents one from beginning to fathom the true predicament of being trapped in *saṃsāra*, which in turn, exacerbates one's entanglement in this form of miserable existence. The Aṭṭhakathā explains that in this instance, the term dust stands for the defilements (*kilesas*), the root causes of one's existence in *saṃsāra*.[651]

The fourth and final leg of this verse continues to develop the metaphor of *saṃsāra* as a dusty abyss. The expression "the dust of desire" (*kāma-rajo*), in particular, is key for understanding the abyss metaphor. Desire is often considered in early Buddhist thought to be the root defilement and the major cause of one's confinement to the cycle of rebirth. When the text says that the "dust of desire" can bring or drag one down, it is alluding to the possibility of sinking deeper into the saṃsāric abyss. According to the Aṭṭhakathā, the deity here is warning the monk that the dust of desire can drag him down to hell (*apāya*), or in the words of the Ṭīkā: "don't let [the dust of desire] lead you down the stream of a miserable rebirth."[652]

When examining the second verse across the three versions of this scripture, it is easy to notice the significant variations among the Isolation Sutta and its two parallel versions. Having said that, one thread that runs through all three versions of this scripture is the use of the dust

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mā taṃ kāmarajo avāhari.

[650] I consider the use of the first-person plural in the second leg as a polite form of referring to oneself. Another option is that the plural here refers to the general role of all the forest deities.

[651] According to the Ṭīkā, the abyss here stands for delusion (*moha*) and the dust stands for the defilements (*kilesas*). There seems to be a redundancy in this way of unpacking the "dusty abyss" metaphor, for *moha* is typically rendered one of the *kilesas*. Also, the sutta says that the abyss is "difficult to cross," which seems to apply more seamlessly to *saṃsāra* rather than *moha*.

[652] *heṭṭhā duggatisotaṃ mā upanesi.*

imagery in this particular verse. In the SĀ version, the second verse opens as follows: "[Your] pondering does not accord with right thought, do not cling to 'I' and 'mine.' As long as you are tainted by dust, this clinging is extremely difficult to remove."[653] The same verse in the SĀ[2], closes with the following line: "Do not crave desire and pleasure; purify the mind when it's dusty and polluted."[654]

The last element I will point out with respect to the second verse concerns a remark the deity makes in the SĀ[2] version about this very moment in the saṃvegic intervention. In place of the leg in the Pāli version where the deity tells the monk of its intention to remind him to be mindful, in the SĀ[2], the deity states: "Now I shall wake you up, causing you once again to retain mindfulness."[655] Considering that the Chinese text renders the deity's desire to cause *saṃvega* as a wish "to wake up" the monk, this statement leaves little room to interpret the main function of *saṃvega* in this scripture. The deity's saṃvegic intervention is meant to refocus the monk's attention. The precise position of this statement by the deity in the SĀ[2] is also noteworthy. It comes right before introducing two different metaphors for desire. One is the dust metaphor mentioned above, the second likens desire to a burning mountain that dries up all the good dharmas. The prospect of waking up the monk, or in other words, provoking his *saṃvega*, seems to be specifically tied to the use of these literary figures. The second verse thus sets the stage for the critical third verse, where we find the analogy that marks the crescendo of the deity's saṃvegic intervention.

5.3 Like a bird, like an elephant

The heart of the Isolation Sutta's notion of *saṃvega* lies in the third verse the deity utters to the monk. This verse presents an analogy, which in the Pāli version, goes as follows:

> Just as a bird covered with dirt
> shakes off the sticky dust,
> so a strenuous and mindful monk
> shakes off the sticky dust.[656]

Up to this point in the sutta, the deity used the second person to address the monk directly. Yet with this analogy, articulated in the third-person, the deity presents to the forest-dwelling monk an inspiring image of a monk that resembles a bird. The analogy itself begins with a bird smeared with dirt, shaking its body to remove the dust that has clung to it.[657] In the same way, we are told that a strenuous and mindful monk is able to shake off the dust from himself.

As I have mentioned earlier in this chapter, the Isolation Sutta clearly states that the deity's intervention in its entirety and this analogy in particular is intended to provoke *saṃvega*. To that I would add that this analogy is also about *saṃvega*. To begin analyzing the different aspects of this

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[653] 思非於正念，　莫著我我所，
如以塵頭染，　是著極難遣.
[654] 勿貪於欲樂，　坌污已淨心.
[655] 我今［寤－吾＋告］悟汝，　令汝還得念.
[656] *sakuṇo yathā paṃsukunthito,*
vidhunaṃ pātayati sitaṃ rajaṃ.
evaṃ bhikkhu padhānavā satimā,
vidhunaṃ pātayati sitaṃ rajanti.
[657] The Aṭṭhakathā clarifies that the sutta is referring to dust that clings to the body (*sarīralaggaṃ*).

analogy and how it unfolds, the first question I would like to address is: what exactly do the words "shaking" and "dust" mean in the case of the monk?

When addressing this question it is worth remembering that the root *saṃ-vij* can mean "to shake" or "to tremble," and that in Buddhist literature, the word *saṃvega* often refers to a state of being "stirred" or "shaken up." In the deity's analogy, the bird and the monk's ability to shake off the sticky dust is a feature of their *saṃvega*. In other words, the bird and the monk are used here as examples of how a stirred-up being uses its animated state to better its situation. The deity invokes these examples to steer the struggling forest monk into a state of *saṃvega* in order to make him shake off "the dust," much like the bird and the monk are able to do in the analogy itself.

As far as the monk in the analogy is concerned, the primary meaning of the word dust is figurative. Most likely, the text is referring to the monk's capacity to shake off the same "dust of desire" that came up in the previous verse. However, one ought to consider two points that might suggest that even in the case of the monk, the word dust also retains its literal meaning. First, as I have mentioned earlier, *saṃvega* often refers to the physical act of shaking or trembling, such as in the case of an animal that shakes out of fear or excitement. Second, the Aṭṭhakathā glosses the expression "sticky dust" (*sitaṃ rajan*) in the sutta with "dust that clings to the body." Thus, I think it is reasonable to at least raise the possibility that the deity's analogy might also allude to a monk who actually casts off a layer of dust from his body.[658] One could even go a step further and question whether the two adjectives attributed to the monk from the analogy, i.e., being strenuous (*padhānavā*) and mindful (*satimā*), refer to his physical and mental dispositions respectively. Whether that is the case or not, I believe the notion of *saṃvega* as a powerful experience that affects both body and mind is at play here.

The Pāli version is the most condensed among the different versions of this scripture, and unfortunately, in the case of the third verse, the Pāli commentaries do not provide us with much exegetical insight. Thus, in addressing the question concerning the meaning of "shake" and "dust" with respect to the monk, it is necessary to carefully examine the three versions of this scripture. I will start with the SĀ[2] version, which bears a strong resemblance to the Pāli; nonetheless, it sheds some new light on the bird-monk analogy.

> Just as a bird covered with dirt
> ruffles its feathers to shake off the dust,
> a monk, too, in a similar manner,
> meditates to remove the defilements.[659]

One noticeable feature of this version is the more detailed articulation of the bird's side of the analogy. The bird, having collected dust, ruffles its feathers and flaps its wings to shake off this physical nuisance. The Chinese word I translate as "ruffles" is *fen* 奮. In this verse, *fen* is used with respect to the bird's ruffling of its feathers and perhaps also the spreading of its wings; however, the word *fen* could also mean "impetus," "energetic" or "exciting."[660] That being so, *fen*

[658] The literal interpretation of dust in this context is especially intriguing to contemplate when considering that the deity is addressing the forest monk. After all, according to the Isolation Sutta, this monk is dwelling in the forest, so for all we know, his body might be covered with actual dust that bothers him.

[659] 如鳥為塵坌，奮翮振塵穢,
比丘亦如是，　禪思去塵勞.

[660] On the meaning of *fen* 奮, see Soothill 2014: 446.

shares a semantic range with the Indic root *saṃ-vij*, and I believe that in this context, it is purposefully used to express the bird's *saṃvega*.

On the other side of the analogy, which involves the monk, the SĀ² has the word "meditation" (*chan-si* 禪思) in the place of the bird's energetic ruffling of its feathers. Thus, the emphasis here is on the act of meditating as that which removes the dust identified with the defilements (*chen-lao* 塵勞).[661] This formulation of the analogy raises another important question, namely, how to characterize the relationship in this scripture between meditation and *saṃvega*.

In the previous verse of the SĀ², the eliciting of *saṃvega*, or to be more precise, the act of waking up the monk is intended to make him "retain mindfulness." This complements well what we see in this analogy, which is that meditation is what removes the defilements in practice not necessarily the shock or distress of entering *saṃvega*. The change here in the monk's emotional state is valuable primarily because it incentivizes or maybe even allows him to meditate. In this regard, *saṃvega* has mainly an instrumental role here, as it facilitates the monk's return to the proper form of practice. If this is in fact the case, then the SĀ² does not highlight the potency of the saṃvegic shock itself in transforming one's situation, as some early Buddhist scriptures do. Rather, it stresses the transformative power of meditation and "right thought" (*zheng-nian* 正念), which in this case, are aided by *saṃvega*. The experience of *saṃvega* is typically presented in the suttas as an emotional upheaval that drastically changes one's spiritual and existential orientation; however, in the Isolation Sutta, *saṃvega* functions more as a power boost or a "shock treatment," which helps the forest monk get back on the right track.

Moreover, it is safe to say that the SĀ² also takes a strong position on how to interpret the word "dust" with respect to the monk. In the next verse, the text clarifies that the monk's dust has only a figurative meaning, as it refers to the three defilements that "contaminate the mind" (*ran-xin* 染心). As I will show later in this chapter, the SĀ version aligns perfectly with the SĀ² on this matter, claiming that the monk's dust refers to the three root defilements.[662] Nonetheless, when it comes to the analogy that is at the heart of this scripture, the SĀ version is noticeably different from the SĀ² and the Pāli.

> Just as the ruler's elephant, when set free,
> spiritedly casts off the dust [from its body],
> so a monk, with respect to himself,
> [uses] right thought to relinquish the defilements.[663]

In this version of the Isolation Sutta, an elephant has taken the place of the bird in the dust-shaking analogy. For starters, what I find intriguing here is that unlike the bird, the royal elephant[664] is first released or set free (*shi* 釋), and only then does it run swiftly, shaking off the dust from its body.

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[661] I have already shown that in the previous verse, the Pāli commentary identifies the monk's dust with the *kilesas*.

[662] The third verse of the SĀ uses the word *cheng-gou* 塵垢 when referring to the defilements, which is different from the word the SĀ² uses (*chen-lao* 塵勞). The identification of dust with the three root defilements is fleshed out in the next verse of the SĀ.

[663] 如釋君馳象，　奮迅去塵穢,
比丘於自身，　正念除塵垢.

[664] Royal elephants are typically described in Buddhist literature as shackled animals. A good example of this image is found in the Lion Sutta, which I discuss in chapter two.

In other words, what is included in this version of the analogy is the event or action that elicits the saṃvegic response. The setting free of the elephant to run spiritedly and remove the dust from its body is likened to the deity's eye-opening intervention, which causes the monk to retain mindfulness and uproot the defilements. This component of the elephant-monk analogy is simply absent from the bird-monk analogy.[665]

Furthermore, in the SĀ, the use of the word *fen-xun* 奮迅, which I translate as "spiritedly," is of special significance. This word includes the character fen 奮, which I have addressed earlier since it is used in the SĀ² to characterize the bird's saṃvegic ruffling of its feathers. Here, this character is paired with *xun* 迅, which denotes a swift or sudden movement. On its own, *xun* is another word that clearly shares a semantic range with the root *saṃ-vij*, as both have the sense of a quick motion often prompted by something alarming or exciting. The binome *fen xun* is the key term used in the SĀ version to express the elephant's *saṃvega*. On the other side of the analogy, we have the monk who removes the defilements by means of right thought (*zheng-nian* 正念). Here it seems that the monk's mindset, i.e., his right thought, is a feature of his *saṃvega.* This raises the question of whether we can even make a clear distinction between the saṃvegic state of shock and the right frame of mind the monk is expected to enter in order to eliminate the defilement. What is certain, however, is that in the SĀ version, the monk's right thought is analogous to the elephant's swift movement with which it casts off the dust from its body. [666]

When considered in the broad context of Buddhist literature, the image of *saṃvega* we find in the Isolation Sutta appears to be unique. *Saṃvega* is portrayed in the different versions of this text as a type of liberating experience. To a smaller extent this is seen in the image of the bird that flaps its wings to shake off the dust, and to a larger extent, in the image of the royal elephant that upon its release begins to run swiftly. I am not familiar with any Buddhist canonical representation or explanation of *saṃvega* that grants this emotion such an emancipating quality. Typically, *saṃvega* is rendered a significant step, or maybe even a leap in the direction of nirvāṇa, yet most traditional accounts of experiencing this emotion are devoid of a strong sense of relief or freedom. Moreover, the SĀ and SĀ² along with the Pāli commentaries, all associate these saṃvegic images with the soteriological attainment of removing the defilements. Having said that, I think this scripture is careful not to present the monk in the analogy as one who has completely uprooted the defilements and attained nirvāṇa. Instead, the Isolations Sutta uses the purification imagery to speak of a beneficial act or process of clearing the mental afflictions that taint one's karmic stream. According to this sutta, when the dust of desire starts piling up, the procedure of shaking it off begins with *saṃvega*.

5.4 The dusty defilements (*kleśas*)

The final verse the deity utters in the SĀ and SĀ² versions does not appear in the Pāli. The content of this verse consists of an exegetical remark regarding how to understand the dust metaphor in this scripture. The inclusion of this "exegetical verse" is telling from a compositional stand point, for its content is similar to what appears in the Pāli commentaries. Whether this verse was part of

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[665] I should mention that even in the SĀ version, the act of provoking *saṃvega* is expressed vividly only on the elephant side of the analogy, but remains implicit in the case of the monk.

[666] Unfortunately, we do not possess a commentary that fleshes out all the different elements of the monk-elephant analogy that are folded into this Chinese verse. Therefore, I took the liberty here of explicating the implied association between the act of releasing the elephant and the deity's eye-opening intervention, as well as the vigorous disposition that the monk and elephant seem to share.

the root Indic text or was incorporated later as the scripture was translated into Chinese is difficult to determine. Yet examples such as this allude to the compositional fluidity of certain early Buddhist scriptures.[667]

Since the two versions of this exegetical verse found in the SĀ and SĀ^{2} are quite similar in content, it is sufficient to examine only one of them for the purposes of this discussion. Here is the deity's final verse in the SĀ^{2}:

> Dirt comes to contaminate the mind,
> right thought can relinquish it.
> Dirt is none other than attachment,
> it is not the soil of the outside [world].
> As for greed, hatred, and delusion,
> consider them as the defilements.
> A person who calms the mind and gains insight,
> thereupon, has the ability to remove [the defilements].[668]

The first thing I would like to point out is that this verse ends the SĀ^{2} version of this scripture. While the SĀ and Pāli versions end with an additional prose segment that focuses on the impact of the deity's intervention on the forest monk, the SĀ^{2} simply concludes the text with this verse. This way of ending the scripture seems to direct the deity's words straight at the reader or listener. Perhaps this is part of the scripture's strategy for provoking a saṃvegic response from its "potential audience." It is certainly a different strategy than the one found in the other two versions of this text, where the saṃvegic response of the forest monk, who serves as the "embedded audience," is included at the end of the text.[669]

As for the content of the verse itself, there are a couple of elements that are important to highlight. The first is an etymological feature of the Chinese text, which unfortunately is lost in my translation. The character *chen* 塵, which in this context means "dirt" or "stain," appears in all of the different words used in the SĀ^{2} in reference to either the literal dust of the physical world or to the figurative dirt and mental defilements that infect the mind. Moreover, the verse segment of the SĀ^{2} consists of sets of five characters, within which *chen* repeatedly appears as the fourth character.[670] Thus, the text uses this character to accentuate the presence of the dust imagery in Buddhist terms like "the defilements" (*chen-lao* 塵勞), and clarifies that in the case of the monk, one should interpret words like dust or dirt in a figurative sense.

The second noteworthy element of the SĀ^{2}'s final verse is its exegetical features. The verse reads like a commentary, as it fleshes out some of the more technical Buddhist terms used here.

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[667] On this topic see Anālayo 2012; Anālayo 2017; and Allon 2021.

[668] 塵垢來染心，　　正念能除捨.
愛欲即塵垢，　　非謂外埃土.
欲覺及瞋癡，　　謂之為塵勞.
攝心有智者，　　爾乃能除去 .

[669] On the distinction between the "embedded" and "potential," see pp. 77-79.

[670] This is most apparent in the third verse of the SĀ^{2}:
如鳥為**塵**坌，　奮翮振**塵**穢。
比丘亦如是，　禪思去**塵**勞.

For example, it clarifies that greed, hatred, and delusion are the three root defilements. In the vast corpus of early Buddhist literature, there are different lists of defilements. Some lists vary in the number of defilements they include; others use different Indic terms for the defilements themselves. Hence, there is exegetical value in numbering and naming the defilements as the SĀ^2 does. Furthermore, the verse ends with an emphasis on the importance of "collecting the mind and gaining insight" (攝心有智者) for the purpose of removing the defilements. In so doing, the text seems to lay out the significance of the two principle aspects of Buddhist practice, namely, calmness (*śamatha*) and insight (*vipaśyanā*).[671] Interestingly, the Pāli commentary on the Isolation Sutta provides the same explanations we find in the "exegetical verses" of the SĀ and SĀ^2. The commentary highlights the association of dust with the defilements and points out the importance of practicing calmness and insight for the sake of removing the defilements. The exegetical features of this fourth verse and its similarities to the Pāli commentaries raise questions as to whether the SĀ and SĀ^2 parallel versions of the Isolation Sutta incorporated into the scripture elements from the early commentarial literature that was possibly available to the Chinese translators.

6. The outcome of the saṃvegic intervention

More than half of the suttas in the Vanasaṃyutta conclude with a brief sentence stating that the deity's intervention caused the monk *saṃvega*. This concluding sentence verifies the efficacy of the deity's attempt to profoundly affect the monk. The Isolation Sutta is where the reader first encounters this verification sentence.

> Then, stirred up by that deity, the monk faced distress (*saṃvega*).[672]

The monk's *saṃvega* is articulated here with the stock phrase (*saṃvejito saṃvegaṃ āpādi*). An identical or similar phrase appears in several suttas in the Pāli canon, including the Goad Sutta, on which I focused in the previous chapter. What is clear about this phrase is that grammatically, it articulates the experience of *saṃvega* using both a passive construction and an active one. [673] To better understand the construction of this phrase, it might be helpful to "translate" it in the following way: "saṃvega'ed he faced *saṃvega*." [674]

What is unclear about this phrase is the reason for articulating the experience of *saṃvega* in this passive-active manner. Contemplating the question concerning the significance of this phrase, I see two possible approaches. The first is that one should not read too much into this phrasing. Perhaps this way of articulating the experience of *saṃvega* is a remnant of the oral composition of these early Buddhist scriptures. Repetitions of such sort are a prevalent stylistic feature of these ancient texts, one which serves primarily a mnemonic function and does not necessarily prompt a careful exegetical or literary analysis. None of the traditional commentaries,

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[671] It is also possible that the text is stressing here the importance of combining meditation (*samādhi*) with wisdom (*prajñā*).
[672] *atha kho so bhikkhu tāya devatāya saṃvejito saṃvegaṃ āpādīti.*
[673] It is worth noting that in this case, the passive construction, *saṃvejita* is the past passive participle of the causative stem of the root *saṃ-vij*. Frequently, the causative is employed to formulate an active grammatical construction, yet here the causative appears in a passive form.
[674] In the Goad Sutta, the Aṭṭhakathā glosses the expression "faces *saṃvega*" (*saṃvegaṃ āpajjati*) with "enters *saṃvega*" (*saṃvegaṃ paṭipajjati*).

for that matter, have much to say about this particular way of articulating the experience of *saṃvega*. That fact alone might suggest that there is no good reason to pay special attention to this passive-active construction.

The other possibility is that this phrasing tells us something essential or at least not trivial about the experience of *saṃvega*. If that is the case, then it seems necessary to seriously consider the diachronic aspect of this passive-active construction. Bodhi's translation, for example, indicates that he understands this phrase as consisting of two meaningful, successive events. He thus translates the concluding sentence of the Isolation Sutta as follows: "Then that bhikkhu, stirred up by that devtā, acquired a sense of urgency."[675] I will not comment here on Bodhi's use of the idiom "a sense of urgency" to translate *saṃvega*, for I have done so elsewhere in this dissertation.[676] What I will point out, however, is that Bodhi provides one translation for the passive construction involving the root *saṃ-vij*—"stirred up"—and another one for the active construction— "acquiring a sense of urgency." According to Bodhi, first the monk is perturbed or simply moved by the deity's intervention, and then, he is able to gain from this experience some kind of edge that propels him to move forward. Bodhi's translation seems to conceive of *saṃvega* as both an emotional response and an acquired temperament or quality. In this translation, Bodhi also converts this articulation of *saṃvega* into terms that easily fit the Buddhist soteriological mold. He thus interprets the meaning of *saṃvega* through the prism of its specific function and worth to the one pursuing the Buddhist path.

What might be lost in Bodhi's translation of this phrase expressing the monk's *saṃvega* is the complex affective dimension of this emotion, as well as the openness to interpret what the experience of *saṃvega* can mean in a given context. By the "affective dimension," I am referring to the various emotional phenomena encompassed by the term *saṃvega*, which in this instance, seems to include feelings of distress, shame, shock, and awe. As for the openness to interpret the experience of *saṃvega*, interestingly, the Pāli commentary on the Isolation Sutta offers two possible explanations for what the expression "faced *saṃvega*" (*saṃvegaṃ āpādi*) means in this context. The fact that the Aṭṭhakathā offers multiple explanations for this expression, using the commentarial *vā* which roughly means "either this or that," suggests that even the exegetical tradition acknowledges that there is a poly-valence or maybe even a certain ambiguity regarding the meaning of experiencing *saṃvega*.

The first explanation the Aṭṭhakathā provides for the expression "he faced *saṃvega*" states that after the encounter in the forest, the monk entered isolation thinking to himself, "the deity thus makes me remember."[677] The Pāli commentary does not specify what exactly the deity reminds the monk; however, in its explication of the second verse, the commentary suggests that the deity causes the monk to remember the "Dharma of the wise ones." In addition to the Dharma, the deity's speech also reminds the monk why he came to the forest to begin with, namely, out of a desire for isolation. Taking all this into account, one possible explanation the commentary offers is that "facing *saṃvega*" refers to the manner in which the deity's reminder continued reverberating in the monk's mind as he resumed his forest-dwelling practice. *Saṃvega* and memory have a complex relationship, which I address elsewhere in this dissertation;[678] yet suffice to say that texts like the

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[675] Bodhi 2000: 294.
[676] See pp. 15-16.
[677] *devatāpi nāma maṃ evaṃ sāretīti* (Sagāthāvagga-aṭṭhakathā 221).
[678] See p. 41.

Isolation Sutta disclose that this emotion often involves the "shock of recognition," as one is intensely reminded of what one has forgotten.[679]

The commentary's second explanation for facing *saṃvega* suggests that "having harnessed the highest [level of] energy, [the monk] entered the ultimate isolation, which is merely the path."[680] This explanation is in line with Buddhaghosa's notion of *saṃvega,* according to which, this emotion gives rise to energy, and "right energy is the root of all attainments."[681] It is also worth noting that this explanation of facing *saṃvega* agrees with Bodhi's translation, insofar as one can easily draw a line between "harnessing a high level of energy" and "acquiring a sense of urgency."

Finally, it is important to highlight that the Isolation Sutta and its traditional commentaries refrain from declaring that after encountering the deity, the monk necessarily reached a substantial soteriological feat. The Pāli sutta ends with the forest monk being distressed, and the Aṭṭhakathā ascertains that this experience of *saṃvega* sets the monk merely (*eva*) on the path, which is "the ultimate isolation," that is to say, on the "path of arhatship."[682] In contrast, the SĀ version of this scripture ends by stating that after the deity's intervention, the monk attained the highest soteriological achievement.

> Then, after the deity spoke these verses, the monk, having heard this speech, harnessed his energy and set his intention,[683] eliminating the mind of afflictions and attaining arhatship.[684]

This closing sentence seems to lay out the steps that follow the monk's initial reaction to the deity's intervention. It is hard to determine whether the monk's attainments of arhatship came shortly after his encounter with the deity or a significant period of time later. Yet the text clearly wishes to establish a causal connection between the saṃvegic encounter and the attainment of liberation. A similar causal chain of events is described in the Goad Sutta, where a process that begins with experiencing *saṃvega* ends with a realization of the ultimate truth. Similar to the Pāli version, the SĀ's concluding statement looks to verify the efficacy of the deity's intervention. Yet while the Pāli version's concluding statement uses the monk's *saṃvega* to confirm the potency of the deity's speech, the SĀ uses the attainment of arhatship to make a similar point.

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[679] McClintock 2017.

[680] *uttamavīriyaṃ vā paggayha paramavivekaṃ maggameva paṭipannoti* (Sagāthāvagga-aṭṭhakathā 221).

[681] *sammā āraddhaṃ sabbāsaṃ sampattīnaṃ mūlaṃ hotīti* (Dhammasaṅgaṇī-aṭṭhakathā, Indriyarāsivaṇṇanā). For a more elaborate discussion of Buddhaghosa's idea of the relationship between *saṃvega* and energy see p. 145.

[682] In the Aṭṭhakathā commentary on the Kassapagotta Sutta (SN 9.3) the expression "he faced *saṃvega*" is explicated as follows: "Having harnessed energy, [the monk] entered upon the path of arhatship, which is the ultimate isolation" (*vīriyaṃ paggayha paramavivekaṃ arahattamaggaṃ paṭipajji*). This suggests that when it says "path" (*magga*) in the commentary on the isolation Sutta, the meaning is the "path of arhatship" (*arahatta-magga*). In the Pāli tradition, there is a scheme of seven kinds of trainees, extending from the trainee who is on the "path of stream-entry" and up to the highest trainee who is on the "path of arhatship." This scheme includes "all the noble persons except the arahant, who is *asekha*, 'one beyond training'" (Bodhi 2012: 1623, n. 229).

[683] It is worth noting that we find in the SĀ another example of the relationship between *saṃvega* and energy.

[684] 時，彼天神說是偈已，彼比丘聞其所說，專精思惟，斷諸煩惱心，得阿羅漢.

7. Conclusion: reflecting on *saṃvega* and its function

With my analysis of the Isolation Sutta in the rearview mirror, I would like to close this chapter by addressing three main topics regarding the concept of *saṃvega* in this scripture. The first has to do with the relationship between this emotion and the forest. A large share of the suttas that deal with *saṃvega* in the Pāli canon are found in the Vanasaṃyutta. This is telling, for as I have argued, the forest emerges from the suttas of the Vanasaṃyutta as a site where emotions are intensified. Yet there is an even broader issue underscored here, which is the inside-outside binary and how it plays into the early Buddhist conception of emotions. The fact that the forest setting has such a significant impact on the prospect of experiencing *saṃvega* suggests there is a need to include both subject and world in our understanding of this emotion. In the Isolation Sutta, for example, it is the encounter with the deity, a being that serves as an extension of the forest, which provokes the monk's *saṃvega*. The forest comes alive to remind the monk who he is, what the Dharma is, and where he is physically situated at the moment. In this sense, there is an aspect of experiencing *saṃvega* highlighted in the suttas of the Vanasaṃyutta that is both about responding to the forest as well as learning to become better attuned to it.

This notion of attunement ties to the second topic I want to address, namely, the function of *saṃvega* as a tool for reforming one's conduct. In the Isolation Sutta, the incongruity between the monk and the forest is not solely about inhabiting the wrong state of mind. The sutta presents the monk's "bad thoughts" as a form of transgression. Liang and Morseth address this topic, claiming that certain "renunciant practices induce *saṃvega* in order to redirect the mind away from the sensual sphere and toward the spiritual sphere. Illustrating these effects, in the *Viveka Sutta* (SN 9.1), a monk is depicted undertaking austerities (*dhutaṅga*). However, he lets his mind wander, lapsing into sensual fantasy as if he were a lay practitioner. Fortunately, he is rescued and rebuked by a deity who reminds him of his renunciant status (Bhikkhu Bodhi *The Connected Discourses* 197). The arising of *saṃvega* upon being reprimanded by the deity prompts the monk to reform his mental conduct."[685] The general claim Liang and Morseth make here concerning the role *saṃvega* plays in reforming one's conduct and the relationship between *saṃvega* and the practice of renunciation is valid. However, I have two worries with their characterization of *saṃvega* and how it is articulated in the Isolation Sutta. The first concerns the notion that some "renunciant practices induce *saṃvega*." Texts like the Isolation Sutta present a more dynamic model of the relationship between *saṃvega* and the practice of asceticism. While in some cases, austerities are meant to induce *saṃvega* (such as when meditating on a skeleton), in other cases, *saṃvega* is required to properly engage in active renunciation. In this regard, the Isolation Sutta shows that even a forest-dwelling monk who is in the midst of an extreme form of renunciation often needs to experience *saṃvega* in order to properly re-engage in his ascetic practice.

My second worry with Liang and Morseth's reading of the Isolation Sutta has to do with their statement that *saṃvega* is useful in redirecting the mind "away from the sensual sphere and toward the spiritual sphere." In general, this statement might ring true, but when applying it to the Isolation Sutta something essential is lost about this text and its notion of *saṃvega*. In this scripture, the saṃvegic redirection of the mind pulls the monk away from his thoughts about the life of a householder and back to the secluded forest. The deity's speech reminds the monk of his desire for isolation and instructs him to give up his longing for people. Thus, the Isolation Sutta and its

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[685] Liang and Morseth 2020: 216

commentaries point specifically to the link between *saṃvega* and *viveka* in this context. The Aṭṭhakathā even goes as far as to use these terms interchangeably. It is indisputable that part of perfecting the solitary life involves ridding oneself of the desires and attachments that make up the "sensual sphere" about which Liang and Morseth speak. Nonetheless, the Isolation Sutta conceives of *saṃvega* more specifically as a force that pulls the monk away from his attachments and thoughts regarding the household life and reestablishes him in the isolated forest-dwelling practice. In other words, *saṃvega* is not about retreating from the material world and entering a purely spiritual sphere, but about reshaping one's relationship with the world.

Now, returning to the broader topic of *saṃvega* as an instrument for reforming one's conduct, what I glean from the Isolation Sutta, and more generally from the Vanasaṃyutta, is that there is variance in the manner in which this reformational function of *saṃvega* pans out. *Saṃvega* is intended to transform one's being, and thus, it brings about a change that affects one's body, mind, and actions. Understanding the particular change that a saṃvegic experience manifests calls for a case-by-case analysis. In general, the experience of *saṃvega* aims to place one on the path of liberation; yet as I have shown in this chapter, even the Pāli commentary acknowledges the ambiguity of the expression "facing *saṃvega*," and the openness to interpret what it means exactly and how it function in a certain context.

The third and final topic I would like to touch on is *saṃvega* and its motivating character. Brekke argues that *saṃvega* is the most significant term in Buddhist literature for studying the religious motivation of the early Buddhists.[686] In some canonical texts, it behooves one to understand or even translate *saṃvega* as "motivational fear."[687] Yet in the Isolation Sutta, the motivational character of *saṃvega* is not strongly associated with feelings of fear and terror. The image of the bird or the elephant that appears at the heart of the Isolation Sutta, compares the experience of *saṃvega* to the act of shaking off the dust that taints one's existence. *Saṃvega* is portrayed in this scripture as a taste of the coveted fruits of renunciation,[688] or a sample of the purification of mind associated with nirvāṇa. The Isolation Sutta grants the experience of this intense emotion a liberating quality, which can motivate even a rigorous forest-dwelling monk to pursue the Buddhist path with a renewed level of energy and focus.

[686] Brekke 2002: 62-63.
[687] On this point, see Giustarini 2012: 523.
[688] It is worth at least mentioning here Buddhaghosa's use of the expression "experiencing the taste of the noble fruit" (*ariyaphalarasānubhavana*). Yet in the same breath, one should keep in mind that in Buddhaghosa's view of the Path, the experience of tasting the noble fruit comes only at the end of the road, that is, after one removes the root defilements. There is, however, another notion of "tasting the fruit of renunciation" in Buddhaghosa's work that seems more relevant in this context. In a segment of the Visuddhimagga dedicated to the forest-dwelling practice, Buddhoghosa specifically mentions "enjoying the taste of the bliss of isolation" (*pavivekasukharasaṃ assādeti*, Visuddhimagga 1.31). I would not go as far as calling the experience of *saṃvega* in the Isolation Sutta blissful, yet it does seem to provide a small taste of liberation that aims to propel the isolated monk to push forward.

Appendix A: Early Buddhist Scriptures

Sīha Sutta SN 22.78	**Lion Sutta** Translation of the SN version	**Sīha Sutta** AN 4.33	**Lion Sutta** Translation of the AN version
"sāvatthinidānaṃ. sīho, bhikkhave, migarājā sāyaṇhasamayaṃ āsayā nikkhamati; āsayā nikkhamitvā vijambhati; vijambhitvā samantā catuddisā anuviloketi; samantā catuddisā anuviloketvā tikkhattuṃ sīhanādaṃ nadati; tikkhattuṃ sīhanādaṃ naditvā gocarāya pakkamati.	"At Sāvatthi. The lion, monks, the king of beasts, comes out of his den in the evening time. He starches out, surveys the four directions all around him, and roars his lion's roar three times. [Then] he sets out [in search] of food.	"sīho, bhikkhave, migarājā sāyaṇhasamayaṃ āsayā nikkhamati. āsayā nikkhamitvā vijambhati. vijambhitvā samantā catuddisā anuviloketi. samantā catuddisā anuviloketvā tikkhattuṃ sīhanādaṃ nadati. tikkhattuṃ sīhanādaṃ naditvā gocarāya pakkamati.	"The lion, monks, the king of beasts, comes out of his den in the evening time. He starches out, surveys the four directions all around him, and roars his lion's roar three times. [Then] he sets out [in search] of food.
ye hi keci, bhikkhave, tiracchānagatā pāṇā sīhassa migarañño nadato saddaṃ suṇanti; yebhuyyena bhayaṃ saṃvegaṃ santāsaṃ āpajjanti; bilaṃ bilāsayā pavisanti; dakaṃ dakāsayā pavisanti; vanaṃ vanāsayā pavisanti; ākāsaṃ pakkhino bhajanti. yepi te, bhikkhave, rañño nāgā gāmanigamarājadhānīsu, daḷhehi varattehi baddhā, tepi	Now, monks, whatever animals thear the roar of the lion, the king of beasts, for the most part are faced with fear, distress (*saṃvega*), and trembling. The hole dwellers enter their holes; the water dwellers enter the water; the forest dwellers enter the forest; and the birds take to the sky. Even, monks, those royal elephants bound by firm straps and binds in the	ye kho pana te, bhikkhave, tiracchānagatā pāṇā sīhassa migarañño nadato saddaṃ suṇanti, te yebhuyyena bhayaṃ saṃvegaṃ santāsaṃ āpajjanti. bilaṃ bilāsayā pavisanti, dakaṃ dakāsayā pavisanti, vanaṃ vanāsayā pavisanti, ākāsaṃ pakkhino bhajanti. yepi te, bhikkhave, rañño nāgā gāmanigamarājadhānīsu daḷhehi varattehi bandhanehi baddhā, tepi tāni bandhanāni	Now, monks, whatever animals hear the roar of the lion, the king of beasts, for the most part, are faced with fear, distress (*saṃvega*), and trembling. The hole dwellers enter their holes; the water dwellers enter the water; the forest dwellers enter the forest; and the birds take to the sky. Even, monks, those royal elephants bound by firm straps and binds in the

tāni bandhanāni sañchinditvā sampadāletvā bhītā muttakarīsaṃ cajamānā, yena vā tena vā palāyanti. evaṃ mahiddhiko kho, bhikkhave, sīho migarājā tiracchānagatānaṃ pāṇānaṃ, evaṃ mahesakkho, evaṃ mahānubhāvo.	villages, towns, and royal cities, burst and tear apart these binds. Frightened, they urinate and defecate, then flee in every direction. So powerful among the animals, monks, is the lion, the king of beasts, so majestic and mighty.	sañchinditvā sampadāletvā bhītā muttakarīsaṃ cajamānā yena vā tena vā palāyanti. evaṃ mahiddhiko kho, bhikkhave, sīho migarājā tiracchānagatānaṃ pāṇānaṃ, evaṃ mahesakkho evaṃ mahānubhāvo.	villages, towns, and royal cities, burst and tear apart these binds. Frightened, they urinate and defecate, then flee in every direction. So powerful among the animals, monks, is the lion, the king of beasts, so majestic and mighty.
evaṃ eva kho, bhikkhave, yadā tathāgato loke uppajjati arahaṃ sammāsambuddho vijjācaraṇasampanno sugato lokavidū anuttaro purisadammasārathi satthā devamanussānaṃ buddho bhagavā. so dhammaṃ deseti — ‘iti rūpaṃ, iti rūpassa samudayo, iti rūpassa atthaṅgamo; iti vedanā... iti saññā... iti saṅkhārā... iti viññāṇaṃ, iti viññāṇassa samudayo, iti viññāṇassa atthaṅgamo’ti.	In the same way, monks, when the Tathāgata arises in the world, an *arahant*, perfectly awakened, accomplished in true knowledge and conduct, a *sugata*, knower of worlds, unsurpassed trainer of persons to be tamed, instructor of gods and humans, a buddha, the Blessed One, he teaches the Dharma: Such is form, such is the origin of form, such the cessation of form. The same goes for feeling, recognition, volitional formations, and consciousness.	evaṃ eva kho, bhikkhave, yadā tathāgato loke uppajjati arahaṃ sammāsambuddho vijjācaraṇasampanno sugato lokavidū anuttaro purisadammasārathi satthā devamanussānaṃ buddho bhagavā, so dhammaṃ deseti — (1) ‘iti sakkāyo, (2) iti sakkāyasamudayo, (3) iti sakkāyanirodho, (4) iti sakkāyanirodhagāminī paṭipadā’ti.	In the same way, monks, when the Tathāgata arises in the world, an *arahant*, perfectly awakened, accomplished in true knowledge and conduct, a *sugata*, knower of worlds, unsurpassed trainer of persons to be tamed, instructor of gods and humans, a buddha, the Blessed One, he teaches the Dharma: (1) Such is individual existence, (2) such is the origin of individual existence, (3) such is the cessation of individual existence, (4) such is the method leading to the cessation of individual existence.

yepi te, bhikkhave, devā dīghāyukā vaṇṇavanto sukhabahulā uccesu vimānesu ciraṭṭhitikā tepi tathāgatassa dhammadesanaṃ sutvā yebhuyyena bhayaṃ saṃvegaṃ santāsaṃ āpajjanti — ‘aniccāva kira, bho, mayaṃ samānā niccamhāti amaññimha. addhuvāva kira, bho, mayaṃ samānā dhuvamhāti amaññimha. asassatāva kira, bho, mayaṃ samānā sassatamhāti amaññimha. mayampi kira, bho, aniccā addhuvā asassatā sakkāyapariyāpannā’ti. evaṃ mahiddhiko kho, bhikkhave, tathāgato sadevakassa lokassa, evaṃ mahesakkho, evaṃ mahānubhāvo”ti. idaṃ avoca bhagavā ... pe ... etad avoca satthā	When the gods, monks, who are long-living, beautiful, abundantly happy, and [accustomed to staying] for long periods of time in heavenly palaces, hear the Tathāgata’s teaching of the Dharma, for the most part, they are faced with fear, distress (*saṃvega*), and trembling. [These gods proclaim:] ‘It appears that truly we are impermanent, yet we considered ourselves permanent; it appears that truly we are unstable, yet we considered ourselves stable; it appears that truly we are non-eternal, yet we considered ourselves eternal. Truly we are impermanent, unstable, and non-eternal, taking part in individual existence.’ So powerful, monks, is the Tathāgata in the world along with its gods, so majestic and mighty.” The Blessed One, the teacher, spoke this and further said the following:	yepi te, bhikkhave, devā dīghāyukā vaṇṇavanto sukhabahulā uccesu vimānesu ciraṭṭhitikā, tepi tathāgatassa dhammadesanaṃ sutvā yebhuyyena bhayaṃ saṃvegaṃ santāsaṃ āpajjanti — ‘aniccā vata kira, bho, mayaṃ samānā niccamhāti amaññimha; addhuvā vata kira, bho, mayaṃ samānā dhuvamhāti amaññimha; asassatā vata kira, bho, mayaṃ samānā sassatamhāti amaññimha. mayaṃ kira, bho, aniccā addhuvā asassatā sakkāyapariyāpannā’ti. evaṃ mahiddhiko kho, bhikkhave, tathāgato sadevakassa lokassa, evaṃ mahesakkho evaṃ mahānubhāvo”ti.	When the gods, monks, who are long-living, beautiful, abundantly happy, and [accustomed to staying] for long periods of time in heavenly palaces, hear the Tathāgata’s teaching of the Dharma, for the most part, they are faced with fear, distress (*saṃvega*), and trembling. [These gods proclaim:] ‘It appears that truly we are impermanent, yet we considered ourselves permanent; it appears that truly we are unstable, yet we considered ourselves stable; it appears that truly we are non-eternal, yet we considered ourselves eternal. Truly we are impermanent, unstable, and non-eternal, taking part in individual existence.’ So powerful, monks, is the Tathāgata in the world along with its gods, so majestic and mighty.”

<table>
<tr>
<td>“yadā buddho abhiññāya,
dhammacakkaṃ pavattayi,
sadevakassa lokassa,
satthā appaṭipuggalo.
sakkāyañca nirodhañca,
sakkāyassa ca sambhavaṃ,
ariyañcaṭṭhaṅgikaṃ maggaṃ,
dukkhūpasamagāminaṃ.</td>
<td>“When the Buddha, through higher knowledge, set in motion the wheel of Dharma; the teacher, the incomparable person in this world along with its gods,
[preached] individual existence, cessation, the origin of individual existence, and the noble eightfold path leading to the alleviation of suffering.</td>
<td>“yadā buddho abhiññāya,
dhammacakkaṃ pavattayī,
sadevakassa lokassa,
satthā appaṭipuggalo.
sakkāyañca nirodhañca,
sakkāyassa ca sambhavaṃ.
ariyañcaṭṭhaṅgikaṃ maggaṃ,
dukkhūpasamagāminaṃ.</td>
<td>“When the Buddha, through higher knowledge, set in motion the wheel of Dharma, the teacher, the incomparable person in this world along with its gods,
[preached] individual existence, cessation, the origin of individual existence, and the noble eightfold path leading to the alleviation of suffering.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>yepi dīghāyukā devā,
vaṇṇavanto yasassino,
bhītā santāsaṃ āpāduṃ,
sīhassevitare migā.
avītivattā sakkāyaṃ,
aniccā kira bho mayaṃ,
sutvā arahato vākyaṃ,
vippamuttassa tādino”ti.</td>
<td>Then, even those gods who are long-living, beautiful and glorious,
became fearful and trembled, just like the different animals [when they hear the roar] of the lion.
‘We do not transcend individual existence, truly we are impermanent,’
[the gods proclaimed] after hearing the speech of the arahant, the steadfast one who is liberated.”</td>
<td>yepi dīghāyukā devā,
vaṇṇavanto yasassino,
bhītā santāsaṃ āpāduṃ,
sīhassevi’taremigā.
avītivattā sakkāyaṃ,
aniccā kira bho mayaṃ.
sutvā arahato vākyaṃ,
vippamuttassa tādino”ti tatiyaṃ.</td>
<td>Then, even those gods who are long-living, beautiful and glorious,
became fearful and trembled, just like the different animals [when they hear the roar] of the lion.
‘We do not transcend individual existence, truly, we are impermanent,’
[the gods proclaimed] after hearing the speech of such a being, the arahant, the steadfast one who is liberated.”</td>
</tr>
</table>

Attadaṇḍa Sutta Sn 4.15/KN 5.53	**Attadaṇḍa Sutta** Translation of the Pāli version	**Yizujing 義足經** T.198, 189b12-189c22	**Arthapada Scripture (16)** Translation of the Chinese parallel version of the Attadaṇḍa Sutta found in the Arthapada
1. “attadaṇḍā bhayaṃ jātaṃ, janaṃ passatha medhagaṃ. saṃvegaṃ kittayissāmi, yathā saṃvijitaṃ mayā.	“Fear is born from one’s own stick; see the people quarrel. I will speak [now] about [my] distress (*saṃvega*); how I was distressed [in the past]. (1)	1. 從無哀致恐怖 人世世從黠聽 今欲說義可傷 我所從捨畏怖	Fear comes from lack of compassion; generation after generation, people hear [this] from the sage. Now, I wish to speak about [how] I was distressed,[689] and the path I follow, which eradicates fear. (1)
2. phandamānaṃ pajaṃ disvā, macche appodake yathā. aññamaññehi byāruddhe disvā maṃ bhayam āvisi.	When I saw the people quivering, like fish in shallow water, when I saw them hostile towards each other, fear came upon me. (2)	2. 展轉苦皆世人 如乾水斷流魚 在苦生欲害意	The people of the world were[690] all rolling around in agony,[691] like fish in a river whose waters have run dry. Living in agony, their minds wished harm [on others],

[689] The binome *ke-shang* 可傷 appears to be a translation of an Indic word derived from the root *saṃ-vij*. (The Chinese text, most likely, is not a direct translation of the Pāli scripture, but of a parallel version of this scripture that was composed in a different Indic language). Unfortunately, *ke-shang* does not appear anywhere else in T.198; however, translating it as “distressed” is consistent with the way *ke shang* is employed in other Chinese translations of early Buddhist scriptures. For example, in T.153_62b13-14, we find *ke-shanga* used in conjunction with *ke-min* 可愍, where both words seem to denot a state of being distressed or miserable.

[690] I translate the opening verses of the Chinese version using the past tense. The reason for doing so is mainly based on the Pāli version of this text, in which the Buddha speaks about his past experience of *saṃvega*. Bapat (1951:172-173) also elects to translate the opening verses in the past tense.

[691] Instead of my literal translation of 展轉苦 as “rolling around in agony,” one could simply translate this as “repeatedly suffering.”

		代彼恐癡冥樂	replacing their fears with deluded pleasures. (2)
3. samantaṃ asāro loko, disā sabbā sameritā. icchaṃ bhavanaṃ attano, na addasāsiṃ anositaṃ.	The entire world had no essence, all directions were in chaos. Searching for a place for myself, I did not see [one that was] unoccupied. (3)	3. 一切世悉然燒 悉十方亂無安 自貢高不捨愛 不見故持癡意	The entire world was in flames; all ten directions were in disorder with no peace. [692] Proud of themselves, [people] did not abandon desire. Because they did not see [the world burning], they latched onto deluded thought. (3)
4. osānetveva byāruddhe disvā me aratī ahu. athettha sallaṃ addakkhiṃ, duddasaṃ hadayanissitaṃ.	Even at the end, when I saw [them still] hostile, dissatisfaction came over me. Then I saw the dart, here, difficult to see, stuck in the heart. (4)	4. 莫作縛求冥苦 我悉觀意不樂 彼致苦痛見刺 以止見難可忍	One should not form bonds; one should not seek ignorant suffering.[693] When I saw [these harmful tendencies in the world] I felt discontent. [Then] I saw the dart [by which] this pain is brought about.[694] When fixing one’s sight [on it], [this dart] becomes hard to endure. (4)

[692] Both the third verse in the Chinese and the Pāli develop the motif of a world fully occupied with no space to hide or live in peace. At the same time, this verse also presents the world in *saṃvega* as resembling a battlefield.

[693] In the Chinese version, the use of the prescriptive in this verse seems to indicate that the text does not make the strong distinction we find in the Pāli between the first five verses and the fifteen verses that follow. Bapat (1951:174), who is committed to producing a translation of the Chinese text that closely resembles the Pāli, translates T.198, 189b18: “With extinction entangled, the darkness of suffering did they seek” (莫作縛求冥苦). Bapat notes that this translation requires some “constructive work,” which he deems necessary in order to make the Chinese text agree with the Pāli and have a better “connection” from one line to the next. That said, given the consistent use of *mo* 莫 to convey the prescriptive in this scripture, I think Bapat’s translation here is implausible and it does not leave us with a coherent interpretation of the Chinese text.

[694] Consider the following alternative translation of the third leg in the Chinese version: “This dart causes pain and is hard to see” (彼致苦痛見刺). This translation takes everything that comes before the dart to modify it.

5. yena sallena otiṇṇo, disā sabbā vidhāvati. taṃ eva sallaṃ abbuyha, na dhāvati na sīdati.	Pierced by that dart, one flees in all directions; but after pulling out the dart, one does not flee nor does one sink.” (5)	5. 從刺痛堅不遺 懷刺走悉遍世 尊適見拔痛刺 苦不念不復走	Because the dart is painful and difficult to remove, the one struck by it runs throughout the world. As soon as the Buddha sees [this] and pulls out the painful dart, suffering is no longer endured [and that person] does not run. (5)
6. tattha sikkhānugīyanti. yāni loke gadhitāni, na tesu pasuto siyā. nibbijjha sabbaso kāme, sikkhe nibbānam attano.	At this point, the trainings are recited: “Whatever fetters there are in the world, one should not give in to them. Having fully penetrated through sensual desires, one should train for one’s own nirvāṇa. (6)	6. 世亦有悉莫受 邪亂本捨莫依 欲可厭一切度 學避苦越自成	Whatever exists in the world, do not grasp at anything, [for] this is the root of confusion. Let go and do not rely on [worldly things]. Desire should be abandoned and completely transcended. Learn to avoid suffering, then liberation will occur for oneself.[695] (6)
7. sacco siyā appagabbho, amāyo rittapesuṇo. akkodhano lobhapāpaṃ, vevicchaṃ vitare muni.	One should be true, not impudent, free of dishonesty and devoid of malicious speech. Without anger, the sage should cross over the evil of greed and avarice. (7)	7. 住至誠莫妄舉 持直行空兩舌 滅恚火壞散貪	One should abide in complete sincerity; one should not engage in deception. One should maintain straight conduct, and remain free of divisive speech. One should extinguish the fire of anger. Destroy and scatter greed. Abandoning afflictions [leads to liberation,

[695] Another plausible translation of the last two legs of this verse in the Chinese: “If desires can be abandoned, all [sentient beings] can be saved. If one learns to avoid suffering, liberation occurs on its own” (欲可厭一切度, 學避苦越自成).

		捨惱解黠見度	[this is how] the sage has crossed [to the shore of nirvāṇa].[696] (7)
8. niddaṃ tandiṃ sahe thīnaṃ, pamādena na saṃvase. atimāne na tiṭṭheyya, nibbānamanaso naro.	One should overcome sleepiness, sloth, and torpor; one should not dwell carelessly. A person with nirvāṇa in mind should not abide in pride. (8)	8. 捨瞢瞢莫睡臥 遠無度莫與俱 綺可惡莫取住 著空念當盡滅	Give up drowsiness and avoid sleepiness. Distance yourself from indulgence and do not [get close] to it. Beauty[697] can be evil, do not obtain or abide in it. Fixate on the thought of emptiness, [for it] will lead [you] to cessation. (8)
9. mosavajje na nīyetha, rūpe snehaṃ na kubbaye. mānañca parijāneyya, sāhasā virato care.	One should not be led into false speech; one should not engender affection for form. One should comprehend pride; one should refrain from acts of violence. (9)	9. 莫爲欺可牽挽 見色對莫爲服 彼綺身知莫著 戲著陰求解難	One should not be dishonest, for one may lead [others] astray. When seeing visual objects in front of you, do not surrender to them. One should know not to be attached to those beautiful figures, for if one takes pleasure in attachment to the aggregates, then seeking liberation becomes difficult. (9)

[696] The last three characters of this verse may also be translated as "wisdom [will get you] liberated." However, I prefer to translate *xia* 黠 as "sage" since this is how it is used elsewhere in this text, for instance, in the first verse.

[697] Bapat (1951: 176) suggests translating *qi* 綺 as "egotism."

10. purāṇaṃ nābhinandeyya, nave khantiṃ na kubbaye. hiyyamāne na soceyya, ākāsaṃ na sito siyā.	One should not find pleasure in the old; one should not engender expectation for the new; one should not feel sorrow over what is passing; one should not be attached to attraction. (10)	10. 久故念捨莫思 亦無望當來親 見在亡不著憂 離四海疾事走	Thoughts about the old should be abandoned, not recollected; one should have no expectation for future affection; seeing what is fleeting now, one should not attach sorrow [to it]; departing from the four oceans, one should run towards the urgent matter.[698] (10)
11. gedhaṃ brūmi mahoghoti, ājavaṃ brūmi jappanaṃ. ārammaṇaṃ pakappanaṃ, kāmapaṅko duraccayo.	Greed, I say, is the great flood; the torrent, I say, is yearning; the foundation is shaking; the mud of desires is hard to cross. (11)	11. 我說貪大猛弊 見流入乃制疑 從因緣意念繫 欲染壞難得離	11. I call greed the great and fierce calamity; witnessing its torrent pouring in engenders doubt [in one's mind]. One's thoughts then become attached to sense objects; polluted by desire, it is hard to obtain detachment.
12. saccā avokkamma muni, thale tiṭṭhati brāhmaṇo. sabbaṃ so paṭinissajja, sa ve santoti vuccati.	A sage does not turn away from the truth; a Brahmin stands on solid ground; having renounced everything, one is truly called peaceful. (12)	12. 捨欲力其輩寡 悉數世其終少 捨不沒亦不走 流已斷無縛結	Those who have given up the power of desire are few. Through all [past] generations, in the end, they are extremely rare. Let go and do not get submerged or carried away, then the torrent will be cut off and there will be no bondage. (12)

698 Another possible translation of 疾事走 is "one should run from this situation as soon as possible."

13. “sa ve vidvā sa vedagū, ñatvā dhammaṃ anissito. sammā so loke iriyāno, na pihetīdha kassaci.	One is truly a knower and a master of knowledge when one understands the Dharma, [for only then,] he depends on nothing. Behaving properly in the world, he does not yearn for anything here [and now]. (13)	13. 乘諦力黠已駕 立到彼慧無憂 是胎危疾事護 勤力守可至安	Having ridden the vehicle that is the power of truth, the sage immediately arrives at the other side, [known as] wisdom with no sorrow. This birth[699] is precarious, one should protect it with urgency. By diligently exerting oneself to protect [this birth], one can attain peace. (13)
14. yodha kāme accatari, saṅgaṃ loke duraccayaṃ. na so socati nājjheti, chinnasoto abandhano.	One, here, who has crossed over sensual desires, the tie so difficult to overcome in this world; who has cut off the stream and is without bonds, does not sorrow and does not stress. (14)	14. 已計遠是痛去 觀空法無所著 從直見廣平道 悉不著世所見	Having reflected on the distant [future, in which] this pain is gone for good, one contemplates the dharma of emptiness and is attached to nothing. Following the straight view, one proceeds on a wide and flat path, fully detached from all worldly views. (14)
15. yaṃ pubbe taṃ visosehi, pacchā te māhu kiñcanaṃ. majjhe ce no gahessasi, upasanto carissasi.	Let what belongs to the past wither; may you have nothing in the future; if you do not grasp [at anything] in between, you will live peacefully. (15)	15. 自不計是少身 彼無有當何計 以不可亦不在 非我有當何憂	One should not identify this meager body with oneself. Since it does not exist [permanently], what is there with which to identify? Because [the body] both cannot and does not exist, it is not in my possession, so what is there to worry about. (15)

[699] The more literal translation of *tai* 胎 is “womb,” yet I believe in this context, it means birth, and more precisely, a human birth that is considered precious.

16. sabbaso nāmarūpasmiṃ, yassa natthi mamāyitaṃ. asatā ca na socati, sa ve loke na jīyati.	One who does not claim as ‘mine’ anything whatsoever in name and form; one who does not sorrow over what is nonexistent, truly, never loses in the world. (16)	16. 本癡根拔爲淨 後栽至亦無養 已在中悉莫取 不須伴以棄仇	To become pure, one should remove the root of primal confusion, As for its future sprout, do not give it any nourishment. While in the thick [of primal confusion], one should not grasp it. [Simply] do not associate [with this confusion], in order to [eventually] get rid of it. (16)
17 yassa natthi idaṃ meti, paresaṃ vāpi kiñcanaṃ. mamattaṃ so asaṃvindaṃ, natthi meti na socati.	One for whom there is no thinking ‘this is mine,’ or ‘something [belongs] to others;’ not finding anything [at all] he considers ‘mine,’ does not sorrow thinking ‘it is not mine.’ (17)	17. 一切已棄名色 不著念有所收 已無有亦無處 一切世無與怨	Having abandoned all name and form, one is not attached to the thought of having something. One who has no possessions also has no abode. That person feels no resentment towards the entire world. (17)
18. aniṭṭhurī ananugiddho, anejo sabbadhī samo. tamānisaṃsaṃ pabrūmi, pucchito avikampinaṃ.	Not bitter, not greedy, not lustful, everywhere the same, I speak of this benefit when asked about one who is unfazed. (18)	18. 悉已斷無想色 一切善悉與等 已從學説其教 所來問不恐對	Having cut off everything, one has no thoughts of form.[700] That person is on par with [everything that is] good and everything to him is equal. Following what he learned, he explains the teaching, replying with no fear to those who come to him with questions. (18)

[700] I interpret this as a continuation of the last verse, which spoke of abandoning all “name and form.” The point here is that having renounced everything, one does not think of or concern oneself with form, i.e., with material objects.

19. anejassa vijānato, natthi kāci nisaṅkhati. virato so viyārabbhā, khemaṃ passati sabbadhi.	For the one who has no lust, the knower, there is no accumulation [of merit or demerit] at all. Abstaining from instigating, he sees security everywhere. (19)	19. 不從一致是慧 所求是無可學 已厭捨無因緣 安隱至見滅盡	Not following anyone, he arrives at this wisdom; what he seeks is [something that is] impossible to learn.[701] Being dispassionate, he relinquishes [everything] and has no karmic bonds. That person reaches peace as he witnesses cessation. (19)
20. na samesu na omesu, na ussesu vadate muni. santo so vītamaccharo, nādeti na nirassatī"ti.	The sage does not speak [of himself] as among equals, inferiors, or superiors; peaceful, without malice, he does not take nor does he reject." (20)	20. 上不憍下不懼 住在平無所見 止淨處無怨嫉 雖乘見故不憍	When superior he is not arrogant; when inferior he does not dread; residing in the middle, he has no [discriminating] views.[702] Dwelling in a pure state, he has no resentment or envy. Although he uses views,[703] he does not display arrogance. (20)

[701] Another possible translation is that "he seeks the state of no learning."
[702] An alternate translation that seems less natural in Chinese but closer to the Pāli version would be: "nor is he seen abiding [only] among equals."
[703] Literally, that person "rides on views" (乘見), which I understand to mean that he relies on or uses views.

Patoda Sutta AN 4.113	**Goad Sutta** Translation of the Pāli version	**SĀ 922 (Goad Sutta parallel)** T.99, 234a16- 234b20	**Goad Scripture** Translation of the SĀ version of the Goad Scripture	**SĀ² 148 (Goad Sutta parallel)** T.100, 429b15- 429c10	**Goad Scripture** Translation of the SĀ² version of the Goad Scripture
"cttārome, bhikkhave, bhadrā assājānīyā santo saṃvijjamānā lokasmiṃ. katame cattāro? (1) idha, bhikkhave, ekacco bhadro assājānīyo patodacchāyaṃ disvā saṃvijjati saṃvegaṃ āpajjati — 'kiṃ nu kho maṃ ajja assadammasārathi kāraṇaṃ kāressati, katham assāhaṃ paṭikaromī'ti! evarūpo pi, bhikkhave, idhekacco bhadro assājānīyo hoti. ayaṃ, bhikkhave, paṭhamo bhadro assājānīyo santo saṃvijjamāno lokasmiṃ.	"There are, monks, these four types of fine thoroughbred horses existing in the world. Which four? (1) Here, monks, one type of fine thoroughbred horse becomes distressed when it sees the shadow of the goad; facing distress (*saṃvega*) it thinks: 'What will the horse trainer make me do today? How am I to serve him?' Such, monks, is one type of fine thoroughbred horse. This, monks, is the first type of fine thoroughbred horse existing in the world.	如是我聞： 一時，佛住王舍城迦蘭陀竹園。爾時，世尊告諸比丘：「世有四種良馬。(1) 有良馬駕以平乘，顧其鞭影馳駃，善能觀察御者形勢，遲速左右，隨御者心。是名，比丘！世間良馬第一之德。	Thus have I heard. One time, the Buddha was dwelling in Rājagṛha in the bamboo grove of Kalandaka. At that time, the World Honored One told the monks [the following]: "There are four types of good horses in the world. (1) The first good horse is a steady ride. This horse notices the shadow of the goad and runs fast. It is able to carefully determine the inclinations of the rider—slow or fast, left or righ—complying with the mind of the rider. This is known, monks, as the virtue of the first type of good horse existing in the world.	如是我聞： 一時，佛在舍衛國祇樹給孤獨園。爾時，世尊告諸比丘：「有四種馬，賢人應乘，是世間所有。何等為四？(1) 其第一者，見舉鞭影，即便驚悚，隨御者意。 (2) 其第二者，鞭觸身毛，即便驚悚，稱御者意。	Thus have I heard. One time, the Buddha was in Śrāvastī in the Jetavana grove of Anāthapiṇḍada. At that time, the World Honored One told the monks [the following]: "There are four types of horses a wise person should ride in the world. Which four types of horses? (1) As for the first type, when it sees the shadow of a raised goad, it immediately becomes alarmed and complies with the wishes of the charioteer. (2) As for the second type, when the goad makes contact with its hair, it immediately becomes alarmed and assents to the wishes of the charioteer.

(2) puna ca paraṃ, bhikkhave, idhekacco bhadro assājānīyo na heva kho patodacchāyaṃ disvā saṃvijjati saṃvegaṃ āpajjati, api ca kho lomavedhaviddho saṃvijjati saṃvegaṃ āpajjati — 'kiṃ nu kho maṃ ajja assadammasārathi kāraṇaṃ kāressati, katham assāhaṃ paṭikaromī'ti! evarūpo pi, bhikkhave, idhekacco bhadro assājānīyo hoti. ayaṃ, bhikkhave, dutiyo bhadro assājānīyo santo saṃvijjamāno lokasmiṃ. (3) puna ca paraṃ, bhikkhave, idhekacco bhadro assājānīyo na heva kho patodacchāyaṃ disvā saṃvijjati saṃvegaṃ āpajjati nāpi	(2) And, monks, another type of fine thoroughbred horse does not become distressed and does not face distress when it sees the shadow of the goad. However, this horse becomes distressed when its hair is struck [by the goad]; facing distress it thinks: 'What will the horse trainer make me do today? How am I to serve him?' Such, monks, is another type of fine thoroughbred horse. This, monks, is the second type of fine thoroughbred horse existing in the world. (3) And, monks, another type of fine thoroughbred horse does not become distressed and does not face distress when it sees the	(2) 復次，比丘！世間良馬不能顧影而自驚察，然以鞭杖，觸其毛尾，則能驚速，察御者心，遲速左右，是名世間第二良馬。 (3) 復次，比丘！若世間良馬不能顧影，及觸皮毛能隨人心，而以鞭杖小侵皮肉則能驚察，隨御者心，遲速左右。是名，比丘！第三良馬。	(2) Next, monks, another good horse existing in the world is unable to become alarmed and discern [the inclinations of the rider] on its own after noticing the shadow [of the goad]. However, once the goad makes contact with its hairy tail, this horse is able to become alarmed and quickly discern the mind of the rider—slow or fast, left or right. This is known as the second type of good horse existing in the world. (3) Next, monks, there is the good horse existing in the world that is unable to comply with the mind of the rider having noticed the shadow [of the goad], nor after the goad makes contact with its skin and hair. However, once a minor whiplash penetrates its skin and flesh, this horse is able to become alarmed and discern the mind of the rider—slow or	(3) 其第三者，鞭觸身肉，然後乃驚，隨御者意。 (4) 其第四者，鞭徹肉骨，然後乃驚，稱御者意。 丈夫之乘，亦有四種。何等為四？(1) 其第一者，聞他聚落，若男若女，為病所惱，極為困篤，展轉欲死。聞是語已，於世俗法，深知厭惡。以厭惡故，至心修善，是名丈夫調順之乘，如見鞭影，稱御者意。	(3) As for the third type, when the goad makes contact with its flesh, only then it becomes alarmed and complies with the wishes of the charioteer. (4) As for the fourth type, when the goad penetrates its flesh and bone, only then it becomes alarmed and assents to the wishes of the charioteer. [Likewise], when it comes to vehicles of [restraining] great persons, there are four types. What four? (1) The first [applies to a person who] hears that in another village a man or woman has fallen ill, experiencing extreme torment, rolling around [in agony] wishing to die. Having heard this report [this type of person] profoundly realizes [what is] disgusting about worldly things. Because of this disgust, he wholeheartedly cultivates the good. This is known as the great persons' [first] vehicle of restraint. It is similar to seeing the shadow of the goad and

lomavedhaviddho saṃvijjati saṃvegaṃ āpajjati, api ca kho cammavedhaviddho saṃvijjati saṃvegaṃ āpajjati — ‘kiṃ nu kho maṃ ajja assadammasārathi kāraṇaṃ kāressati, katham assāhaṃ paṭikaromī’ti! evarūpo pi, bhikkhave, idhekacco bhadro assājānīyo hoti. ayaṃ, bhikkhave, tatiyo bhadro assājānīyo santo saṃvijjamāno lokasmiṃ. (4) puna ca paraṃ, bhikkhave, idhekacco bhadro assājānīyo na heva kho patodacchāyaṃ disvā saṃvijjati saṃvegaṃ āpajjati nāpi lomavedhaviddho saṃvijjati saṃvegaṃ āpajjati nāpi cammavedhaviddho saṃvijjati saṃvegaṃ	shadow of the goad, nor when its hair is struck by it. However, this horse becomes distressed when its skin is struck [by the goad]; facing distress it thinks: ‘What will the horse trainer make me do today? How am I to serve him?’ Such, monks, is another type of fine thoroughbred horse. This, monks, is the third type of fine thoroughbred horse existing in the world. (4) And, monks, another type of fine thoroughbred horse does not become distressed and does not face distress when it sees the shadow of the goad, nor when its hair is struck by it, nor when its skin is struck by it.	(4) 復次，比丘！世間良馬不能顧其鞭影，及觸皮毛，小侵膚肉，乃以鐵錐刺身，徹膚傷骨，然後方驚，牽車著路，隨御者心，遲速左右。是名世間第四良馬。 「如是於正法律有四種善男子。何等為四？(1) 謂善男子聞他聚落有男子、女人疾病困苦，乃至死，聞已，能生恐怖，依正思惟，如彼良馬顧影則調，是名第一善男子，	fast, left or right. This, monks, is known as the third type of good horse. (4) Next monks, there is the good horse that is incapable of [discerning the mind of the rider] after noticing the shadow of the goad, nor once the goad makes contact with its hair, nor after the goad slightly penetrates its skin. However, once an iron awl hits its body, penetrating its skin and bruising its bone, only then, does it become alarmed. [That horse] pulls the cart along the road complying with the mind of the rider—slow or fast, left or right. This is known as the fourth type of good horse. In the same way, there are four types of good persons with respect to right discipline. Which are the four? (1) One good person hears that in another village there is a man or woman who was	(2) 其第二者，見於己身聚落之中，若男若女，有得重病，遂至困篤，即便命終。覩斯事已，深生厭患。以厭患故，至心修善，是名丈夫調順之乘，如觸身毛，稱御者意。 (3) 其第三者，雖復見於己聚落中有病死者，不生厭惡。見於己身、所有親族、輔弼己者，遇病困篤，遂至命終，然後乃能於世間法，生厭惡心。以厭惡故，勤修善行，是名丈夫調順之乘，如觸毛肉，稱御者意。	complying with the wishes of the charioteer. (2) The second type [applies to a person who] sees in his own village that a man or woman has become gravely ill, reaching [a state of] extreme torment, and eventually dying. Having witnessed this event, he is profoundly revolted. Because of this revulsion, he wholeheartedly cultivates the good. This is known as the great persons’ [second] vehicle of restraint. It is similar to [feeling the goad] make contact with the hair and assenting to the wishes of the charioteer. (3) The third type [applies to a great person who] even after seeing someone die of sickness in his own village does not feel disgusted. Yet having seen his own relatives and attendants encounter illness, experience torment, and subsequently die, he is able to give rise to a mind of disgust with respect to worldly things. Because of this disgust, he diligently cultivates good

<table>
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<td>āpajjati, api ca kho aṭṭhivedhaviddho saṃvijjati saṃvegaṃ āpajjati — ‘kiṃ nu kho maṃ ajja assadammasārathi kāraṇaṃ kāressati, katham assāhaṃ paṭikaromī’ti! evarūpo pi, bhikkhave, idhekacco bhadro assājānīyo hoti. ayaṃ, bhikkhave, catuttho bhadro assājānīyo santo saṃvijjamāno lokasmiṃ. ime kho, bhikkhave, cattāro bhadrā assājānīyā santo saṃvijjamānā lokasmiṃ.

evaṃ eva kho, bhikkhave, cattārome bhadrā purisājānīyā santo saṃvijjamānā lokasmiṃ. katame cattāro? (1) idha, bhikkhave, ekacco bhadro purisājānīyo suṇāti — ‘amukasmiṃ nāma gāme vā nigame vā itthī vā puriso vā dukkhito vā kālakato</td>
<td>However, this horse becomes distressed when its bone is struck [by the goad]; facing distress it thinks: ‘What will the horse trainer make me do today? How am I to serve him?’ Such, monks, is another type of fine thoroughbred horse. This, monks, is the fourth type of fine thoroughbred horse existing in the world.

Likewise, monks, there are these four types of fine thoroughbred persons existing in the world. Which four? (1) Here, monks, one type of fine thoroughbred person hears that in some village or town a certain woman or man is ailing or dead. Distressed by this, that person faces</td>
<td>於正法律能自調伏。

(2) 復次，善男子不能聞他聚落若男、若女老、病、死苦，能生怖畏，依正思惟；見他聚落若男、若女老、病、死苦，則生怖畏，依正思惟，如彼良馬觸其毛尾，能速調伏，隨御者心，是名第二善男子，於正法律能自調伏.</td>
<td>tormented by sickness and died. Having heard that, this person is able to give rise to dread and rely on right thought. This is similar to the good horse that is tamed by noticing the shadow [of the goad]. This is known as the first type of good person who is capable of restraining himself through right discipline.

(2) Next, another type of good person is unable to give rise to dread and rely on right thought having heard that in another village a man or woman suffered old age, sickness, and death. Yet, when he sees in another village a man or woman who suffered old age, sickness, and death, he then is able to give rise to distress and rely on right thought. This is similar to the horse that is quickly tamed to comply with the mind of the rider after the goad makes contact with its hairy</td>
<td>(4) 其第四者，雖復見之所有親族、輔弼己者，遇病喪亡，而猶不生厭惡之心。若身自病，極為困篤，受大苦惱，情甚不樂，然後乃生厭惡之心。以厭惡故，修諸善行，是名丈夫善調之乘，如見鞭觸肉骨，隨御者意。」

時諸比丘聞佛所說，歡喜奉行.</td>
<td>practices. This is known as the great personas’ [third] vehicle of restraint. It is similar to [feeling the goad] make contact with the hair and flesh, and assenting to the wishes of the charioteer.

(4) The fourth type [of great person], even having seen his own relatives or attendants encounter illness and die, still does not give rise to a mind of disgust. [Yet] if he is sick himself, and is extremely tormented, experiencing intense suffering and feeling terrible discomfort, only then does he give rise to a mind of disgust. Because of this disgust, he cultivates good practices. This is called the great persons’ [fourth] vehicle of restraint. It is like experiencing the goad make contact with the flesh and bone, and complying with the wishes of the charioteer.”

When the monks heard this speech uttered by the Buddha, they were delighted and adhered [to the teaching].</td>
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vā’ti. so tena saṃvijjati, saṃvegaṃ āpajjati. saṃviggo yoniso padahati. pahitatto kāyena ceva paramasaccaṃ sacchikaroti, paññāya ca ativijjha passati. seyyathāpi so, bhikkhave, bhadro assājānīyo patodacchāyaṃ disvā saṃvijjati saṃvegaṃ āpajjati; tathūpamāhaṃ, bhikkhave, imaṃ bhadraṃ purisājānīyaṃ vadāmi. evarūpo pi, bhikkhave, idhekacco bhadro purisājānīyo hoti. ayaṃ, bhikkhave, paṭhamo bhadro purisājānīyo santo saṃvijjamāno lokasmiṃ.	distress. Distressed, he strives properly. Strenuous, he realizes the ultimate truth with the body, penetrates [it] with comprehensive knowledge, and sees [it]. I say, monks, that this fine thoroughbred person is similar to the fine thoroughbred horse that becomes distressed and faces distress when it sees the shadow of the goad. Such, monks, is one type of fine thoroughbred person. This, monks, is the first type of fine thoroughbred person existing in the world.	(3) 復次，善男子不能聞、見他聚落中男子、女人老、病、死苦，生怖畏心，依正思惟，然見聚落、城邑有善知識及所親近老、病、死苦，則生怖畏，依正思惟，如彼良馬，觸其膚肉，然後調伏，隨御者心，是名善男子於聖法、律而自調伏。	tail. This is known as the second type of good person capable of restraining himself through right discipline. (3) Next, there is a good person unable to give rise to a mind of distress and rely on right thought even after hearing or seeing in another village a man or woman who suffered old age, sickness, and death. However, having seen in a village a good friend or relative who suffered old age, sickness, and death, he gives rise to distress and relies on right thought. This is similar to the good horse that is tamed to comply with the mind of the rider only after [the goad] makes contact with its flesh. This is known as the [third type of] good person capable of restraining himself with the noble teaching.		
(2) puna ca paraṃ, bhikkhave, idhekacco bhadro purisājānīyo na heva kho suṇāti — ‘amukasmiṃ nāma gāme vā nigame vā itthī vā puriso vā dukkhito vā kālakato vā’ti, api ca	(2) And, monks, another type of fine thoroughbred person does not merely hear that in some village or town a certain woman or man is ailing or dead.	(4) 復次，善男子不能聞、見他聚落中男子	(4) Next, there is a good person unable to		

kho sāmaṃ passati itthiṃ vā purisaṃ vā dukkhitaṃ vā kālakataṃ vā. so tena saṃvijjati, saṃvegaṃ āpajjati. saṃviggo yoniso padahati. pahitatto kāyena ceva paramasaccaṃ sacchikaroti, paññāya ca ativijjha passati. seyyathāpi so, bhikkhave, bhadro assājānīyo lomavedhaviddho saṃvijjati saṃvegaṃ āpajjati; tathūpamāhaṃ, bhikkhave, imaṃ bhadraṃ purisājānīyaṃ vadāmi. evarūpo pi, bhikkhave, idhekacco bhadro purisājānīyo hoti. ayaṃ, bhikkhave, dutiyo bhadro purisājānīyo santo saṃvijjamāno lokasmiṃ.	Instead, he sees for himself a woman or man who is ailing or dead. Distressed by this, that person faces distress. Distressed, he strives properly. Strenuous, he realizes the ultimate truth with the body, penetrates [it] with comprehensive knowledge, and sees [it]. I say, monks, that this fine thoroughbred person is similar to the fine thoroughbred horse that becomes distressed and faces distress when its hair is struck [by the goad]. Such, monks, is another type of fine thoroughbred person. This, monks, is the second type of fine thoroughbred person existing in the world.	、女人及所親近老、病、死苦，生怖畏心，依正思惟；然於自身老、病、死苦能生厭怖，依正思惟，如彼良馬侵肌徹骨，然後乃調，隨御者心，是名第四善男子於聖法、律能自調伏。」 佛說此經已，諸比丘聞佛所說，歡喜奉行.	give rise to a mind of distress and rely on right thought even after seeing in another village some man, woman, or relative who suffered old age, sickness, and death. However, with regard to his own suffering of old age, sickness, and death, he is able to generate anxiety and rely on right thought. This person is similar to the good horse that is tamed to comply with the mind of the rider only after [the goad] penetrates [its flesh] and bruises the bone. This is known as the fourth type of good person capable of restraining himself with the noble teaching." After the Buddha spoke this discourse, the monks who heard the Buddha's speech were delighted and adhered to [the teaching].		

(3) puna ca paraṃ, bhikkhave, idhekacco bhadro purisājānīyo na heva kho suṇāti — ‘amukasmiṃ nāma gāme vā nigame vā itthī vā puriso vā dukkhito vā kālakato vā’ti, nāpi sāmaṃ passati itthiṃ vā purisaṃ vā dukkhitaṃ vā kālakataṃ vā, api ca khvassa ñāti vā sālohito vā dukkhito vā hoti kālakato vā. so tena saṃvijjati, saṃvegaṃ āpajjati. saṃviggo yoniso padahati. pahitatto kāyena ceva paramasaccaṃ sacchikaroti, paññāya ca ativijjha passati. seyyathāpi so, bhikkhave, bhadro assājānīyo cammavedhaviddho saṃvijjati saṃvegaṃ āpajjati; tathūpamāhaṃ, bhikkhave, imaṃ bhadraṃ purisājānīyaṃ vadāmi. evarūpo pi, bhikkhave, idhekacco bhadro purisājānīyo	(3) And, monks, another type of fine thoroughbred person does not hear that in some village or town a certain woman or man is ailing or dead, nor does he see for himself a woman or man who is ailing or dead. Instead, a kinsman or a relative of his is ailing or dead. Distressed by this, that person faces distress. Distressed, he strives properly. Strenuous, he realizes the ultimate truth with the body, penetrates [it] with comprehensive knowledge, and sees [it]. I say, monks, that this fine thoroughbred person is similar to the fine thoroughbred horse that becomes distressed and faces distress when its skin is struck [by the				

hoti. ayaṃ, bhikkhave, tatiyo bhadro purisājānīyo santo saṃvijjamāno lokasmiṃ. (4) puna ca paraṃ, bhikkhave, idhekacco bhadro purisājānīyo na heva kho suṇāti — ‘amukasmiṃ nāma gāme vā nigame vā itthī vā puriso vā dukkhito vā kālakato vā’ti, nāpi sāmaṃ passati itthiṃ vā purisaṃ vā dukkhitaṃ vā kālakataṃ vā, nāpissa ñāti vā sālohito vā dukkhito vā hoti kālakato vā, api ca kho sāmaññeva phuṭṭho hoti sārīrikāhi vedanāhi dukkhāhi tibbāhi kharāhi kaṭukāhi asātāhi amanāpāhi pāṇaharāhi. so tena saṃvijjati, saṃvegaṃ āpajjati. saṃviggo yoniso padahati. pahitatto kāyena ceva	goad]. Such, monks, is another type of fine thoroughbred person. This, monks, is the third type of fine thoroughbred person existing in the world. (4) And, monks, another type of fine thoroughbred person does not hear that in some village or town a certain woman or man is ailing or dead, nor does he see for himself a woman or man who is ailing or dead, nor is a kinsman or a relative of his ailing or dead. Instead, he himself is affected by bodily sensations that are painful, piercing, sharp, severe, disagreeable, unpleasant, and life-threatening. Distressed by this, that person faces distress. Distressed,				

paramasaccaṃ sacchikaroti, paññāya ca ativijjha passati. seyyathāpi so, bhikkhave, bhadro assājānīyo aṭṭhivedhaviddho saṃvijjati saṃvegaṃ āpajjati; tathūpamāhaṃ, bhikkhave, imaṃ bhadraṃ purisājānīyaṃ vadāmi. evarūpo pi, bhikkhave, idhekacco bhadro purisājānīyo hoti. ayaṃ, bhikkhave, catuttho bhadro purisājānīyo santo saṃvijjamāno lokasmiṃ. ime kho, bhikkhave, cattāro bhadrā purisājānīyā santo saṃvijjamānā lokasmin"ti. tatiyaṃ.	he strives properly. Strenuous, he realizes the ultimate truth with the body, penetrates [it] with comprehensive knowledge, and sees [it]. I say, monks, that this fine thoroughbred person is similar to the fine thoroughbred horse that becomes distressed and faces distress when its bone is struck [by the goad]. Such, monks, is another type of fine thoroughbred person. This, monks, is the fourth type of fine thoroughbred person existing in the world."				

Viveka Sutta SN 9.1	Isolation Sutta Translation of the Pāli version	SĀ 1333 (Isolation Sutta parallel) T.99, 368a12- 368b21	Isolation Scripture Translation of the SĀ version of the Isolation Scripture	SĀ² 353 (Isolation Sutta parallel) T.100, 490a03- 490a23	Isolation Scripture Translation of the SĀ² version of the Isolation Scripture
“evaṃ me sutaṃ — ekaṃ samayaṃ aññataro bhikkhu kosalesu viharati aññatarasmiṃ vanasaṇḍe. tena kho pana samayena so bhikkhu divāvihāragato pāpake akusale vitakke vitakketi gehanissite. atha kho yā tasmiṃ vanasaṇḍe adhivatthā devatā tassa bhikkhuno anukampikā atthakāmā taṃ bhikkhuṃ saṃvejetukāmā yena so bhikkhu tenupasaṅkami;	“Thus have I heard. One time, a certain monk was dwelling among the Kosalas in a certain forest thicket. At the time, as the monk had gone for his midday rest, he kept on thinking bad and improper thoughts concerning the household life. Then, the deity inhabiting that forest thicket, out of pity for the monk, desiring his benefit and desiring to stir up	如是我聞： 一時，佛住舍衛國祇樹給孤獨園。時，有異比丘在拘薩羅住林中，入晝正受，心起不善覺，依於惡貪。 時，彼林中住止天神作是念： 「非比丘法，止住林中，入晝正受，心生不善覺，依於惡貪.我今當往開悟之。」時，彼天神即說偈言：	Thus have I heard. One time, the Buddha was dwelling in Śrāvastī in the Jetavana grove of Anāthapiṇḍada. At the time, in Kosala, a certain monk was dwelling in the forest. Entering his day time meditation, [the monk’s] mind gave rise to bad thoughts originating from harmful craving. At the [same] time, a deity abiding in that forest was bringing this to mind: “This is not the dharma of a monk. Abiding in the forest, he enters meditation, [yet] his mind generates bad thoughts originating from harmful craving. Now, I shall go and wake him up.” Then,	爾時，復有一比丘，亦住於彼俱薩羅林.晝入房坐，起於惡覺，依於貪嗜。 時林天神知彼比丘起於惡覺，依於貪嗜。「不能稱可出家法式，是不善事，處此林中，起於惡覺。我於今者，當［寤－吾＋告］悟之。」作是念已，即往其	At a certain time, there was another monk dwelling in the Śāla forest.[704] During the daytime, he entered his abode and sat [in meditation], giving rise to bad thoughts originating from craving. At the time, a forest deity realized that the monk was giving rise to bad thoughts originating from craving. “[This] cannot be the dharmic practice of a recluse. Being situated in this forest and giving rise to bad thoughts is simply not good conduct. Now, I shall wake him up.” Having brought this to mind, the deity went to the monk and spoke these verses:

704 In the SĀ², the Isolation Sutta is not the first text of this collection of scriptures dedicated to the practice of forest dwelling. Therefore, the text refers to the monk from this scripture as “another” case of an isolated monk dwelling in the forest.

upasaṅkamitvā taṃ bhikkhuṃ gāthāhi ajjhabhāsi —	that monk, approached him and spoke these verses:		that deity addressed [the monk] directly with these verses:	所，而說偈言：	
‘vivekakāmosi vanaṃ paviṭṭho, atha te mano niccharatī bahiddhā. jano janasmiṃ vinayassu chandaṃ, tato sukhī hohisi vītarāgo. (1)	‘Desiring isolation you enter the forest, but your mind goes outwards. Give up, man, [your] longing for people, then you will be happy and free of passion (1).	「其心欲遠離， 正於空閑林， 放心隨外緣， 亂想而流馳。 調伏樂世心， 常樂心解脫， 當捨不樂心， 執受安樂住。(1)	“This mind desires isolation, properly [situated] in the empty, quiet forest. [Yet, this] unrestrained mind [continues to] follow external objects, confusing [one’s] thoughts and flowing about. To tame the mind that rejoices in the world, constantly rejoice in the liberation of mind. You should let go of the unjoyful mind, to maintain a peaceful and joyful dwelling. (1)	「比丘惡怖欲， 故來處此林。 形雖坐林間， 心意出林表。 馳騁逐外塵， 起于惡覺觀。 若滅諸欲著， 然後得解脫。 既得解脫已， 乃爾知快樂。 (1)	“A monk detests his fears and desires, therefore, he came to this forest; yet while his figure sits in the forest, his thoughts depart to the [world] outside the forest. Eagerly chasing after external objects, [he] gives rise to bad discursive thought. If one annihilates all desires and attachments, then, liberation is attained. After attaining liberation, one finally knows satisfaction. (1)
aratiṃ pajahāsi sato, bhavāsi sataṃ taṃ sārayāmase. pātālarajo hi duttaro, mā taṃ kāmarajo avāhari. (2)	Let go of discontent and be mindful; we shall remind you to be mindful. The dusty abyss is difficult to cross; don’t let the dust of desire bring you down (2).	思非於正念， 莫著我我所。 如以塵頭染， 是著極難遣。	[Your] pondering does not accord with right thought; do not cling to ‘I’ and ‘mine.’ As long as you are tainted by dust, this clinging is extremely difficult to remove.	汝應捨不樂， 安心樂此法. 我今［寤－吾＋告］悟汝， 令汝還得念。 欲如惡焦山， 煎涸諸善法， 惡焦無厭足； 難可得小離。	You should abandon discontent, a peaceful mind is content with this dharma. Now I shall wake you up, causing you once again to retain mindfulness. Desire is like a mountain terribly burning, simmering and drying up the good dharmas.[705] The terribly burning [mountain of desire] has no satisfaction;

[705] In place of the image of a dusty abyss in the Pāli version, we find in the SĀ² the image of a burning mountain. In Buddhist literature, dust and fire are both common metaphors for desire. The SĀ² might even provide a way to further link these two images, as the burning mountain of desire gives rise to a mind that is polluted by dust. Moreover, it seems the figures of the dusty abyss and the burning mountain are both associated here with the terror of saṃsāric existence.

sakuṇo yathā paṃsukunthito, vidhunaṃ pātayati sitaṃ rajaṃ. evaṃ bhikkhu padhānavā satimā, vidhunaṃ pātayati sitaṃ rajan'ti. (3)	Just as a bird covered with dirt shakes off the sticky dust, so a strenuous and mindful monk shakes off the sticky dust (3).'	莫令染樂著， 欲心所濁亂。(2) 如釋君馳象， 奮迅去塵穢。 比丘於自身， 正念除塵垢。(3)	Do not allow impurity and joy to abide [in you], they are what is tainted and confused by your desirous mind. (2) Just as the ruler's elephant,[706] when set free, spiritedly casts off[707] the dust [from its body], so a monk, with respect to himself, [uses] right thought to relinquish the defilements. (3)	勿貪於欲樂； 坌污已淨心。(2) 如鳥為塵坌， 奮翮振塵穢。 比丘亦如是， 禪思去塵勞。(3)	[therefore] it is difficult to obtain even a modicum of detachment. Do not crave desire and pleasure; purify the mind when it's dusty and polluted. (2) Just as a bird covered with dirt, ruffles its feathers to shake off the dust, a monk, too, in a similar manner, meditates to remove the defilements. (3)
atha kho so bhikkhu tāya devatāya saṃvejito saṃvegaṃ āpādī''ti.	Then, stirred up by that deity, the monk faced distress (*saṃvega*)."	塵者謂貪欲， 非世間塵土。 黠慧明智者， 當悟彼諸塵。 於如來法律， 持心莫放逸。 塵垢謂瞋恚， 非世間塵土。 黠慧明智者， 當悟彼諸塵。 於如來法律， 持心莫放逸。	Dust refers to greed, not to physical dust in the world. The clever and wise person should recognize these [manifestations of greed] as dust, and in accordance with the law of the Tathāgata, control the mind and not let it run wild. Dust refers to hatred, not to physical dust in the world. The wise and clever person should recognize	塵垢來染心， 正念能除捨。 愛欲即塵垢， 非謂外埃土。 欲覺及瞋癡， 謂之為塵勞。 攝心有智者， 爾乃能除去。」(4)	Dirt comes to contaminate the mind, right thought can relinquish it. Dirt is none other than attachment, it is not to the soil of the outside [world]. As for greed, hatred, and delusion, consider them as the defilements. A person who calms the mind and gains insight, thereupon, has the ability to remove [the defilements]." (4)

[706] The more literal translation is "the elephant that is ridden by the ruler" (君馳象).

[707] *Fen-xun* 奮迅 is sometimes used as a Chinese translation of the Sanskrit term *vijṛmbha* (Muller 2007: DDB's entry on 奮迅). On the meaning of the Pāli word *vijambhana* (Skt. *vijṛmbhana*) and its relationship with *saṃvega,* see n. 712.

		塵垢謂愚癡， 非世間塵土。 明智黠慧者， 當捨彼諸塵。 於如來法律， 持心莫放逸。」 (4) 時，彼天神說是偈已，彼比丘聞其所說，專精思惟，斷諸煩惱心，得阿羅漢。	these [manifestations of hatred] as dust, and in accordance with the law of the Tathāgata, control the mind and not let it run wild. Dust refers to delusion, not to physical dust in the world. The wise and clever person, should abandon these [different forms of] dust, and in accordance with the law of the Tathāgata, control the mind and not let it run wild.” (4) Then, after the deity spoke these verses, the monk, having heard this speech, harnessed his energy and focused his thoughts, eliminating the mind of afflictions and attaining arhatship.		

Appendix B: Aṭṭhakathā Commentaries

Commentary on the Lion Sutta

(Catukkanipāta-aṭṭhakathā 33)

33. In the third [sutta of the Wheel Chapter], it says, "**The lion**." There are four[708] [kinds of] lions: the grass lion, the black lion, the yellow lion, and the maned lion. With respect to these, (1) the **grass [eating] lion**[709] resembles a cow that has the color of a pigeon (i.e., a greyish-blue color) and subsists on grass. (2) The **black lion** resembles a black cow and also subsists on grass. (3) The **yellow lion** resembles a cow that has the color of a withered leaf and subsists on meat. (4) The **maned lion** is one whose mouth, the tip of his tail, and the edges of his four feet are as if colored with lac. From his head onwards, there are three stripes that are as if painted with lac, which run through the middle of his back, and wind to the right between his thighs. On his neck area (*khandha*), he carries a mane similar to a wrap-around garment worth hundreds of thousands. The rest of the areas [of his body] have the color of a mass of shell powder and a mass of clean rice. Among these four lions, the maned lion is the one intended [in this sutta].

"**The king of beasts**." The king of all species of beasts. "**Out of his abode**." He is said to come out of his dwelling place, the golden cave or the cave of silver, gems, crystals, and red arsenic. Now, [when] coming out [of his abode], he comes out due to four reasons: (1) Bothered (*pīḷito*) by darkness [he comes out] for light, (2) bothered by [an urge to] urinate and defecate [he comes out] to discharge, (3) bothered by hunger [he comes out] for food, and (4) bothered by [an urge to] mate (*sambhava*), [he comes out] to indulge in adharmic[710] activity (*asaddhamma-paṭisevana*). In this context, the intended [reason for the lion's] coming out is food.

"**He stretches out**." On the golden surface or on another surface of silver, gems, crystals, or red arsenic, [the lion] plants his two hind legs evenly, spreads out forward his two front legs, pulls up the back part of his body, brings down (*abhiharitvā*) the front part, bends his back, and holds up his neck. Then, just like a resounding thunderbolt he blows his nostril tubes (*nāsa-puṭāni pothetvā*)[711] and stretches out, shaking off the dust that clings to the body. On the ground of his vigorous wakening (*vijambhana-bhūmi*),[712] [the lion] resembles a young calf moving swiftly to

[708] The Aṭṭhakathā commentary on the Lion Sutta provides a number of fourfold explanations. It appears that since the Lion Sutta is in the AN's Book of Fours, which is a collection of Buddhist scriptures that includes fourfold teachings, the commentary attempts to supply as many fourfold explanations of different elements in the sutta.

[709] The Ṭīkā provides the following explanation: "The grass-eating lion is the **grass lion**. In this [compound], the first word (i.e., grass) [is preserved], yet due to the dropping of the second word (i.e., eating) [it receives its aforementioned form – 'grass lion'], just like 'vegetable king' (Pāṇini 2.1.60), [which means a vegetable-eating king]."

[710] I find it a bit odd that the commentary considers the lion's mating activity as *asaddhamma* (inappropriate, or more literally, against the true Dharma). After all, the lion has never taken a vow of celibacy, and more broadly, it seems absurd to accuse the lion of breaking any percept that pertains to sexual conduct.

[711] See Rhys-Davids and Stede1921: 465. I believe this describes how the lion blows his nose.

[712] The Pāli term *vijambhana* (Skt. *vijṛmbhaṇa*) seems to stand here for the set of activities through which the lion rouses himself and wakes up from his slumber. Thus, it signals more than just the act of stretching or yawning,

and fro. Moving swiftly [in this manner], his body looks like a burning torch reeling about in the dark.

"**He surveys**." Why does he survey [the four directions]? Out of kindness for others. For when he roars the lion's roar, elephants, antelopes, and other non-violent creatures that walk on steep rocks, pits, and other such uneven surfaces, fall down these steep rocks and pits. [Therefore, the lion] surveys [the four directions] out of kindness for those non-violent animals. [Should one] use the term "kindness" with respect to this fierce eater of the flesh of other [animals]? Indeed [one should]. But "what about the many killed by me (i.e., by the lion)?" [One should keep in mind that the lion] does not take the life of small creatures to feed himself. In this way, he practices kindness. [Thus] it is said: "I do not bring about the killing of small, unequal creatures" (AN 10.21).

"**He roars the lion's roar**." As many as three times, [the lion] roars the fearless roar. Having thus stood on the ground of his vigorous wakening, the noise of his roar makes a single sound that [covers] an area of three *yojanas* all around. When hearing the sound of his roar, the two and four-legged species [of animals] that are within three *yojanas* are incapable of standing still.

"Sets out [in search of] food." [The lion] sets out for the sake of sustenance. How [exactly]? Having stood on the ground of his vigorous wakening, jumping right or left, the lion covers an area the size of a bull (*usabha*).[713] Jumping straight-up, he jumps [covering] areas [the size] of four and eight bulls. Springing forward up-right on even ground, he springs forward [covering] an area [the size] of sixteen bulls and twenty bulls. Springing forward from raised ground or from a rock, he springs [covering] an area [the size of] sixty bulls and eighty bulls. Having seen a tree or rock on his path, the lion avoids it, going left, right, or upwards [covering an area] the length of a bull. Having roared the lion's roar three times, [the lion] becomes known to an area of three *yojanas* altogether. Having moved [swiftly] through three *yojanas*, he turns around, stands still, and listens to the echo of his roar. [The lion] thus comes out [of his cave] with quickness and speed.

"**For the most part**," i.e., mostly. "**Fear**, **trembling**, **and distress**." [In the following lines, the sutta mentions] in particular (*eva nāma*) all of those who [experience] mental terror, for having heard the sound of the lion, many are afraid and few are not afraid. [But] who are those [few]? The lion has as its equal the thoroughbred elephant, the thoroughbred horse, the thoroughbred bull, the thoroughbred person, and the one whose influxes are destroyed.[714] Why are they not afraid? As long as one is equal to the lion, [thinking,] "I am equal in terms of genus, clan, family, and valor (*sūrabhāva*)," one does not fear. The [thoroughbreds] beginning with the thoroughbred elephant are not afraid because of the strength [rooted] in the view of their individual existence.[715]

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which is how this term is often translated. Moreover, the compound *vijambhana-bhūmi* (the ground of his vigorous wakening), could also be figuratively rendered a state of mind that one can enter. The lion's distinct manner of waking up is used in some Buddhist texts in reference to a specific form of meditative trance (*siṃha-vijṛmbhita-samādhi*). On the meaning and use of the *siṃha-vijṛmbhita-samādhi* in Mahāyāna scripture, see Huang Yi-hsun 2012: 128-129.

[713] The word *usabha* (Skt. *ṛṣabha*) could also mean "the length of 140 cubits" (Rhys-Davids and Stede1921: 156). However, I chose not to use this length of measurement here since it would mean the lion covers over fifty meters in one jump to the side, and as we learn in the following part of this passage, he covers even greater lengths when jumping upward and forward.

[714] Another way of reading this sentence would be to take *khīṇāsavo* (the one whose influxes are destroyed) as a modifier of the *purisājānīyo* (thoroughbred person). In that case, there would be four categories of beings that are unafraid of the lion, the last one being "the thoroughbred person whose influxes were destroyed."

[715] Simply put, their strength is rooted in the way they perceive themselves. The Ṭīkā expounds on this topic (for my discussion of this, see pp. 68-70).

[However,] the person whose influxes were destroyed is unafraid because he has abandoned the view of individual existence [itself].[716]

"**Hole dwellers**," [that is,] those living in holes, i.e., sleeping in a hole, like the snake, the mongoose, and the lizard. "**Water dwellers**," [that is,] those living in water, like the fish and the tortoise. "**Forest dwellers**," [that is,] those living in the forest, like the elephant, the horse, the antelope, and the deer. "**They enter**." [Thinking,] "now [the lion] will come and capture [me]," they inspect the path and enter [their dwelling places]. "**By those firm**," i.e., by [those] solid [straps]. "**Straps**," i.e., leather cords. As for [being] "**powerful**" and so forth, [the lion] should be known as powerful since having stood on the ground of his vigorous wakening, he is able to jump right, straight, etc., [covering areas the size of] a bull, twenty bulls, and so forth. [He should be known as] majestic on account of being the ruler of all the other animals. [And he should be known as] mighty since [the animals] in a radius of three *yojanas* flee on account of his power once they hear the sound [of his mighty roar].

"**In the same way**." The Blessed One himself spoke [of his similarity to different figures] in this and that sutta and in such and such a way. In some suttas, he speaks of himself as similar to the lion: "the lion, monks, is a designation (*adhivacana*) for the Tathāgata, the *arahant*, the perfectly awakened one" (AN 5.99 and AN 10.21).[717] [In a particular sutta he speaks of himself] as similar to a physician: "a physician, a surgeon, Sunakhatta, is a designation for the Tathāgata" (MN 3.65). [In another sutta he speaks of himself] as similar to a Brahmin: "a Brāhmana, monks, is a designation for the Tathāgata" (AN 8.85). [In a certain sutta he speaks of himself] as similar to a person who shows the way: "a person skilled in [showing] the way, Tissa, is a designation for the Tathāgata" (SN 3.48). [In some suttas he speaks of himself] as similar to a king: "I am a king, Sela" (Sn 559 and MN 2.399). In this sutta (AN 4.33), having drawn the comparison between the lion and himself, he spoke thus.

Here, this is the similarity [between the Buddha and the lion]: Just as for the lion there is the time of living in a golden cave and so forth, so for the Tathāgata, after making a resolution at the feet of Dīpaṅkara,[718] completing the perfections for an immeasurable amount of time, shaking the ten world systems [both] through his conception[719] and [when] coming out of his mother's womb in his final existence, and having experienced pleasure equal to heavenly pleasure while growing up, it should be known, [there was] the time when he resided in the three palaces.

Just as for the lion, there is the time of coming out of the golden cave and so forth, so for the Tathāgata, at the age of twenty-nine, after he mounted [his horse] Kaṇḍaka (Kanthaka) and departed through an open gate with his companion Channa, he crossed the three kingdoms, and on the bank of the Anomā river, he put on the robes given [to him] by Brahmā. [Then,] having gone forth, he journeyed to Rājagaha on the seventh day. There, after going around begging for alms, he finished his meal, and on the slopes of Paṇḍava Mountain he reached perfect awakening

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[716] The Aṭṭhakathā does not explain what it means that the fearlessness of the one whose influxes are destroyed comes from his abandonment of the view of individual existence. Perhaps the idea is that the liberated being realizes that due to the absence of an enduring self, in actuality, there is no individual left for whom to fear.

[717] AN 5.99 and AN 10.21 are also called the "Lion Sutta." On the similarities and differences between these scriptures and the Lion Sutta (AN 4.33), see pp. 63-64.

[718] The former buddha who preceded Gautama.

[719] This is the moment he enters the womb prior to his last birth. The commentary uses the compound *paṭisandhi-gahaṇa,* which more literally means "embracing conception."

(*sammā-sambodhi*).[720] Then, [there was] the time when he promised the king to return to the kingdom of Magadha first.[721]

Just as for the lion, there is the time of stretching out, so for the Tathāgata by whom a promise was previously given [to the king of Magadha], after first approaching Āḷāra Kālāma, it should be known, [there was] the time when he ate [a few] balls of milk rice given [to him] by Sujātā after [fasting for] forty-nine days.

Just as for the lion, [there is the time of] shaking his body, so in the evening time [the Tathāgata] took eight handfuls of grass offered by the gracious man (*sottiyena*), and being praised by the gods of the ten world systems and worshiped with [auspicious] scents, etc., he circumambulated the Bodhi tree three times. [Then,] he ascended the ground of the Bodhi (*bodhi-maṇḍa*) [tree], spreading his grass mat on a spot that was [elevated] fourteen hands high. He sat down having activated the strength of his four limbs (*catur-aṅga*),[722] and realizing this opportunity, he defeated the army of Māra. [Then,] in the night's third watch, he purified the three forms of wisdom and churned the ocean of dependent origination with and against the grain by means of the churning of the double knowledge. As he penetrated the knowledge of omniscience, on account of this power (*anubhāva*), it should be known, [there was the time of] shaking the ten world systems.

Just like the lion's surveying of the four directions, so it should be seen (i.e., known) that for the one who penetrated the knowledge of omniscience, having stayed for seven weeks at the ground of the Bodhi tree, and after eating a few balls of flour mixed with honey at the root of the Ajapāla Nigrodha [tree], he accepted the request of Great Brahmā to teach the Dharma. Dwelling at that place, on the eleventh day, he thought to himself: "tomorrow will be the completion of the Āsāḷha month." [Then], in the morning time, he asked himself: "to whom should I teach the Dharma?" Having realized that Ālāra and Udaka were dead, there was [the time when he] looked for the five ascetics [who accompanied him prior to his awakening] for the sake of teaching them the Dharma.

Just as for the lion, there is the time of walking three *yojanas* for the sake of food, so [for the Tathāgata, having thought to himself:] "I will set in motion the wheel of Dharma [in the presence of] the five ascetics," he rose from the [ground of the] Ajapāla Nigrodha [tree] after having a meal, [and then,] there was the time when he walked the eighteen-*yojana* [long] road with his bowl and robes.

Just as there is the time of the lion's roaring, so for the Tathāgata, after walking the eighteen-*yojana*-long path and convincing the five ascetics, he sat in a cross-legged [posture] without movement, surrounded by an assembly of gods, which came together from across the ten world

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[720] It is unclear what spiritual attainment the Buddha reaches here. Certainly this is not his nirvāṇa, yet the text seems to refer to the attainment of some form of awakening (*sambodhi*). Bodhi (2017:124) mentions that according to the Jātaka Commentary, Siddhārtha enjoyed the bliss of renunciation shortly before his conversation with King Bimbisāra.

[721] On the conversation between Siddhārtha and King Bimbisāra in early Buddhist sources, see Bodhi 2017: 124-125. In the Buddhacarita, we find both this conversation between Siddhārtha and Bimbisāra, which occurs early in the life of the Buddha, as well as the dialogue between Bimbisāra and the Tathāgata after the Buddha's nirvāṇa. On Aśvaghoṣa's version of the philosophical teaching the Buddha gives King Bimbisāra after his awakening, see Eltschinger 2013.

[722] The compound *catur-aṅga* most likely refers here to the four limbs of the Buddha's body. Yet another meaning of this compound worth considering in this context is the fourfold division of an army (elephants, chariots, cavalry, and infantry). In the case of the Buddha, at this moment in his life story, he is not preparing an actual army, but gathering the spiritual and mental forces he will use to defeat Māra.

systems, and then, it should be known, there was the time of his setting in motion of the Dharma Wheel through the method beginning with "the two ends, monks, should not be practiced (*sevitabba*) by means of going forth." When he taught this doctrine (*pada*),[723] the sound of the Dharma of the Tathāgata-lion went down below to the Avici hell and up to the highest point of the universe, spreading across the ten world systems.

Just as there is the time when the small creatures are faced with trembling due to the lion's sound, so when the Tathāgata spoke the Dharma, illuminating the three marks (of existence) and analyzing the four truths through the sixteen aspects and the sixty thousand methods, it should be known, there was the time when trembling as knowledge had arisen among the long-living gods.

There is another manner [in which the lion and the Buddha are similar.] The Tathāgata attained omniscience [in a way] similar to the [nocturnal routine of the] lion. Just as for the lion, there is the coming out of the golden cave, which is [his] abode, so [for the Tathāgata] there is the time of coming out of the *gandhakuṭi* (the perfumed chamber). Just as there is the stretching out [of the lion], so [for the Tathāgata] there is the time of approaching the Dharma hall. Just as [for the lion] there is the surveying of the [four] directions, so [for the Tathāgata] there is the surveying of the assembly. Just as there is the roaring of the lion's roar, so there is the time of teaching the Dharma [of the Tathāgata]. Just as [for the lion,] there is the coming out [in search of] food, so for the Tathāgata, there is the walking around for the sake of defeating his philosophical opponents.

There is another manner [in which they are similar.] Just like the lion, so the Thatāgata should be known. Just as [for the lion,] there is the coming out of the Kañcana Cave, situated in the Himālaya, [so for the Tathāgata] there is the emerging out of the attainment of the fruit, situated in nirvāṇa, because of the sense objects (*ārammaṇa*).[724] Just as [for the lion,] there is the stretching out, so [for the Tathāgata] there is the knowledge through reflection (*paccavekkhaṇa-ñāṇa*). Just as [for the lion,] there is the surveying of the directions, so [for the Tathāgata] there is the surveying of sentient beings who are capable of being instructed. Just as [for the lion] there is the lion's roar, so [for the Tathāgata] there is the teaching of the Dharma to the assembly that has arrived (*sampatta-parisa*).[725] Just as [for the lion,] there is the setting out in search of food, so [for the Tathāgata,] there is the approaching of sentient beings who are capable of being instructed but have yet to arrive.

"**When**," i.e., at which time. "**Tathāgata**." Because of the eight reasons addressed below [he] is the Tathāgata. "**In the world**." In the world of sentient beings. "**Arises**." [Everything] beginning with the resolution [to become a Buddha], through the cross-legged sitting [under] the Bodhi [tree,] and up to the knowing of the path of arahtship, [is encompassed in] the word "arises." When [the Tathāgata] attains the fruit of arhatship he is referred to as the arisen one.[726] [The epithets,]

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[723] The Ṭīkā takes *pada* here to mean a segment of the Buddha's true doctrine (*saddhamma*).
[724] It appears that the object that makes the Buddha emerge out of mediation is likened to that which bothers the lion, causing him to come out of his cave.
[725] The Idea here is that those beings have not only physically arrived to hear the Buddha teach, but also arrived at the truth, having heard the Buddha's Dharma.
[726] The commentary tells us that the word *uppajjati* (arises) is analogous to the series of actions that precede the roaring of the lion. While the sutta makes it clear that the lion's roar is like the Buddha's preaching of the Dharma, it does not draw out other parallels between the actions of the Buddha and the lion. The commentary thus takes "*upajjati*" as an opportunity to interject and lay out the similarities between the lion's nocturnal routine and the Buddha's life story.

beginning with "**the perfectly awakened one**" are explained in the teaching on the recollection of the Buddha found in the Visuddhimagga.[727]

"**Such is individual existence**." This is individual existence; only this is individual existence; beyond this there is no individual existence. To that extent, in terms of its nature (*sabhāva*), its essence (*sarasa*), its boundary (*pariyanta*), its limitation (*pariccheda*) and its extension (*parivaṭuma*),[728] everything is shown as the five aggregates of clinging. "**Such is the origin of individual existence**." This refers to the origin of individual existence. With regard to this, everything is [further] explained, beginning with [the notion that] "from the origin of nutriment comes the origin of material form."[729] "**Such is the cessation [of individual existence]."** This is the cessation of individual existence. With respect to this, everything is [further] explained beginning with [the notion that] "from the cessation of nutriment comes the cessation of material form."[730]

"**Beautiful**." Beautiful because of the beauty (*vaṇṇa*) of the body. "**Having heard the teaching of the Dharma**." Having heard the teaching of the Dharma of the Tathāgata, which consists of the fifty characteristics that pertain to the five aggregates. "**For the most part**." In this context, which [gods] are exceptional? The gods who are noble disciples [are exceptional]. For [some of those] gods, fear as mental terror does not arise since their influxes were destroyed. [In the case] of the one who was distressed (*saṃviggassa*), because [he went on] attaining what ought be attained through striving properly, [even] distress as knowledge (*ñāṇa-saṃvego*) [does not arise].[731] For the other deities, who are engaging in the contemplation of [the phrase] "this very fear, monks, is impermanent," there is [still] fear as mental terror; yet, at the time of strong insight, fear as knowledge (*ñāṇa-bhayam*) arises. "**Bho**", this is merely addressing the Dharma.[732] "**Taking part in individual existence**." Taking part in the five aggregates. Thus, when the perfectly awakened one teaches the Dharma stamped by the three marks [of existence], pointing out the faults in the cycle of rebirth, fear as knowledge enters (*okkamati*) them (i.e., the gods).

"**Through higher knowledge**," i.e., having known. "**The wheel of Dharma**." The penetrating knowledge and the knowledge of teaching. What is called "**the penetrating knowledge**" is the knowledge by which [the Buddha] having sat cross-legged under the Bodhi tree, penetrated the four truths through the sixty thousand methods and the sixteen aspects. What is called the "**knowledge of the teaching**" is the knowledge by which [the Buddha] set in motion the wheel of Dharma in three iterations [resulting in] twelve modes (*ākāras*). Both of these are [included in] the knowledge that has arisen in the chest of the one endowed with ten powers. Among these [two], the knowledge of the teaching of Dharma should be grasped. Until the fruit of stream-entry of the

[727] See the segment of the Visuddhimagga beginning at 1.124.
[728] While boundary (*pariyanta*), limitation (*pariccheda*), and extension (*parivaṭuma*) seem like synonymous terms, the Ṭīkā explicates each of them to highlight their slight differences: "'**In terms of its boundary**,' i.e., the boundary of its dimension. '**In terms of its limitation**,' i.e., the limitation of its motion in a given space. '**In terms of its extension,**' i.e., the motion of its conclusion."
[729] This is the first step of the explication of the fifty characteristics that pertain to the five aggregates.
[730] Here the explication of the fifty characteristics (see the previous note) is done in reverse, i.e., against the grain (*paṭiloma*).
[731] Bodhi (2012: 1685, n. 689) suggests a different way of reading this passage, according to which, these liberated gods do experience *ñāṇa-saṃvega* (distress as knowledge, or in Bodhi's translation, "the urgency of knowledge"). On my reasons for rejecting Bodhi's reading, see n. 309.
[732] The commentary is seemingly informing the reader that *bho* is a vocative.

elder monk Aññākoṇḍañña, along with countless Brahmas,[733] does not arise, [the Buddha continues to] set in motion [the wheel of Dharma]. When he (i.e., the Buddha) has arisen, it should be known that there was the setting in motion [of the Dharma Wheel]. "**The incomparable person**," i.e., one without a person like him. "**Renowned**," i.e., endowed with followers. "**Of the steadfast one**." Of the one who remains the same when it comes to profit and loss, etc.

[733] More precisely eighteen *kotis* of Brahmās.

Commentary on the Attadaṇḍa Sutta

(Suttanipāta-aṭṭhakathā 942-961)

942. (1) "**Fear is born from one's own stick**" [is the beginning of] the Attadaṇḍa Sutta. What is the origin [of this sutta]? At the time of addressing the origin of the Sutta on Proper Wandering, it is said that a dispute [broke out] between the Śākyans and the Koliyans over water. Learning about it, the Blessed One thought: "my kinsmen are disputing, I shall stop them." [And so], standing between the two armies, he uttered this sutta.[734]

Here is [the explication] of the first verse: Whatever fear is born in the world, whether pertaining to this life or the next life, all of it is **fear born from one's own stick** (*daṇḍa*), that is to say, fear] born because of one's own misconduct. That being so, "**see the people quarrel**," i.e., see the Śākya people and the others quarrel, hurt, and harass each other. Having reproached the people opposing [each other] for acting wrongfully, for the sake of provoking their distress (*saṃvega*) through a teaching on the right practice, [the Buddha] said: **"I will speak [now] about my distress (*saṃvega*), how I was distressed [in the past]**." The intended meaning [here] is "in the past, when I was only a bodhisattva."

943. (2) Now, showing the manner by which he was distressed, he utters [the verse] beginning with "**quivering**." In this context, "**quivering**" means trembling out of thirst and so forth. "**In shallow water**," i.e., in water that is shallow. "**When I saw them hostile towards each other**." When I saw different beings opposing each other. "**Fear came upon me**," i.e., fear entered me.

944. (3) "**The entire world had no essence**." The entire world, including hell and the other [realms], was essenceless, [that is], devoid of permanent essence and so forth. "**All directions were in chaos**." All directions were shaking on account of impermanence. "**Seeking a place for myself."** Seeking refuge for myself. "**I did not see [one that was] unoccupied**." I did not see any place that was not inhabited by old age and so forth.

945. (4) "**Even at the end, when I saw [them still] hostile, dissatisfaction came over me**." Even at the end of youth and so forth, even when dying (*antagamaka*), even in destruction (*vināsāka*), [all of which occur] because of old age and so forth, when I saw these beings [still] hostile, i.e., mind-stricken, dissatisfaction came over me. "**Then, [I saw the] dart here**." Then, [I saw] in these beings the dart of passion and so forth. "**stuck in the heart**," i.e., stuck in the mind.

946. (5) And how powerful is this dart? The verse says: "**Pierced by that dart**". In this context, "**one flees in all directions**" means one flees in all directions of bad conduct as well as towards the cardinal and intermediate [geographical] directions, beginning with the eastern one. "**But after pulling out the dart, one does not flee nor does one sink**." Having removed this dart, one does not flee in those directions, nor does one sink in the four floods.[735]

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[734] A lengthier version of the Attadaṇḍa Sutta's origin story appears in the Aṭṭhakathā of the Sammāparibbājanīya Sutta (the Sutta on Proper Wandering,). For this version, see Suttanipāta-aṭṭhaktahā 2.13.
[735] According to the Mahāniddesa, the four floods are the flood of desire, the flood of existence, the flood of views, and the flood of ignorance (Mahāniddesa 174).

947. (6) And [expounding] on those beings pierced by such a powerful dart, the verse says: "**At this point, the trainings are recited: Whatever fetters there are in the world.**" The meaning of this is as follows: **In the world**, the five strands of sensual pleasures are what people desire to obtain, therefore, they are called "fitters." Or, they are called "fitters" because [people have] indulged in them for a long time. "**At this point.**" For that reason, the numerous **trainings**, beginning with the training of elephants, were uttered or learned. See the extent to which this world is indolent. Since a pundit, a son of a good family, **should not** be intent on **those** fetters or trainings, "**one should**," instead, "**train for one's nirvāṇa, having fully penetrated through sensual desires**" by seeing [things] as impermanent and so forth.

948. (7) Now, showing the way one ought to train for nirvāṇa, he says: "**One should be true**" and so forth. In this context, "**true**" pertains to one who is endowed with true speech, true knowledge, and the true path. "**Devoid of malicious speech**," that is, one by whom malicious speech was abandoned. **"Avarice**," i.e., selfishness.

949. (8) "**One should overcome sleepiness, sloth, and torpor**." One should overcome these three [negative] traits: drowsiness, lethargy of body, and lethargy of mind. "**[A person with] nirvāṇa in mind**," i.e., one whose thought is bent on nirvāṇa.

950-51. (9-10) "**[One should refrain] from recklessness**," that is, from acting recklessly out of lust, which includes passionate behavior and so forth. **"One should not find pleasure in the old**." One should not find pleasure in past forms and so forth. "[**One should not engender expectation**] **for the new,**" i.e., with respect to the present. "**Passing**" means perishing. **"One should not be attached to attraction**." One should not be dependent on thirst (*tanhā*). Thirst is called "attraction" because of attracting one to forms and so forth.

952. (11) And "for what reason should one not be attached to attraction?" The verse says: "**Greed, I say, is the great flood**." The meaning of this goes as follows: I speak of thirst, which is [also] called attraction, as "**greed**" because it greedily craves (*gijjhana*) forms and so forth. Furthermore, I call it (i.e., greed) a "**flood**" because it has the sense of [being] overwhelming; a "**torrent**" because it has the sense of flowing; "**yearning**" [because it has the sense of] causing one to mumble "this is mine, this is mine;"[736] "**foundation**" because it has the sense of [being] difficult to give up; "**shaking**" since it causes [one] to shake. "**The mud of desires is hard to cross**." This refers to the world in the sense of being an obstruction and [that which is] difficult to transcend. Or, when [the previous verse] says: "One should not be attached to attraction," [this begs the question:] "what is this attraction?" [The reply is:] "**Greed, I say**." The connection of this verse [to the previous verse] could be understood [as a reply to that question]. If this is the case, [then] the grammatical construction is as follows: I say greed is "attraction." Here, it is called the great flood. I say it is a torrent; I say it is yearning; I say it is shaking; I say it is the mud of desires [that] is hard to cross in this world along with its gods.

953. (12) Thus, [concerning the] one who is not attached to this attraction, which has synonyms such as greed, the verse says: "[he] **does not turn away from the truth**." The meaning here is as follows: A **"sage**," who is called such on account of attaining sagehood, "**does not turn away from the truth**," i.e., from the three forms of truth mentioned earlier;[737] "**a Brahmin stands on**

[736] The text is playing here with the fact that the Pāli for mumbling (*japana*) sounds almost exactly like the word we find here for yearning (*jappana*).

[737] True speech, true knowledge, and the true path (see the commentary on verse 7).

solid ground," which is, nirvāṇa. Such a person, having given up on all the sense-spheres, is called "**peaceful**."

954. (13) Furthermore, the verse says: "**One is truly a knower."** In this context, "**when one understands the Dharma**" means having understood things as conditioned because of being impermanent and so forth. "**Behaving properly in the world**." By abandoning the defilements that cause improper behavior, one behaves properly in the world.

955. (14) And thus, not lusting, the verse says: "**One, here, who has crossed over sensual desires**." In this context, "**the tie**" means the sevenfold tie[738] that one crosses. "**Does not stress**," i.e., does not hope [for anything].

956. (15) Therefore, if among you there is anyone who wishes to be like this, [for you] I say this verse: "**Let what belongs to the past wither**." In this context, "**what [belongs to] the past**" refers to past karma, as well as to what is born of the defilements having the property of arising with respect to past conditioned things. "**May you have nothing in the future**." May there be nothing such as passion, which has the property of arising with respect to future conditioned things. "**If you do not grasp [at anything] in between**." If you do not grasp any present thing such as form.

957. (16) Having thus shown the attainment of arhatship by saying: "you will live peacefully," now, in the following verses, he (i.e., the Buddha) speaks in praise of the arhat. Here, the verse says: "**Anything**." "**Not claiming as mine**," that is, [not] making [things] mine or grasping an object by saying: "this is mine." "**He does not sorrow over what is nonexistent.**" He does not sorrow on account of [something] being absent or nonexistent. "**He does not lose**." He does not endure loss.

958-9. (17-18) Furthermore, the [next] verse says: "**One for whom there is no**." In this context, "**something**" refers to what is born of things such as form. Furthermore, the [next] verse says: "**Not bitter**." In this context, "**not bitter**" means not jealous. [Here] some read "not cruel."[739] "**Everywhere the same**," i.e., the same everywhere. The intended meaning [of everywhere the same] is indifferent. What is said [here]? When asked (*puṭṭho*) about the one who does not tremble; the one who does not sorrow saying: "it's not mine," with regard to that person, I speak of the fourfold benefit—not bitter, not greedy, not lustful, and everywhere the same.

960. (19) Furthermore, the [next] verse says: "**For the one who has no lust**." In this context, "**accumulation (***nisaṅkhiti***)**" refers to any volitional activity among [activities] such as accretion of merit. It is called "accumulation" since it is both accumulated and accumulates. "**Instigating**," i.e., [engaging in] various undertakings, such as accretion of merit. "**He sees security everywhere,**" that is, he sees only fearlessness (*abhayam eva*) everywhere.

961. (20) Seeing thus, the [next] verse says: "**Not among equals**." In this context, "**he does not speak**" means he does not speak of himself as among equals, inferiors, or superiors, claiming out of pride things like: "I am similar." "**He does not take and does not rejec**t." He does not take or reject anything with respect to forms and so forth. The rest is entirely clear.

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[738] According to the Mahāniddesa, the sevenfold tie consists of passion, fault, delusion, pride, views, defilements, and bad conduct (Mahāniddesa 183).

[739] On the different terms the commentary supplies here, see Bodhi 2017: 1540, n. 2018.

Thus, the Blessed One finished the teaching with the culmination in arhatship. At the time [when] he concluded this teaching, five hundred young men of the Śākyans and the Koliyans had gone forth [renouncing the household life] by means of the "come monk" (*ehi-bhikkhu*) admission procedure. Having taken them [with him], the Blessed One entered the great forest.

Commentary on the Goad Sutta

(Catukkanipāta-aṭṭhakathā 113)

113. In the third [sutta of this chapter], [the text says]: "**the shadow of the goad.**" The shadow of the goad lifted for the sake of striking (*vijjhana*) [the horse].[740] "**Becomes distressed**." He becomes distressed because of the discernment: "speed is to be seized by me."[741] It "**faces distress**," i.e., enters distress, [when] "**struck by the striking of its hair**," [that is to say, when] struck by the striking of the goad on its hair-follicles. "**Struck by the striking of the skin**." Struck by the striking of the goad, [or in this case] by the tearing of the outer skin. "**Struck by the striking of the bone**." Struck by the striking, [or in this case] by the breaking of the bone. "**Through the body**." With the body and mental faculties. "**The ultimate truth**," i.e., nirvāṇa. "**Realizes**," i.e., sees. "**With comprehensive knowledge**," that is, with the comprehensive knowledge of the path, which is accompanied by insight (*vipassanā*)

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740 I unpack the image of the horse seeing the raised goad on pp. 141-142. Also, notice that the SĀ[2] version of this scripture speaks of the horse that "sees the shadow of the raised goad" (見舉鞭影). This is an example of another case where the Chinese translation of an early scripture and the Pāli commentary of that same text are aligned.

741 In other words, the horse thinks: "I must speed up."

Commentary on the Viveka Sutta

(Sagāthāvagga-aṭṭhakathā 221)

221. In the first sutta of the Vanasaṃyutta, [the texts] says: "**A certain monk was dwelling among the Kosalans [in a certain forest thicket]**." Having taken on a meditation subject (*kammaṭṭhāna*) from a teacher, [the monk] went to dwell there for the sake of easily collecting alms in that country. "**Desiring to stir up [that monk**]." Desiring to cause him to enter isolation (*viveka*). "**Desiring isolation**." Seeking the three isolations.[742] "**But your mind goes outwards**," [that is], goes to the diversity of external sense-objects. "**Give up, man, [your] longing for people**:" You, man, give up [your] exciting desire for other people. "**Let go,**" i.e., you must let go. "**Be mindful**," i.e., you must be mindful. "**We shall remind you to be mindful**." The meaning is either we shall remind you, the learned,[743] to have mindfulness, or, we shall remind you of the Dharma of the wise ones. "**The dusty abyss**." [In this context], what is called an abyss has the meaning of [being] groundless [and its] dust is the defilements. "**Don't let the dust of desire bring you down**." Do not let the dust of sensual passion bring you down, [or in other words], do not let it lead you to hell (*apāya*). "**Covered with dirt**", i.e., smeared with dirt. "**Shakes off**", i.e., shaking. "**The sticky dust.**" The dust sticking to the body. "**Faced distress**." [There are two possible explanations of this expression here,] either [it means that] upon entering isolation the monk thinks to himself "the deity thus makes me remember," or, [it means that] having harnessed the highest [level of] energy, [the monk] entered the ultimate isolation, which is merely the path. [744]

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[742] On the threefold isolation scheme, see pp.161-163.

[743] When the Aṭṭhakathā emphasizes here that the deity reminds the monk who is "learned" (*paṇḍita*) of the Dharma, it seems to suggest that the deity is not the one who teaches the Dharma. The act of teaching the Dharma is preserved for the Buddha or the teacher. Therefore, the forest deity merely reminds the monk of the Dharma, which he already knows well, having learned it from the Buddha or his teacher.

[744] On the two options for interpreting the meaning of facing *saṃvega* in this context, see pp. 182-183.

Pāli, Sanskrit, and Chinese Sources

My references to Pāli scriptures and commentaries are based on the PDR (Pāli Digital Reader) edition of the Pāli canon, which I check against the PTS (Pāli Text Society) edition in case of any discrepancies between the PDR and PTS versions.

My references to early Chinese translations of Buddhist scriptures are based on the SAT (Saṃgaṇikīkṛtam Taiśotripiṭaka) and CBETA (Chinese Buddhist Electronic Text Association) online versions of the *Taishō Shinshū Daizōkyō* (大正新脩大藏經).

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