

Tevijjavaccagotta Sutta (Majjhima Nikāya Sutta No. 71)

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1. Introduction

by **Victor Gunasekara**

This is the first sutta in the section in the Middle Length Collection called the “Section on the Wanderers” (*Paribbājaka vagga*). There are 10 suttas in this section, Nos 71 to 80) and each deals with a topic which is discussed with a wanderer. The “wanderers” were ascetics who went around the country in search of spiritual truth. They did not belong to the Brahmanical religion and were in fact opposed to it. Their life-style would have reasssembled that of a Bhikkhu but they did not have the systematic rules which the Buddha laid down for the Sangha.

The first three discourses in this section were given to a wanderer called Vaccagotta. This is not the personal name of the wanderer but means “Belonging to the clan (*gotra*) of Vacca”. The Buddha simply refers to him as Vacca. The first (no. 71) of the suttas deals with limits to the knowledge of a fully enlightened person, the second (No. 72) with the notion of ‘self’ or ‘soul’, and the third (No 73) with the question of morality. In the last of these suttas Vacca becomes a disciple of the Buddha. This discourse deals with the first of these three topics.

The topics dealt with in this discourse are: (a) whether the Buddha is omniscient, (b) the threefold knowledge possessed by the Buddha, (c) whether householders can reach full liberation, and (d) whether Ajīvakas can reach full liberation.

Is the Buddha Omniscient?

The claim to omniscience has been made with respect to the Jain teacher Mahavira (or Nataputta as he is known in Buddhist discourses) by himself as well as his followers. Vacca is interested to find out if this is true of the Buddha as well. The claim of omniscience has also been made with respect to the God of Abrahamic religion as well.

In this sutta the Buddha specifically denies that he is omniscient. However the modern Theravada tradition (as well as other Buddhist traditions) have held that the Buddha is indeed omniscient. This contradiction has been explained in the Commentaries in an ingenious way. This arises from the way in which Vacca poses the question as to whether the Buddha is omniscient. Vacca refers to the claim that the Buddha is omniscient and that his omniscience exists whether he is standing, walking or sleeping. The Buddha denies this proposition but the Commentary claims that the denial relates only to the second part, i.e. to the standing-walking-sleeping part but not to the first part which is a general claim to omniscience. This gloss put on the Buddha’s denial cannot be accepted. Nowhere is it affirmed that the Buddha is omniscient, and the postures in which omniscience manifests itself is not the essential part of Vacca’s query. I think we have to take the Buddha’s statement that he is not omniscient is correct, and the position of modern Buddhist schools, Theravada included, is wrong.

The Limits to the Buddha’s Knowledge

If the Buddha is not omniscient the question arises what does he know. The Buddha says that his special knowledge is confined to the “threefold knowledge”. The three kinds of knowledge that he mentions are: (1) the ability to recall his past births, (2) the ability to see how beings get reborn, and (3) the knowledge of liberation of mind and liberation through wisdom. It is third of these kinds of knowledge that the Buddha spent his lifetime teaching. This is

none other than the Four Noble Truths and the Eightfold Path. The Buddha said that he did not hold anything back when it came to the means of escape from suffering and this is the component of the threefold knowledge he acquired that he wanted to communicate to his followers.

This leads to the question of the significance of the other two components of the special knowledge of a Buddha. Clearly there has not been a great deal of exposition on these two aspects of the Buddha's knowledge in the Pali Canon. What we have about it are statements of the Buddha that he was such-and-such in a past birth. The whole of the birth stories (Jataka stories) are based on the Buddha demonstrating this power. However there is some agreement that many of these birth stories are adaptations of popular stories that may predate the Buddha, or they were deliberately composed after the Buddha's death for the purpose of the edification of ordinary people. The latter is the most likely explanation.

As to the Buddha's power to state the rebirth destiny of people there are many instances in the Canon in which the Buddha gives the rebirth destiny of different people. It is easy to dismiss these as later concoctions. But it may also have a purpose of encouraging people to do good if it is stated that people of right moral conduct have gone into, or will go into, a happy destination. This may be considered something not strictly true, or a using the "end justifies the means" principle. Whatever it is people are not obliged to take them merely on the authority of the Buddha as they have no way of verifying what the Buddha says. According to the Kalama sutta only things that can be verified should be accepted as definitely correct by any person.

Of the three kinds of knowledge it is the knowledge of the ending of suffering to which the Buddha gave the greatest emphasis. It is also the only kind of knowledge whose correctness can be verified. We may conclude that the Buddha is not an omniscient and that only knowledge as to the means of liberation from suffering that can be accepted without qualification.

Destiny of Householders and Ajivakas

On the destiny of householders the Buddha makes the conventional statement that a householder, without breaking his ties to the household life, cannot get full liberation (i.e. achieve Nibbana) in this very life. But very many householders while still in the household bonds can reach the heavenly realms. There are however other suttas in which it is stated that a householder can reach full freedom even without removing all the household fetters. Sometimes it is said that a householder can make a permanent end to suffering without returning to the household life, i.e. from some other destination. These other possibilities are not mentioned in this sutta.

There can be some doubt as to what is really meant by freedom from household bonds. This need not necessarily imply that the person has formally joined the Bhikkhu order. Thus an Anagātika, who exercises some restraints, including chastity, may qualify under the category of non-attachment to household life. If this interpretation is given then such a lay person can also reach full liberation in this life itself.

The Ajivakas, a kind of naked ascetic, fares much worse than lay followers of the Buddha. They can neither gain full liberation nor aspire to the heavenly life. Their destiny might be birth again in the human plane, or in some of the sub-human planes. This is because the Ajīvakas do not admit of the law of moral causation. In fact the only Ajīvaka which the Buddha admits as an exception to this rule is a person who did accept the law of moral consequences for good and bad action. In effect he was not an Ajīvaka as he did not accept their central belief.

Conclusion

This sutta, though a brief one, does deal with some weighty questions of the Dhamma. The most important of these is the question of the limits to the knowledge of a Buddha. By admitting that he is not omniscient the Buddha dissented from a principal claim of people setting themselves up as religious teachers. The principal discovery of the Buddha is how people can eliminate suffering. This does not require that they master all forms of knowledge. They have only to master the basic discovery of the Buddha.

The other subjects that are discussed in this sutta are not as conclusively answered. Thus on the question of whether householders can reach Nibbana in this very life is answered in an ambiguous manner.

There are two other suttas dealing with questions posed by Vacca. These follow immediately after the present discourse.

2. To Vaccagotta on the Threefold True Knowledge

Translated by Bhikkhu Bodhi

1. **THUS HAVE I HEARD.** On one occasion the Blessed One was living at Vesālī in the Great Wood in the Hall with the Peaked Roof.

2. Now on that occasion the wanderer Vacchagotta was staying in the Wanderers' Park of the Single White-Lotus Mango Tree.¹

3. Then, when it was morning, the Blessed One dressed, and taking his bowl and outer robe, went into Vesālī for alms. Then the Blessed One thought: "It is still too early to wander for alms in Vesālī. Suppose I went to the wanderer Vacchagotta in the Wanderers' Park of the Single White-Lotus Mango Tree."

4. Then the Blessed One went to the wanderer Vacchagotta in the Wanderers' Park of the Single White-Lotus Mango Tree. The wanderer Vacchagotta saw the Blessed One coming in the distance and said to him: "Let the Blessed One come, venerable sir! Welcome to the Blessed One! It is long since the Blessed One found an opportunity to come here. Let the Blessed One be seated; this seat is ready." The Blessed One sat down on the seat made ready, and the wanderer Vacchagotta took a low seat, sat down at one side, and said to the Blessed One:

5. "Venerable sir, I have heard this: 'The recluse Gotama claims to be omniscient and all-seeing, to have complete knowledge and vision thus: "Whether I am walking or standing or sleeping or awake, knowledge and vision are continuously and uninterruptedly present to me."² Venerable sir, do those who speak thus say what has been said by the Blessed One, and not misrepresent him with what is contrary to fact? Do they explain in accordance with the Dhamma in such a way that nothing which provides a ground for censure can be legitimately deduced from their assertion?"

"Vaccha, those who say thus do not say what has been said by me, but misrepresent me with what is untrue and contrary to fact."³

6. "Venerable sir, how should I answer that I may say what has been said by the Blessed One and not misrepresent him with what is contrary to fact? How may I explain in accordance with the Dhamma in such a way that nothing which provides a ground for censure can be legitimately deduced from my assertion?"

"Vaccha, if you answer thus: 'The recluse Gotama has the threefold true knowledge,' you will be saying what has been said by me and will not misrepresent me with what is contrary to fact. You will explain in accordance with the Dhamma in such a way that nothing which provides a ground for censure can be legitimately deduced from your assertion.

7. "For in so far as I wish, I recollect my manifold past lives, that is, one birth, two births ... (as *Sutta 51, §24*) ... Thus with their aspects and particulars I recollect my manifold past lives.

8. "And in so far as I wish, with the divine eye, which is purified and surpasses the human, I see beings passing away and reappearing, inferior and superior, fair and ugly, fortunate and unfortunate, and I understand how beings pass on according to their actions ... (as *Sutta 51, §25*)...

9. "And by realising for myself with direct knowledge, I here and now enter upon and abide in the deliverance of mind and deliverance by wisdom that are taintless with the destruction of the taints.

10. "If you answer thus: 'The recluse Gotama has the threefold true knowledge,' you will be saying what has been said by me and will not misrepresent me with what is contrary to fact. You will explain in accordance with the

1. This sutta and the following two seem to present a chronological account of Vacchagotta's spiritual evolution. The Samyutta Nikaya contains a whole section of short discussions between the Buddha and Vacchagotta, SN 33/iii.257-62. See also SN 44:7-11 /iv.391-402.

2. This is the type of omniscience that the Jain teacher the Nigantha Nātaputta claims at MN 14.17.

3. MA explains that even though part of the statement is valid, the Buddha rejects the entire statement because of the portion that is invalid. The part of the statement that is valid is the assertion that the Buddha is omniscient and all-seeing; the part that is excessive is the assertion that knowledge and vision are continuously present to him. According to the Theravada tradition the Buddha is omniscient in the sense that all knowable things are potentially accessible to him. He cannot, however, know everything simultaneously and must advert to whatever he wishes to know. At MN 90.8 the Buddha says that it is possible to know and see all, though not simultaneously, and at AN 4:24/ii.24 he claims to know all that can be seen, heard, sensed, and cognized, which is understood by the Theravada tradition as an assertion of omniscience in the qualified sense. See too in this connection Miln 102-7.

Dhamma in such a way that nothing which provides a ground for censure can be legitimately deduced from your assertion.”

11. When this was said, the wanderer Vacchagotta asked the Blessed One: “Master Gotama, is there any householder who, without abandoning the fetter of householdership, on the dissolution of the body has made an end of suffering? ⁴

“Vaccha, there is no householder who, without abandoning the fetter of householdership, on the dissolution of the body has made an end of suffering.”

12. “Master Gotama, is there any householder who, without abandoning the fetter of householdership, on the dissolution of the body has gone to heaven?”

“Vaccha, there are not only one hundred or two or three or four or five hundred, but far more householders who, without abandoning the fetter of householdership, on the dissolution of the body have gone to heaven.”

13. “Master Gotama, is there any Ajīvaka who, on the dissolution of the body, has made an end of suffering?”

“Vaccha, there is no Ajīvaka who, on the dissolution of the body, has made an end of suffering.”

14. “Master Gotama, is there any Ajīvaka who, on the dissolution of the body, has gone to heaven?”

“When I recollect the past ninety-one aeons, Vaccha, I do not recall any Ajīvaka who, on the dissolution of the body, went to heaven, with one exception, and he held the doctrine of the moral efficacy of action, the doctrine of the moral efficacy of deeds.⁵

15. “That being so, Master Gotama. this fold of other sectarians is empty even of [a chance of] going to heaven.”

“That being so, Vaccha, this fold of other sectarians is empty even of [a chance of] going to heaven.”

That is what the Blessed One said. The wanderer Vacchagotta was satisfied and delighted in the Blessed One’s words.

3. Discourse to Vacchagotta on the Threefold Knowledge

Translated by Horner (PTS)

1. THUS have I heard: At one time the Lord was staying near Vesālī in the Great Grove in the hall of the Gabled House.

2. Now at that time the wanderer Vacchagotta⁶ was living in Ekapundarika⁷, the wanderers’ park.

3. Then the Lord, having dressed in the morning, taking his bowl and robe, entered Vesālī for almsfood. But it occurred to the Lord: “It is still too early to walk for almsfood in Vesālī. Suppose I were to approach Ekapundarika, the wanderers’ park, and Vacchagotta the wanderer?”

4. Then the Lord approached Ekapundarika, the wanderers’ park, and Vacchagotta, the wanderer. The

4. MA explains “the fetter of householdership” (*gihisañyojanā*) as attachment to the requisites of a householder, which MT details as land, ornaments, wealth, grain, etc. MA says that even though the texts mention some individuals who attained arahantship as laymen, by the path of arahantship they destroyed all attachment to worldly things and thus either went forth as monks or passed away immediately after their attainment. The question of lay arahants is discussed at Miln 264.

5. Since this Ajīvaka believed in the moral efficacy of action, he could not have subscribed to the orthodox philosophical fatalism of the Ajīvakas, which denied the effective role of kamma and volitional deeds in modifying human destiny. MA identifies this Ajīvaka with the Bodhisatta in a previous birth.

6. Cf. A. i. 160; 2. iii. 251 ff., iv. 391 ff. Verses are ascribed to him at *Thag.* 112. His spiritual evolution is told in this and the two following and very briefly at *ThagA.* i. 235.

7. MA. iii. 196=DA. ii. 416 says pandarika is a white mango tree. A solitray one (*eka*) grew in this wanderers’ park. This park is not to be confused with the *ekapandrika uyyāna* of M. i. 252.

wanderer Vacchagotta saw the Lord in the distance and seeing him, he spoke thus to the Lord: “Revered sir, let the Lord come; revered sir, there is a welcome for the Lord; revered sir, it is long since the Lord made the opportunity to come here; revered sir, let the Lord sit down, this is the appointed seat.” The Lord sat down on the appointed seat, and Vacchagotta wanderer, [482] having taken a low seat, sat down at a respectful distance. As he was sitting down at a respectful distance, the wanderer Vacchagotta spoke thus to the Lord:

5. “Revered sir, I have heard: The recluse Gotama is all knowing⁸, all seeing; he claims all-embracing knowledge-and-vision, saying: ‘Whether I am walking or standing still or asleep or awake, knowledge-and-vision is permanently and continuously before me.’ ? Revered sir, those who speak thus: The recluse Gotama is all knowing, all seeing; he claims all-embracing knowledge-and-vision, saying: ‘Whether I am walking or standing still or asleep or awake, knowledge-and-vision is permanently and continuously before me’ – revered sir, I hope that these are speaking of the Lord in accordance with what has been said and are not misrepresenting the Lord with what is not fact, but are explaining in accordance with dhamma, and that no one of his fellow dhamma-men, of this way of speaking, gives grounds for reproach?”

“Vaccha, those who speak thus: the recluse Gotama is all knowing, all seeing; he claims all-embracing knowledge-and-vision, saying: ‘Whether I am walking or standing still or asleep or awake, knowledge-and-vision is permanently and continuously before me’ – these are not speaking of me in accordance with what has been said, but they are misrepresenting me with what is untrue, not fact.”

6. “Expounding in what way, revered sir, would we be speaking in accordance with what has been said, and would not be misrepresenting the Lord with what is not fact, but would be explaining in accordance with dhamma so that no fellow dhamma-man, of the same way of speaking, could give grounds for reproach ?”

“Vaccha, expounding: ‘The recluse Gotama is a threefold-knowledge man,’ you would be one who speaks in accordance with what has been said by me, you would not be misrepresenting me with what is not fact, you would be explaining in accordance with dhamma, and no fellow dhamma-man of this way of speaking could give grounds for reproach.

7. For I, Vaccha, whenever I please recollect a variety of former habitations, that is to say one birth, two births ... thus do I recollect divers former habitations in all their modes and details.

8. And I, Vaccha, whenever I please, with the purified deva-vision surpassing that of men ... see beings as they pass hence and come to be; I comprehend that beings are mean, excellent, comely, ugly, well-going, ill-going according to the consequences of deeds.

9. And I, Vaccha, by the destruction of the cankers, having realised here and now by my own super-knowledge the freedom of mind and the freedom through wisdom that are cankerless, entering thereon, abide therein.

10. Vaccha, expounding that the recluse Gotama is a threefold-knowledge man, you would be one who speaks in accordance with what has been said by me, you would not be misrepresenting me with what is not fact, you would be explaining in accordance with dhamma, and no fellow dhamma-man of this way of speaking could give grounds for reproach.”

11. When this had been said, Vacchagotta the wanderer spoke thus to the Lord:

“Good Gotama, is there any householder who, not getting rid of the householder’s fetter(s),⁹ at the breaking up of the body is an end-maker of ill ?”

“There is not any householder, Vaccha, who, not getting rid of the householder’s fetter(s), at the breaking up of the body is an endmaker of ill.”

12. “But is there, good Gotama, any householder who, not getting rid of the householder’s fetter(s), at the breaking up of the body attains heaven ?”

“Not just one hundred, Vaccha, nor two hundred, nor three, four or five hundred, but far more are those householders who, not getting rid of the householder’s fetter(s), at the breaking up of the body attain heaven.”

“Now, good Gotama, is there any Naked Ascetic who at the breaking up of the body is an end-maker of ill ?”

“There is not, Vaccha, any Naked Ascetic who at the breaking up of the body is an end-maker of ill.”

13. “But is there then, good Gotama, any Naked Ascetic who at the breaking up of the body attained heaven?”

8. Said of Nātaputta at M. i. 92-93.

9. probably meaning his wife, children and servants.

14. "Although I, Vaccha, recollect ninety-one eons,¹⁰ I do not know of any Naked Ascetic who attained heaven, except one; and he professed *kamma*, he professed operative *kamma*."¹¹

15. "This being so, good Gotama, that fold of the sects¹² is empty even in regard to attaining heaven."

"This being so, Vaccha, that fold of the Sects is empty even in regard to attaining heaven."

Thus spoke the Lord. Delighted, the wanderer Vacchagotta rejoiced in what the Lord had said.

4. Translation into German

DAS HAB' ICH GEHÖRT. Zu einer Zeit weilte der Erhabene bei Vesáí, im Großen Walde, in der Halle der Einsiedelei. Um diese Zeit nun hielt sich der Pilger Vacchagotto im Pilgergarten der Weißen Lotusrose auf. Und der Erhabene, zeitig gerüstet, nahm Mantel und Schale und wanderte gegen Vesáí, um Almosenspeise. Und es gedachte der Erhabene: 'Allzu früh ist's noch, in der Stadt um Almosen zu stehn; wie, wenn ich nun in den Pilgergarten der weißen Lotusrose einträte und den Pilger Vacchagotto besuchte?' Und der Erhabene trat in den Pilgergarten der Weißen Lotusrose ein und begab sich dorthin wo der Pilger Vacchagotto weilte. Da sah der Pilger Vacchagotto den Erhabenen von ferne herankommen, und als er den Erhabenen gesehn sprach er also zu ihm:

"Es komme, o Herr, der Erhabene, begrüßt sei, o Herr, der Erhabene! Lange schon, o Herr, hat der Erhabene hoffen lassen, mich einmal hier zu besuchen, Möge sich, o Herr, der Erhabene setzen: dieser Sitz ist bereit."

Es setzte sich der Erhabene auf den dargebotenen Sitz. Vacchagotto aber, der Pilger, nahm einen von den niederen Stühlen zur Hand und setzte sich an die Seite. An der Seite sitzend sprach nun Vacchagotto der Pilger also zum Erhabenen:

"Gehört hab' ich solches, o Herr: 'Der Asket Gotamo weiß alles, versteht alles, bekennt unbeschränkte Wissensklarheit: 'Ob ich geh' oder stehe, schlaf' oder wache, jederzeit hab' ich die gesamte Wissensklarheit gegenwärtig.' Die da solches, o Herr, gesagt haben, haben die wirklich, o Herr, des Erhabenen Worte gebraucht und den Erhabenen nicht mit Unrecht angeführt und der Lehre gemäß geredet, so daß sich kein entsprechender Folgesatz als ungehörig erweisen kann?"

"Die da, Vaccho, solches gesagt haben: 'Der Asket Gotamo weiß alles, versteht alles, bekennt unbeschränkte Wissensklarheit: 'Ob ich geh' oder stehe, schlaf' oder wache, jederzeit hab' ich die gesamte Wissensklarheit gegenwärtig', die haben nicht meine Worte gebraucht und haben mich also ohne Grund und mit Unrecht angeführt."

"Wie dann, o Herr, sollten wir reden, um eben die Worte des Erhabenen zu gebrauchen und den Erhabenen nicht mit Unrecht anzuführen und der Lehre gemäß zu reden, so daß sich kein entsprechender Folgesatz als ungehörig erweisen könnte?"

"Drei Wissen weiß der Asket Gotamo': also redend, Vaccho, würde man eben meine Worte gebrauchen und mich nicht mit Unrecht anführen und der Lehre gemäß reden, so daß sich kein entsprechender Folgesatz als ungehörig erweisen könnte.

Denn nach Belieben, Vaccho, erinnere ich mich an manche verschiedene frühere Daseinsform, als wie an ein Leben, dann an zwei Leben, dann an drei Leben, dann an vier Leben, dann an fünf Leben, dann an zehn Leben, dann

10. At *D. ii. 2* Gotams, is reputed to say that the Buddha Vipassin arose in thp world ninety-one eons, *kappa*, ago. This context mentions six Buddhas preceding Gotama; of these Vipassin is the first. I suggest that our *M. Passage* may have a hidden reference to the fact that Gotama's recollection of his previous lives, or "habitations," goes back to Vipassin's time; and that, since from *D. ii. 2* and *M. i. 483* it does not appear to go back to the times of the other Buddhas who preceded Vipassin, is perhaps contributory evidence that the number of these was of later growth; see e.g. E. J. Thomas, *Life of Buddha*, p. 27. See *Intr.* p. xvii.

11. *So p'āsi kammavādi kiriyāvādi. MA. iii. 196* says that if he was the former he could not avoid being the latter. A. L. Basham, *Hist. of the Ajīvakas*, p. 135 says he was in consequence of these views "not an orthodox follower of Makkhali Gosāla." Cf. *Vin. i. 71: kammavādino ete kiriyavadino*, said of the matted hair ascetics who, for this very reason, were to be privileged not to undergo the prescribed four months' probation for members of other sects before they were ordained as monks. Cf. also A. i. 287.

12. *Titthāyatana*, as at V. I, 60, 69.

an zwanzig Leben, dann an dreißig Leben, dann an vierzig Leben, dann an fünfzig Leben, dann an hundert Leben, dann an tausend Leben, dann an hunderttausend Leben, dann an die Zeiten während mancher Weltenentstehungen, dann an die Zeiten während mancher Weltenvergehungen, dann an die Zeiten während mancher Weltenentstehungen-Weltenvergehungen. 'Dort war ich, jenen Namen hatte ich, jener Familie gehörte ich an, das war mein Stand, das mein Beruf, solches Wohl und Wehe habe ich erfahren, so war mein Lebensende; dort verschieden trat ich anderswo wieder ins Dasein: da war ich nun, diesen Namen hatte ich, dieser Familie gehörte ich an, dies war mein Stand, dies mein Beruf, solches Wohl und Wehe habe ich erfahren, so war mein Lebensende; da verschieden trat ich hier wieder ins Dasein.' So erinnere ich mich mancher verschiedenen früheren Daseinsform, mit je den eigentümlichen Merkmalen, mit je den eigenartigen Beziehungen.

Und nach Belieben, Vaccho, seh' ich mit dem himmlischen Auge, dem geläuterten, über menschliche Grenzen hinausreichenden, die Wesen dahinschwinden und wiedererscheinen, gemeine und edle, schöne und unschöne, glückliche und unglückliche, ich erkenne wie die Wesen je nach den Taten wiederkehren. 'Diese lieben Wesen sind freilich in Taten dem Schlechten zugetan, in Worten dem Schlechten zugetan, in Gedanken dem Schlechten zu getan, tadeln Heiliges, achten Verkehrtes, tun Verkehrtes; bei der Auflösung des Körpers, nach dem Tode, gelangen sie abwärts, auf schlechte Fährte, zur Tiefe hinab, in höllische Welt. Jene lieben Wesen sind aber in Taten dem Guten zugetan, in Worten dem Guten zugetan, in Gedanken dem Guten zugetan, tadeln nicht Heiliges, achten Rechtes, tun Rechtes; bei der Auflösung des Körpers, nach dem Tode, gelangen sie auf gute Fährte, in himmlische Welt.' So seh' ich mit dem himmlischen Auge, dem geläuterten, über menschliche Grenzen hinausreichenden, die Wesen dahinschwinden und wiedererscheinen, gemeine und edle, schöne und unschöne, glückliche und unglückliche, ich erkenne wie die Wesen je nach den Taten wiederkehren.

Und ich habe, Vaccho, den Wahn versiegt und die wahnlose Gemütererlösung, Weisheitserlösung noch bei Lebzeiten mir offenbar gemacht, verwirklicht und errungen. 'Drei Wissen weiß der Asket Gotamo': also redend, Vaccho, würde man eben meine Worte gebrauchen und mich nicht mit Unrecht anführen und der Lehre gemäß reden, so daß sich kein entsprechender Folgesatz als ungehörig erweisen könnte."

Nach diesen Worten sprach Vacchagotto der Pilger zum Erhabenen also:

"Gibt es nun wohl, o Gotamo, irgendeinen Hausgewohnten, der, ohne die häuslichen Bande gelassen zu haben, bei der Auflösung des Körpers, dem Leiden ein Ende macht?"

"Nicht gibt es, Vaccho, irgendeinen Hausgewohnten, der, ohne die häuslichen Bande gelassen zu haben, bei der Auflösung des Körpers, dem Leiden ein Ende macht."

"Gibt es aber, o Gotamo, irgendeinen Hausgewohnten, der, ohne die häuslichen Bande gelassen zu haben, bei der Auflösung des Körpers, in himmlische Welt gelangt?"

"Nicht gibt es, Vaccho, nur etwa hundert oder zweihundert oder dreihundert oder vierhundert oder fünfhundert sondern noch mehr Hausgewohnte, die, ohne die häuslichen Bande gelassen zu haben, bei der Auflösung des Körpers, in himmlische Welt gelangen."

"Und gibt es, o Gotamo, irgendeinen Nackten Büsser, der, bei der Auflösung des Körpers, dem Leiden ein Ende macht?"

"Nicht gibt es, Vaccho, irgendeinen Nackten Büsser, der, bei der Auflösung des Körpers, dem Leiden ein Ende macht."

"Doch gibt es, o Gotamo, irgendeinen Nackten Büsser, der, bei der Auflösung des Körpers, in himmlische Welt gelangt?"

"Von heute, Vaccho, zurück bis zum einundneunzigsten Weltalter, dessen ich gedenke, weiß ich von keinem Nackten Büsser, der in himmlische Welt gelangt wäre, einen ausgenommen: der aber glaubte an eigene Tat und eigenes Handeln."

"So ist freilich, o Gotamo, jenes Büssertum eitel, sogar um in himmlische Welt zu gelangen?"

"So ist freilich, Vaccho, jenes Büssertum eitel, sogar um in himmlische Welt zu gelangen."

Also sprach der Erhabene. Zufrieden freute sich Vacchagotto der Pilger über das Wort des Erhabenen.

5. Pali Text of the Sutta

Tevijjavacchasuttam

1. Evaṃ (2.0148) me suttaṃ– ekaṃ samayaṃ bhagavā vesāliyaṃ viharati mahāvane kūṭāgārasālāyaṃ.
2. Tena kho pana samayena vacchagotto paribbājako ekapuṇḍarīke paribbājakārāme paṭivasati.
3. Atha kho bhagavā pubbaṅhasamayaṃ nivāsetvā pattaṭṭhāraṃ vesāliyaṃ piṇḍāya pāvisi. Atha kho bhagavato etadahosi– “atippago kho tāva vesāliyaṃ piṇḍāya carituṃ; yaṃnūnāhaṃ yena ekapuṇḍarīko paribbājakārāmo yena vacchagotto paribbājako tenupasaṅkameyyan”ti.
4. Atha kho bhagavā yena ekapuṇḍarīko paribbājakārāmo yena vacchagotto paribbājako tenupasaṅkami. Addasā kho vacchagotto paribbājako bhagavantaṃ dūratova āgacchantaṃ. Disvāna bhagavantaṃ etadvoca– “etu kho, bhante, bhagavā. Svāgataṃ , bhante, bhagavato. Cirassaṃ kho, bhante, bhagavā imaṃ pariyaṃmakāsi yadidaṃ idhāgamanāya. Nisīdatu, bhante, bhagavā idamāsaṃ paññattan”ti. Nisīdi bhagavā paññatte āsane. Vacchagottopi kho paribbājako aññataṃ nīcaṃ āsaṃ gahetvā ekamantaṃ nisīdi. Ekamantaṃ nisinna kho vacchagotto paribbājako bhagavantaṃ etadvoca–
 5. “suttaṃ metaṃ, bhante– ‘samaṇo gotamo sabbaññū sabbadassāvī, aparise+saṃ ñāṇadassanaṃ paṭijānāti, carato ca me tiṭṭhato ca suttassa ca jāgarassa ca satataṃ samitaṃ ñāṇadassanaṃ paccupaṭṭhitan’ti. Ye te, bhante, evamāhaṃsu– ‘samaṇo gotamo sabbaññū sabbadassāvī, aparisesaṃ ñāṇadassanaṃ paṭijānāti, carato ca me tiṭṭhato ca suttassa ca jāgarassa ca satataṃ samitaṃ ñāṇadassanaṃ paccupaṭṭhitan’ti, kacci te, bhante, bhagavato vuttavādino, na ca bhagavantaṃ abhūtena abbhācikkhanti, dhammassa cānudhammaṃ byākaronti, na ca koci sahadhammiko vādānuvādo gārayhaṃ ṭhānaṃ āgacchatī”ti?

“Ye te, vaccha, evamāhaṃsu– ‘samaṇo gotamo sabbaññū sabbadassāvī, aparisesaṃ ñāṇadassanaṃ paṭijānāti, carato ca me tiṭṭhato ca suttassa ca jāgarassa ca satataṃ samitaṃ ñāṇadassanaṃ paccupaṭṭhitan’ti, na me te vuttavādino, abbhācikkhanti ca pana maṃ asatā abhūtenā”ti.
 6. “Kathaṃ (2.0149) byākaramānā pana mayaṃ, bhante, vuttavādino ceva bhagavato assāma, na ca bhagavantaṃ abhūtena abbhācikkheyyāma, dhammassa cānudhammaṃ byākareyyāma, na ca koci sahadhammiko vādānuvādo gārayhaṃ ṭhānaṃ āgaccheyyā”ti?

“Tevijjo samaṇo gotamo’ti kho, vaccha, byākaramāno vuttavādī ceva me assa, na ca maṃ abhūtena abbhācikkheyya, dhammassa cānudhammaṃ byākareyya, na ca koci sahadhammiko vādānuvādo gārayhaṃ ṭhānaṃ āgaccheyya.
 7. Ahañhi, vaccha, yāvadeva ākañkhāmi anekavihitāṃ pubbenivāsaṃ anussarāmi, seyyathidaṃ– ekampi jātiṃ dvepi jātiyo ...pe... iti sākāraṃ sa-uddesaṃ anekavihitāṃ pubbenivāsaṃ anussarāmi.
 8. Ahañhi, vaccha, yāvadeva ākañkhāmi dibbena cakkhunā visuddhena atikkantamānusakena satte passāmi cavamāne upapajjamāne hīne paṇīte suvaṇṇe dubbaṅṇe sugate duggate ...pe... yathākammūpage satte pajānāmi.
 9. Ahañhi, vaccha, āsavānaṃ khayā anāsavaṃ cetovimuttiṃ paññāvimuttiṃ diṭṭheva dhamme sayaṃ abhiññā sacchikatvā upasampajja viharāmi.
 10. “Tevijjo samaṇo gotamo’ti kho, vaccha, byākaramāno vuttavādī ceva me assa, na ca maṃ abhūtena abbhācikkheyya, dhammassa cānudhammaṃ byākareyya, na ca koci sahadhammiko vādānuvādo gārayhaṃ ṭhānaṃ āgaccheyyā”ti.
 11. Evaṃ vutte, vacchagotto paribbājako bhagavantaṃ etadvoca– “atthi nu kho, bho gotama, koci gihī gihisaṃyojanaṃ appahāya kāyassa bhedā dukkhassantakaro”ti?

“Natthi kho, vaccha, koci gihī gihisaṃyojanaṃ appahāya kāyassa bhedā dukkhassantakaro”ti.
 12. “Atthi pana, bho gotama, koci gihī gihisaṃyojanaṃ appahāya kāyassa bhedā saggūpago”ti?

“Na kho, vaccha, ekaṃyeva sataṃ na dve satāni na tīṇi satāni na cattāri satāni na pañca satāni, atha kho bhiiyyova ye gihī gihisaṃyojanaṃ appahāya kāyassa bhedā saggūpagā”ti .
 13. “Atthi (2.0150) nu kho, bho gotama, koci ājīvako , kāyassa bhedā dukkhassantakaro”ti?

“Natthi kho, vaccha, koci ājīvako kāyassa bhedā dukkhassantakaro”ti.
 14. “Atthi pana, bho gotama, koci ājīvako kāyassa bhedā saggūpago”ti?

“Ito kho so, vaccha, ekanavuto kappo , yamaṃ anussarāmi, nābhijānāmi kañci ājīvakaṃ saggūpagaṃ aññatra ekena; sopāsi kammavādī kiriyavādī”ti.
 15. “Evaṃ sante, bho gotama, suññaṃ aduṃ titthāyatanāṃ antamaso saggūpagenapī”ti?

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“Evaṃ, vaccha, suññaṃ aduṃ tiṭṭhāyatanaṃ antamaso saggūpagenapī“ti.
Idamavoca bhagavā. Attamano vacchagotto paribbājako bhagavato bhāsitaṃ abhinandīti.
Tevijjavacchasuttaṃ niṭṭhitaṃ paṭṭhamam.