

**‘That *bhikkhu* lets go both the near and far shores’:
meaning and metaphor in the refrain from the *uraga* verses**

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The *uraga* (‘serpent’) verses are some early Buddhist stanzas, preserved in different versions, each with the refrain (in Pāli at Sn vv.1–17) *so bhikkhu jahāti orapāraṃ, urago jīṇṇaṃ iva tacaṃ purāṇaṃ*, ‘That *bhikkhu* lets go both the near and far shores, like a serpent its worn-out old skin’. The meaning of *orapāra*, ‘near and far shores’, has posed a problem for ancient and modern commentators, because according to the usual metaphor of ‘crossing the flood’ the *bhikkhu* lets go the ‘near shore’, which is *saṃsāra*, to reach the safety of the ‘far shore’, which is *nirvāṇa*. I discuss some commentarial and recent discussions of the refrain, before presenting two possible solutions to this problem: first in terms of the old binary cosmology, whereby the *bhikkhu* lets go the ‘near shore’ of this world and the ‘far shore’ of the other, and second in terms of the ‘stream of the Dharma’ metaphor, in which the *bhikkhu* lets go the ‘near shore’ of the subjective sense spheres and the ‘far shore’ of the objective sense spheres. I conclude with a consideration of metaphor in the *uraga* verses refrain, and how the refrain may be an example of early Buddhist non-dualism.

‘to be good at metaphor is to perceive resemblances’
Aristotle, *Poetics*, 1459^a

Introduction

The *uraga* (‘serpent’) verses are a collection of Buddhist *gāthās* preserved in Pāli, Prakrit and Sanskrit versions. The existence of the verses in these different versions implies both that they were popular among Indian Buddhists and that they are testimony to an early period of Buddhist literature prior to the spread of versions translated into different dialects. Taking the Pāli version (Sn vv.1–17) as an exemplar, though without implying that the original was in Pāli, each of the stanzas ends with the following refrain:

*so bhikkhu jahāti orapāraṃ
urago jiṇṇaṃ iva tacāṃ purāṇaṃ*

that *bhikkhu* lets go both the near and far shores
like a serpent its worn-out old skin.

This refrain presents the reader with a problem: what can it mean that the *bhikkhu* should let go of both the near and far shores? In early Buddhist literature, the ‘near shore’ is usually a metaphor for this dangerous and unsafe situation, *saṃsāra*, and the ‘far shore’ is a metaphor for the safety of *nirvāṇa*, so that the Buddhist path is a means of crossing from the near shore to the far shore. To let go of both seems not to make sense. The Theravādin commentary on the *uraga* verses tries to solve this problem by re-defining ‘near and far shores’ as ‘near-shore’, before going on to present several alternative explanations of the meaning of ‘near shore’ and ‘far shore’. Modern commentators have come to different conclusions about the meaning of ‘near and far shores’. In the following I present the views of old and new commentators before proposing two possible solutions to the problem of ‘the near and far shores’, both of which have support in the traditional commentary but are not very well explained there.

The *uraga* verses in early Buddhist literature

The Pāli version of the *uraga* verses consist in 17 *gāthās* in *aupacchandāsika*,¹ a strict metrical form consisting in patterns of long and short syllables, giving

¹ Except for Sn v.7a, which is in *vaitālīya* (two measures shorter than *aupacchandāsika*). The Sanskrit parallel at Ud-V 32.77 is also in *vaitālīya*, so this appears to be deliberate.

the verses a strong, memorable rhythm. To take the first Pāli stanza as an example, we read:

<i>yo uppatitaṃ vineti kodhaṃ</i>	— — √ √ — √ — √ — x
<i>visataṃ sappaviṣaṃ va osadhehi</i>	√ √ — — √ √ — √ — √ — x
<i>so bhikkhu jahāti orapāraṃ</i>	— — √ √ — √ — √ — x
<i>urago jiṇṇaṃ iva ttacaṃ² purāṇaṃ</i>	√ √ — — √ √ — √ — √ — x

One who controls anger when it has arisen
as if treating with remedies a snake's spread venom –
that *bhikkhu* lets go both the near and far shores
like a serpent its worn-out old skin.

The other *gāthās* use a variety of metaphors to describe: the giving up of passion (*rāga*) (v.2); craving (*taṇhā*) (v.3); conceit (*māna*) (v.4); one who sees that existence has no essence (v.5); the giving up of irritation (*kopa*); (v.6); thoughts (*vitakkā*) (v.7); ‘one who neither goes too far nor goes back’ (vv.8–13); the giving up of underlying tendencies (*anusaya*) (v.14); distress (*daratha*) (v.15); desire (*vanatha*) (v.16); and the hindrances (*nīvaraṇa*) (v.17). The six stanzas whose first *pāda* (or verse) is ‘one who neither goes too far nor goes back’ are each accompanied by a second *pāda*, four of which differ by only one word. Word-substitution to create new stanzas appears to be a feature of this style of oral literature.³ It means that there are really only 11 distinct *gāthās* in the Pāli collection.

While the Pāli version is to be found in the *Sutta-nipāta* of the Theravādin school, the other versions are included in *Dharmapada* collections associated with other Indian Buddhist schools (although the Sanskrit parallel to the *Dharmapada* is called the *Udānavarga*).⁴ I will briefly describe these parallel versions (following Roebuck 2010: xxviii–xxxiv) as I will refer to them further along:

(i) in the ‘Patna *Dharmapada*’ (abbreviated to PDhp), a *Dharmapada* collection in a mixed Pāli, Prakrit and Sanskrit dialect affiliated to the Sāmātiya

² Correcting *tacaṃ* in PTS to *ttacaṃ* for the sake of the metre (K. R. Norman 2001). In fact, Be reads *ttacaṃ*, and cf. *tvaya* in GDhp-K and *tvacaṃ* in Ud-V (see below for these versions).

³ Brough 1962: 197 comments, in his masterfully irreverent way, that this process of ‘serial repetition’ was ‘highly esteemed as a mechanism for expanding the volume of sacred texts’.

⁴ The versions are usefully compared by Ānandajyoti 2004.

sect of the Pudgalavādin school (Skilling 1997). A manuscript of this text was found in Tibet in the 1930s, dated to the 12th c. (Cone 1989: 103), and initially worked on from photographs kept in Patna in India (whence its name). The 17 *uraga* verses, edited by Margaret Cone (1989), comprise the *Uraga-vargga*, the final chapter, and are either identical or similar to the Pāli verses, with serial repetition of one *gāthā*.

(ii) in the *Gāndhārī Dharmapada* (GDhp), in Gāndhārī Prakrit, preserved in birch-bark manuscripts written in *kharoṣṭhi* script. The ‘Khotan’ version (GDhp-K) was found at Khotan in central Asia in 1890s, and has been edited by John Brough (1962). The 10 *uraga* verses are again identical or similar to the Pāli version. The ‘London’ version (GDhp-L) edited by Timothy Lenz (2003) consists of fragments of the *uraga* verses recently discovered in Afghanistan (see Salomon 1999 for details) and now kept in the British Library in London.

(iii) in Sanskrit, in a text called *Udānavarga* (Ud-V). Franz Bernhard (1965) has edited a version in classical Sanskrit from various manuscripts, containing 27 *uraga* verses, produced by serial repetition of several *gāthās*. There is also a Buddhist Hybrid Sanskrit version of the *Udānavarga* from a manuscript written on poplar wood from the Subaṣi monastery now in China (Nakatani 1987), with some different readings.

While the *uraga* verses have a chapter to themselves in PDhp, they are tacked onto the end of the *Bhikṣu-varga* (Chapter on the Monk) in GDhp and Ud-V. This suggests that the *uraga* verses were originally preserved as a separate collection before being added to existing collections (Brough 1962: 196; Norman 2001: xxxi–ii; Ānandajyoti 2004: 7). Although there is an element of chance in how Buddhist manuscripts survive, the number of versions of the *uraga* verses preserved suggests their popularity in that they appear to have been copied out many times as well as put into various Indian dialects. The question then is, what did the Indian Buddhists, who seemed to like these verses so much, think that the *uraga* verses meant?

The problem of ‘the near and far shores’

The refrain of the *uraga* verses describes how the bhikkhu lets go of ‘the near and far shores’. The word bhikkhu here does not necessarily refer only to a male member of the Buddhist monastic saṅgha but to any Buddhist spiritual

practitioner.⁵ The problem with understanding this refrain arises because of the supposed reference of ‘near and far shores’ to the metaphor, very common in early Buddhist texts, of the spiritual life as the crossing from the near shore to the far shore of a flood or stream. An explicit presentation of this image appears in the well-known ‘simile of the raft’ in the Simile of the Water-Snake Discourse (M 22):⁶

‘Monks, it is as if a person had been going along a main road. He might see a great river, the near shore dangerous and insecure, the far shore safe and secure, and for him there was neither a ferry boat nor the span of a bridge for going from the near to the far shore. And he might think: this is indeed a great river... that person, collecting grass, twigs, branches and leaves and making a raft, then relying on that raft, paddling with hands and feet, might cross over safely to the far shore.’⁷

In another discourse (S 35: 238), after a restatement of these same words, the Buddha is reported to have explained the image as follows:

“‘A great river,’ monks, is a designation for the fourfold flood (*ogha*): the flood of sensuality, the flood of existence, the flood of views, the flood of ignorance. ‘The near shore dangerous and insecure,’ monks, is a designation for identity (*sakkāya*).⁸ ‘The far shore safe and secure,’ monks, is a designation for *nirvāṇa*. ‘A raft,’ monks, is a designation for the noble eightfold path, namely, right view... up to right concentration. ‘Paddling

⁵ Dhṛ v.267: ‘One who, here avoiding good and bad, living the spiritual life, | wanders the world contemplating – that one indeed is called a bhikkhu’ (*yo’ dha puññañ ca pāpañ ca bāhetaṃ brahmacariyavā | saṅkhāya loke carati sa ve bhikkhū’ ti vuccati*). Nidd 1: 465, commenting on the word *bhikkhu* in verse at Sn v.810: ‘a *bhikkhu* is either an ordinary person of good character or someone in monastic training’ (*bhikkhuno’ ti puthujjanakalyānassa vā bhikkhuno sekkhassa vā bhikkhuno*). For the gender-inclusivity of the word *bhikkhu* see Collett and Anālayo 2014.

⁶ References to the *nikāyas* are given in two parts: firstly (e.g. M 33) to the *sutta* number as given in the English translation (see Abbreviations), to facilitate access for those who do not read Pāli; secondly (e.g. PTS M i.134–5) to the Pāli Text Society (PTS) edition of the Pāli text.

⁷ PTS M i.134–5 *seyyathāpi, bhikkhave, puriso addhānamaggappaṭipanno. so passeyya mahantaṃ udakaṇṇavaṃ, orimaṃ tīraṃ sāsākaṃ sappaṭibhayaṃ, pārimaṃ tīraṃ khemaṃ appaṭibhayaṃ; na cassa nāvā santāraṇī uttarasetu vā apārā pāraṃ gamanāya. tassa evam assa: ayaṃ kho mahā udakaṇṇavo... puriso tiṇakaṭṭhasākhāpalāsaṃ saṃkaḍḍhitvā, kullaṃ bandhitvā taṃ kullaṃ nissāya hatthehi ca pādehi ca vāyamamāno sothinā pāraṃ uttareyya.*

⁸ *Sakkāya* is here the contrary of *nibbāna*, and must mean ‘the group (*kāya*) of existents (*sat*)’, this world considered as really existent: discussed in Gombrich 2003.

with hands and feet”, monks, is a designation for making an effort.”⁹

This metaphor for the spiritual life as crossing over the flood to the safety of the far shore is found in poetry as well as prose. For instance, in the *Dhaniya-sutta*, immediately following the *Uraga-sutta* in the *Sutta-nipāta*, the Buddha tells Dhaniya (Sn v.21):

‘One crossed to the far shore will overcome the flood,
and then there will be no need for a raft.’¹⁰

But while the metaphor of crossing the flood allows us to make sense of the idea of letting go of the near shore in order to reach the safety of the far shore (*nirvāṇa*), it is hard to understand what it would mean to let go of the far shore

The Pāli commentary’s solutions

The Pāli commentary on the *Sutta-nipāta* records various interpretations of the meaning of *orapāra*, which appear to suggest that the Theravādins were unsure about the meaning of the refrain of the *uraga* verses. The commentary firstly attempts to re-define *orapāra* to mean simply ‘near-shore’, which would solve the problem by making it go away:

‘That *bhikkhu* lets go both the near and far shores’ should be taken as meaning that that *bhikkhu*, controlling anger in this way, and because anger is altogether let go of by the third stage of the path,¹¹ thus lets go of the so-called *orapāra* which are the five fetters connected with the near side (*ora*) of existence.¹² For, generally speaking, *pāra* is a word for a shore;¹³ therefore wording it so that

⁹ PTS S iv.175 *mahā udakaṇṇavo’i kho, bhikkhave, catunn’etaṃ oghānaṃ adhivacanaṃ – kāmoghassa, bhavoghassa, diṭṭhoghassa, avijjoghassa. orimaṃ tīraṃ sāsāṅkaṃ sappaṭibhayan’ti kho, bhikkhave, sakkāyass’etaṃ adhivacanaṃ. pārimaṃ tīraṃ khemaṃ appaṭibhayan’ti kho, bhikkhave, nibbānass’etaṃ adhivacanaṃ. kullaṇ’ti kho, bhikkhave, ariyass’etaṃ aṭṭhaṅgikassa maggassa adhivacanaṃ, seyyathīdaṃ – sammādiṭṭhi ... pe ... sammāsamādhī. tassa hatthehi ca pādehi ca vāyāmo’ti kho, bhikkhave, vīriyārambhass’etaṃ adhivacanaṃ.*

¹⁰ *tiṇṇo pāragato vineyya oghaṃ | attho bhisiyā na vijjati.*

¹¹ Meaning the stage of the non-returner.

¹² The five *pañcorabhāgiyasamyojanāni* are usually translated ‘the five lower fetters’, but the commentary is playing on the connection between *ora* (‘what is nearer’, ‘near shore’ as well as ‘lower’) and *ora-bhāgiya* (DOP i.583: ‘connected with this side of existence, with the lower spheres of existences’).

¹³ The commentator’s analysis is borne out by MW s.v. *pāra*: ‘the further bank or shore or boundary, any bank or shore, the opposite side, the end or limit of anything, the utmost reach or fullest extent’ (my italics); if not by PED s.v. *pāra*: ‘the other side, the opposite shore’.

those [fetters] are both ‘near’ (*ora*) and are the ‘shores’ (*pāra*) of the ocean of *saṃsāra*, the verse says ‘near-shore (*ora-pāra*)’.¹⁴

This shows nicely that the idea of letting go of both the near and the far shores was felt to be problematic, so much so that commentary, in this first part of its discussion, re-defines *orapāra* so that the expression no longer means ‘near and far shores’ but instead means ‘[fetters which are] the shore of the near [side of existence]’.

While this solution to the problem of the ‘near and far shores’ seems extreme, it may in fact be representative of a tendency found beyond the Theravāda Buddhist world. While the refrain of the GDhp and PDhp versions of the *uraga* verses are identical to the Pāli, the Sanskrit of the Ud-V reads quite differently:¹⁵

sa tu bhikṣur idaṃ jahāty apāraṃ
hy urago jīrṇam iva tvacaṃ purāṇam

But that *bhikṣu* lets go this near shore
indeed like the serpent its worn-out old skin.

It would appear that the composer of the Ud-V, while putting the *uraga* verses into classical Sanskrit, took the opportunity to remove the problem of the ‘near and far shores’ by changing the metaphor to the conventional one, that the Buddhist spiritual practitioner should abandon ‘this shore’, and, by implication, should cross over to the far shore.

The Theravādin commentaries, however, do not always present a single view on the meaning of the texts on which they comment; they often present several, sometimes contradictory, explanations of particular words and phrases.¹⁶ The commentary on the *uraga* verses, having taken the same approach as the composer of Ud-V, re-defining the problem away, then goes on to present six pairs of alternative and not entirely compatible interpretations of the words *ora* and *pāra*, now with their more general meanings of ‘near’ and ‘far’:

¹⁴ PTS Pj II 12–13: so bhikkhu jahāti orapāraṃ so evaṃ kodhaṃ vinento bhikkhu yasmā kodho tatiyamaggena sabbaso pahīyati, tasmā orapārasaññitāni pañc’orambhāgiyaṣaṃyojanāni jahātī ti veditabbo, avisesena hi pāraṇ ti tīrassa nāmaṃ, tasmā orāni ca tāni saṃsārasāgarassa pārabhūtāni cā ti katvā orapāraṇ ti vuccanti.

¹⁵ Although in the Sanskrit of the Ud-V from Subaṣi the refrain reads *orapāraṃ*.

¹⁶ Norman 1983 p.119. The commentaries represent a gathering of information from different sources and periods, hence preserving a record of ways the early texts had been understood.

Alternatively, ‘One who controls anger when it has arisen / as if treating with remedies a snake’s spread venom’, that *bhikkhu*, controlling anger completely through the third path, firm in the fruit of non-returning, lets go of the ‘near’ (*ora*) and the ‘far’ (*pāra*).¹⁷ In this respect:

[1] the ‘near’ is one’s own individual existence (*sakattabhāva*), the ‘far’ is one’s next individual existence (*parattabhāva*);

[2] the ‘near’ is the six subjective spheres of perception, the ‘far’ is the six objective spheres of perception;

[3] in the same way, the ‘near’ is the world of human beings, the ‘far’ the world of gods;

[4] the ‘near’ is the sensual domain of experience (*dhātu*), the ‘far’ is the pure form domain and the formless domain;

[5] the ‘near’ is the sensual and the pure form state of existence (*bhāva*), the ‘far’ is the formless state of existence;

[6] the ‘near’ is individual existence (*attabhāva*), the ‘far’ is the means of happiness in individual existence.¹⁸

It is noticeable that some of these six alternatives are quite different from each other and sometimes incompatible among themselves. This, however, is because these six alternatives in fact simply reproduce glosses found in the *Niddesa*, and should therefore be understood to be deferring to an earlier commentarial tradition.

The *Niddesa* is an early commentarial text that is included in the Pāli canon, mainly giving word-glosses on the *Aṭṭhakavagga*, the *Pārāyana*, and the *Khaggavisāṇa-sutta*, texts which were subsequently gathered into the *Suttanipāta*, along with the *Uraga-sutta* and others. The *Niddesa* has a repetitive

¹⁷ The implication being that a non-returner has let go of ‘this world’ but neither will he be reborn in the ‘next world’.

¹⁸ Pts Pj II 13: *atha vā, yo uppatitaṃ vineti kodhaṃ visataṃ sappavisamaṃ va osadhehi, so tatiyamaggena sabbaso kodhaṃ vinetvā anāgāmiphale ṭhito bhikkhu jahāti orapāraṃ. Tattha oran ti sakattabhāvo, pāraṃ ti parattabhāvo; oraṃ vā cha ajjhātikāyatanāni, pāraṃ cha bāhirāyatanāni; tathā oraṃ manussaloko, pāraṃ devaloko, oraṃ kāmādhātu, pāraṃ rūpārūpadhātu, oraṃ kāmārūpabhavo pāraṃ arūpabhavo, oraṃ attabhāvo pāraṃ attabhāvasukhūpakaraṇāni.*

style, giving standard comprehensive lists of glosses on words and phrases, glosses the elements of which are not always relevant to the context in which they are found. The six alternatives reproduced in our commentary on *orapāra* are found in the *Niddesa* as follows:

(i) at Nidd 1 60, in a gloss on Sn v.779 *lokaṃ imaṃ parañ ca*, ‘this world and the next’. The *Niddesa* glosses *imaṃ lokaṃ* (‘this world’) and *paraṃ lokaṃ* (‘the next world’) with nearly the same six pairs of interpretations as we find in the later commentary on the *Uraga-sutta*.¹⁹

(ii) at Nidd 1 109, in a gloss on Sn v.801 *idha vā huraṃ vā*, ‘here or there’. The *Niddesa* glosses *idha* (‘here’) and *huraṃ* (‘there’, ‘in the other world’) in exactly the same way.

(iii) at Nidd 2 422b,²⁰ in a gloss on Sn v.1048 *parovarāni*, ‘things far and near’. The compound can be understood as comprising *para* and *avara* = *ora*.²¹ The *Niddesa* glosses *ora* (‘near’) and *para* (‘far’) in exactly the same way.

We can perhaps now better understand the Pāli commentary’s strategy in reproducing six alternative explanations of *orapāra*. The commentary firstly assimilates the phrase *orapāra* to the the phrase *parovara*, to which it is similar,²² and then reproduces the earlier gloss in the *Niddesa* on *parovara*. This gloss treats the *ora* and *para* of *parovara* as parallel to *imaṃ lokaṃ* and *paraṃ lokaṃ* and to *idha* and *huraṃ*, that is to say, as meaning ‘this world’ and ‘the next world’. The *Niddesa*, followed by the later commentary, then provides a series of alternative explanations of the various pairs, *ora* and *pāra*, *idaṃ lokaṃ* and *paraṃ lokaṃ*, *idha* and *huraṃ*.

¹⁹ The gloss has *sakarūpavedanāsaññāsāṅkhāraviññāṇaṃ* (‘one’s own form, feeling, perceptions, formations and consciousness’) as a gloss of *imaṃ lokaṃ*, and *pararūpavedanāsaññāsāṅkhāraviññāṇaṃ* (‘one’s next ?? form, feeling, perceptions, formations and consciousness’) as a gloss of *paraṃ lokaṃ*, but does not have alternative [6] from Pj II 13.

²⁰ The reference is to entry 422(b) *paroparāni* on p.202 of the PTS ed.

²¹ The phrase *parovara* alternates with *paropara* in all eds. (see PED 439), and occurs elsewhere with the meaning ‘high and low’, ‘all kinds’.

²² Pj II 590 on *parovarāni* at Sn v.1048 prefers option [1] above, taking *pāra* as ‘one’s next individual existence’ and *ora* as ‘one’s own individual existence’. Norman 2001 p.406 interprets the commentary to mean ‘the existences of others and one’s own existence’ but this would not seem to be correct.

The pairing of ‘this world’ and the ‘next world’ is found in early Buddhist poetry, such as the *Sutta-nipāta*, in place of the full rebirth cosmology of traditional Buddhism. I will explore this topic further below. For the moment I will conclude this discussion of the Pāli commentaries on *orapāra* with the observation that while the *Niddesa* implies that *orapāra* can be understood in terms of ‘this world’ and ‘the next world’, so that it offers alternative explanations of this pair, the later commentary appears to prefer to re-define *orapāra* as ‘near-shore’.²³ No doubt the Pāli commentary is not so willing to allow that *orapāra* can mean ‘the near and far shores’ because this would conflict with the ‘crossing the stream’ metaphor. It is instructive in this regard to notice, however, that the phrase *orapāra* seems to occur in only one other passage in pre-commentarial Pāli literature,²⁴ in the *Milindapañha* (Miln 319), where it has to mean ‘near and far shores’. Arguing that *nirvāṇa*, like the great ocean, is without a counterpart, Nāgasena tells King Milinda that:

‘The great ocean is huge and without near and far shores (*an-orapāra*), and is not filled up by all the rivers flowing into it; and likewise, great king, *nirvāṇa* is huge and without near and far shores and is not filled by all the beings attaining it.’²⁵

Modern translators and interpreters

Translating *so bhikkhu jahāti orapāra*, Fausbøll (1898) wrote, ‘That *bhikkhu* leaves this and the further shore’, hence not trying to solve the problem that the verse implies. Lord Chalmers (1932), however, addressed the problem, translating, ‘An almsman sheds beliefs in this or after-worlds’, the translation of *orapāra* as ‘this or after-worlds’ evidently taking into account the Pāli commentary. I.B. Horner criticised this interpretation as ‘unnecessarily far-

²³ It would seem however that ultimately the commentary prefers its own interpretation of *orapāra* to mean ‘near-shore’, since it concludes: ‘Thus, in reference to the *orapāra*, letting go of desire and passion through the fourth path [that of the *arahant*], it is said that he ‘lets go this world and the next world (*orapāra*)’. In this respect, there is no desire and passion whatever towards individual existence and so on in this world for a non-returner, because his sensual passion has been given up. And yet nevertheless, it might be that, having compiled all these kinds of near and far things (*orapāra*), the sense of the explanation has an appearance like that of [those fetters let go of at] the third path and so on, therefore, through the letting go of desire and passion, the text says that “one lets go of the near-shore (*orapāra*)”.’

²⁴ Based on a text search using the Digital Pali Reader (<http://pali.sirimangalo.org>).

²⁵ *mahāsamuddo mahanto anorapāro, na paripūrati sabbasavantīhi, evameva kho, mahārāja, nibbānaṃ mahantaṃ anorapāraṃ, na pūrati sabbasattehi.*

fetches' (1936: 291), in a discussion of what she calls 'the somewhat puzzling phrase *jahāti orapāraṃ*'. She proposes that *jahāti orapāraṃ* might be understood as a *bahuvrīhi* compound meaning 'he abandons what is beyond (*pāra*) this world (*ora*)',²⁶ meaning, 'he abandons the beyond of this world'. Horner goes on to explain her proposed meaning as follows: 'This suggestion would mean that it is not sufficient merely to attain to the beyond of this world; it is not the end of what man is potentially capable of attaining. For he can leave the beyond of this lower world to proceed ever further in development' (1936: 291). She goes on to favour Fausbøll's quite literal rendering, in that leaving this and the further shore means that the *bhikkhu* 'has set out on a journey whose end is not necessarily in sight' (1936: 292).

Going back to translations, Hare (1944) tried, 'That monk quits bounds both here and yon', which appears to incorporate I.B. Horner's thoughts on the matter. John Brough has been the most influential modern interpreter of *orapāra*, however. In his edition of GDhp-K he comments at length on the *uruga* verses. Disagreeing with I.B. Horner, he says 'it seems difficult to take *orapāraṃ* other than as a *dvandva*' (Brough 1962: 202), and he prefers Lord Chalmers' translation of *jahāti orapāraṃ*, although he comments: 'if we are to go so far as to see in the phrase "a shedding of beliefs" – which is altogether foreign to the Pāli commentator – then there is no need to strain the sense of *pāra* by taking it to mean "after-worlds". The latter is forced upon the Pāli commentator only because of the difficulty, in Theravāda terms, of "abandoning *nirvāṇa*".' (202)

Brough in fact takes a rather radical view of the meaning of *jahāti orapāraṃ*. He acknowledges the problem of the 'near and far shores', and the consequent difficulty for the Pāli commentator of making sense of the idea of letting go of *nirvāṇa*. But Brough solves the problem by supposing it is deliberate – he believes that the idea of 'letting go of the near and far shores' was 'intended to be paradoxical (since the 'further shore' is commonly the whole aim of religious endeavour)' (202), and that the verse thus appears to be recommending the 'shedding of beliefs' in the duality of *samsāra* and *nirvāṇa*. He goes on to observe how such a paradox is:

'an early example of the pseudo-profundity so richly developed in later Mahāyāna literature... The 'higher wisdom' sees that *samsāra* (*ora*) and *nirvāṇa* (*pāra*) are one, and the perfected man is ultimately indifferent to both, since in

²⁶ That is to say, not a *dvandva* meaning 'the near shore and the far shore'. Brough (1962: 202) however points out that Horner must have meant *tatpuruṣa* rather than *bahuvrīhi*.

effect neither exist, *paramārthataḥ* [i.e., ultimately]’ (1962: 202).²⁷

He can thus conclude that the Pāli commentator ‘was clearly embarrassed by *orapāraṃ*, and presumably recognised in it a phrase with dangerously Mahāyānist tendencies.’ (202) As I will go on to show, however, there is no need to suppose that the phrase *jahāti orapāraṃ* is paradoxical, and neither is it necessary to compare it to the use of paradox in Mahāyāna.

Nevertheless, Brough’s views have proved influential. In some lectures, published as *A Philological Approach to Buddhism*, Prof. K.R. Norman explains that the Pāli commentary on the *uruga* verses recognised that the ‘idea of leaving behind the far shore in the form of *nirvāṇa* was a Mahāyāna idea, which as a Theravādin he was very reluctant to accept’ (Norman 2006: 215). But he goes on to ask if the Mahāyāna idea could have been in existence when the *uruga* verses were composed. He concludes that *orapāra* refers to ‘this world’ and ‘the next world’:

‘My own belief is that the reference is not to *samsāra* and to the far shore of *samsāra*, i.e. *nibbāna*, but to this world and the next, and I believe that the verse was first formulated in a situation where the author was considering this world and the afterlife, rather than the endless stream of *samsāra*’ (2006: 215).

Consequently, Norman’s translation of *jahāti orapāraṃ* reads ‘That *bhikkhu*... leaves this shore and the far shore’, with a note explaining that *ora* refers to this world and *pāraṃ* to the next (Norman 2001: 147).²⁸

Whether or not we can see in the Pāli commentary a worry about dangerous Mahāyāna tendencies in the *uruga* verses, we can observe that Norman’s own belief about the meaning of *orapāra* is quite compatible with the traditional Buddhist one, in that, as we have seen, the Pāli commentary also implies in its explanations that *orapāraṃ* may refer to ‘this world and the next’. To sum up: modern interpreters of the *uruga* verses have certainly seen a puzzle and

²⁷ Brough cites Nāgārjuna, *Mūlamadhyamakakārikā* 25.3 as an example of the occurrence of the pseudo-profound paradox that *samsāra* and *nirvāṇa* are one. However, this verse from Nāgārjuna describes *nirvāṇa* as ‘not abandoned’ (*aprahīnaṃ*), ‘not acquired’ (*asamprāptaṃ*), and so on. The point is not that one should ‘shed belief in *samsāra* and *nirvāṇa*’, but that one should recognize that the distinction between *samsāra* and *nirvāṇa* is a conventional truth that does not ultimately hold. In the *Vimalakīrti-nirdeśa* ch.8 (Lamotte 1976: 193) the Bodhisattva Dāntamati teaches the non-duality of *samsāra* and *nirvāṇa*. It should be noted however that non-duality is not the same as unity and that the *sūtra* does not say that the Bodhisattva should be indifferent.

²⁸ Norman does not explain the reasons for his belief, though below I will present some canonical discourses in favour of it. Valerie Roebuck (2010: 88–92) follows Norman’s approach in her translation of the *uruga* verses in an appendix to her translation of the *Dhammapada*.

a problem in the idea of letting go both the near and far shores. It has led I.B. Horner to analyse *orapāra* as ‘the beyond of this world’, and to guess that the *bhikkhu* should let go even of attachment to a state beyond this world as the object of his spiritual striving. It has led John Brough to denounce *orapāra* as a pseudo-profound paradox, a kind of cheap spiritual rhetoric. And it has led K.R. Norman to the belief that *ora* must refer, not to ‘this shore’, but to ‘this world’, and *pāra* not to ‘the other shore’, but to ‘the next world’, a belief already seen in the Pāli commentaries old and new. In short, then, no interpreter, old or new, seems to have been able to make sense of the surface meaning of *so bhikkhu jahāti orapāraṃ*, ‘that *bhikkhu* lets go both the near and far shores’. Before I present a possible solution to this problem, based on canonical Buddhist teachings that preserve the surface meaning of the verse, I will consider what has turned out thus far to be the dominant interpretation of *orapāra*, as ‘this world and the next world’.

The ‘near and far shores’ as ‘this world and the next’

We have seen how the commentarial interpretation of *orapāra* takes *ora* and *pāra* in their more general meanings of ‘near’ and ‘far’ and hence takes them together as an equivalent of expressions meaning ‘this world and the next’. To ‘let go of this world and the next’ would imply abandoning those factors responsible for continued existence here and beyond, a thought entirely congruent with the message of the *uruga* verses. The idea of a binary rebirth cosmology, in which people are reborn into ‘the other world’, and are reborn into this world from that, was a precursor to the more elaborate ethicized eschatology of early Buddhism, in which people are reborn into one of five or six realms according to the ethical quality of their actions (Obeyesekere 2002: 72–149). Richard Gombrich has noted that, despite the developed cosmology of Buddhism, the idea of ‘this world’ and ‘the next world’ remained as an idiom, especially in poetry (Gombrich 2009: 35). An example is at Sn v.779:

The sage, completely understanding perception,
crosses the flood unsullied by grasping.
With the arrow pulled out, living heedfully,
he does not wish for this world or the next.²⁹

²⁹ *saññaṃ pariññā vitareyya oghaṃ | pariggaḥesu muni nopalitto | abbhūlhasallo caraṃ appamatto | nāsiṃsati lokam imaṃ parañ cā ti ||*

We see in these verses how letting go of hope for further existence in this world and the next is said to be an equivalent to crossing the flood.

The theme of letting go of this world and the next is explicit in some discourses. Sāriputta gives teachings to the Buddha's devoted lay-follower Anāthapiṇḍika, who is on his deathbed, among them the following (M 143, PTS iii.261):

‘Householder, you should train yourself in this way: “I shall not hold on to this world (*idhaloka*), and my consciousness shall not become reliant on this world”... ‘I shall not hold on to the other world (*paraloka*), and my consciousness shall not become reliant on the other world.’”

This teaching is similar to a trope found in several discourses, in which the Buddha recommends a line of thought culminating in the realisation:

‘When there is no death or rebirth, neither here (*idha*) nor there (*huraṃ*) nor in between exists. Just this is the end of suffering.’³⁰

It is clear that not only is the idiom of ‘this world’ (or ‘here’) and ‘the next world’ (or ‘there’) found in early Buddhist teachings as a pair which summarises all the realms of rebirth in *samsāra*, but it is recommended that the Buddhist practitioner not hold on to them. Since likewise in the *uruga* verses the *bhikkhu* is enjoined to let go of the *orapāra*, it makes sense to interpret the *orapāra* in terms of ‘this world and the next’, an interpretation thus implied by the traditional commentary and made explicit by K.R. Norman and others. However, the uncertainties involved in this interpretation leave room for a second interpretation of *orapāra*, which retains the surface meaning of *orapāra* as ‘near and far shores’, but understands these shores within a different metaphor.

The ‘near and far shores’ of the river of sense experience

According to this second interpretation, rather than referring to *samsāra* and *nirvāṇa*, as in the crossing the flood metaphor, *ora* and *pāra* are to be understood as referring to the near and far shores of the stream of the Dharma flowing to the ocean of *nirvāṇa*. This metaphor is the subject of *The Simile of the Great Tree-Trunk* discourse at S 35:241.³¹

At one time the Blessed One was living at Kosambī, on the banks of the

³⁰ *cutūpapāte asati nevidha na huraṃ na ubhayamantarena*: M 144, PTS iii.266 = S 35:87, PTS iv.59, with close parallels at Ud 1:10, Ud 8:4, S 12:40, S 35:87.

³¹ Found in PTS S iv.179–81, with two parallels in Chinese translation, according to <https://suttacentral.net/sn35.241>.

river Ganges. The Blessed One saw a large tree trunk being carried along by the current of the river Ganges. Seeing this he addressed the monks:

‘Monks, do you see that large tree trunk being carried along by the current of the river Ganges?’

‘Certainly, lord.’

‘Monks, if that tree trunk does not go towards (*upagacchati*) the near bank (*orimaṃ tīraṃ*), does not go towards the far bank (*pārimaṃ tīraṃ*)... then that tree trunk will tilt, incline and tend towards the ocean. For what reason? Because, monks, the current of the river Ganges tilts, inclines and tends towards the ocean. Likewise, monks, if you do not drift over to the near bank, do not drift over to the far bank... you will tilt, incline and tend towards *nirvāṇa*. For what reason? Because, monks, right view tilts, inclines and tends towards *nirvana*.’

When this had been said, a certain monk said this to the Blessed One:

‘But what, lord, is the near bank? What is the far bank?...’

‘Monk, “the near bank” is a designation for the six subjective spheres of perception (*ajjhakkāni āyatanāni*). “The far bank” is a designation for the six objective spheres of perception (*bāhirāni āyatanāni*)...’

The elisions indicated by ellipses are of further elements of the ‘stream of the Dharma’ metaphor that are not relevant here. In terms of this metaphor, the *bhikkhu* should indeed let go of the near and far shores, with the meaning of abandoning the subjective and objective spheres of perception. By letting go of these near and far shores, the *bhikkhu* will remain in the stream of the Dharma which will carry him or her to the ocean of *nirvāṇa*. The extended metaphor seems only to appear in this one discourse in the Pāli canon, but its components are found elsewhere.

The ‘stream of the Dharma’ metaphor contains four components: (i) near shore = subjective sense spheres; (ii) far shore = objective sense spheres; (iii) river = stream of the Dharma; (iv) ocean = *nirvāṇa*. Elements (iii) and (iv), the river flowing into the ocean, are found in a simile which

recurs many times in the *Samyutta-nikāya*, for instance in reference to the eightfold path:

‘Just as, monks, the river Ganges tilts, inclines and tends towards the ocean, likewise the monk developing and frequently practising the noble eightfold path tilts, inclines and tends towards *nirvāṇa*.’³²

This river and ocean metaphor appears so often in the *Samyutta-nikāya* that it is called the ‘Ganges repetition’ (*gaṅgāpeyyāla*), appearing not only in reference to the eightfold path (*aṭṭhaṅgika magga*) (S 45:91 *et seq.*), but also in reference to the factors of awakening (*bojjhaṅga*) (S 46: 131f.), to the establishments of mindfulness (*satipaṭṭhāna*) (S 47:51 *et seq.*), to the spiritual faculties (*bodhindriya*) (S 48:71 *et seq.*), to the spiritual powers (*bala*) (S 50:55 *et seq.*), and to the bases for success (*iddhipāda*) (S 51:33f *et seq.*). Elsewhere it appears with reference to the disciples who are practising the Buddhist path. In M 73, after a long eulogy of the Buddha and his awakened disciples, Vacchagotta the wanderer concludes:

‘Mr Gotama, just as the river Ganges tilts, inclines and tends toward the ocean and stays there, likewise this assembly of Mr Gotama, consisting in both wanderers and householders, tilts, inclines and tends towards *nirvāṇa* and stays there.’³³

The comparison of the path to *nirvāṇa* to a river or stream is embedded in the category of the ‘stream-entrant’ (*sotāpanna*), the first category of awakened being, who has removed the first three fetters, and is now bound to gain awakening. The stream of Dharma that flows into the ocean of *nirvāṇa* is in several discourses compared to rain falling on the mountains, the water consequently filling streams, pools and rivers on the way to the ocean.³⁴

Turning now to elements (i) and (ii) of the ‘stream of Dharma’ metaphor, it appears to be only in the *Simile of the Great Tree-Trunk Discourse*, given above, that the near bank of the river is compared to the subjective sense

³² S 45:91 (PTS S v.38): *seyyathāpi, bhikkhave, gaṅgā nadī samuddaninnā samuddapoṇā samuddapabbhārā; evam eva kho, bhikkhave, bhikkhu ariyaṃ aṭṭhaṅgikaṃ maggaṃ bhāvento ariyaṃ aṭṭhaṅgikaṃ maggaṃ bahulikaronto nibbānaninno hoti nibbānapoṇo nibbānapabbhāro.*

³³ PTS M i.493: *seyyathāpi, bho gotama, gaṅgā nadī samuddaninnā samuddapoṇā samuddapabbhārā samuddaṃ āhacca tiṭṭhati, evam evāyaṃ bho gotamassa parisā sagahaṭṭhapabbajitā nibbānaninnā nibbānapoṇā nibbānapabbhārā nibbānaṃ āhacca tiṭṭhati.* The *Madhyama-āgama* version contains similar metaphors (Anālayo 2011: 396–7).

³⁴ Especially S 55:38 (PTS S v.396), where the stream is compared to noble disciples who are stream-entrants.

spheres, and the far bank of the river to the objective sense spheres. These ‘subjective sense spheres’ are the ‘spheres of perception’ (*āyatanaṇi*) which ‘belong to oneself’ (*ajjhattikāṇi*).³⁵ They are elsewhere elaborated in terms of the ‘spheres’ of the eye, ear, nose, tongue, body and mind.³⁶ The ‘objective sense spheres’ are the ‘spheres of perception’ which are ‘external’ (*bāhira*), elaborated in terms of visual forms, sounds, smells, tastes, tangibles and mental objects (*dhammā*). The distinction of ‘subjective’ and ‘objective’ amounts to the experiential distinction of ‘what belongs to oneself’ and ‘what is external [to oneself]’. An uninstructed worldly person might regard what belongs to oneself as a really existing subjective self, with its feelings and passions; and what is external as an objective world worth holding on to. However, as is evident in the entire *Saḷāyatana-saṃyutta* of the *Saṃyutta-nikāya* (S 35), the Buddha is said to have recommended that his followers observe the impermanent, unsatisfactory and insubstantial characteristics of both the subjective and the objective sense spheres in order to gain liberation.

When imagined as the ‘near shore’ and the ‘far shore’, the subjective and objective sense spheres therefore correspond to the dichotomy of self and world, viewed as really existing, and as the subject and objects respectively of craving. In terms of the Simile of the Great Tree-Trunk Discourse, the *bhikkhu* who does not ‘go towards’ (*upagacchati*) the near bank and the far bank does not mistake the subjective sense spheres for a permanent self nor mistake the objective sense spheres for a world worth holding on to.³⁷ To interpret the *uruga* verses in terms of this metaphor, the thought that ‘that *bhikkhu* lets go both the near and far shores’ (*so bhikkhu jahāti orapāraṃ*) can be understood to imply that the Buddhist practitioner abandons subjective and objective sense spheres, as an example of one important Buddhist spiritual exercise aiming at liberation.

³⁵ Definitions from DOP i.320 s.v. *āyatana*; DOP i.35 s.v. *ajjhattika*. The word *ajjhattika* can be analysed as *adhi* (‘in regard to’) + *atta* (‘self’) + *ika* (possessive suffix).

³⁶ Listed at D 33 (PTS D iii.243) among lists of six things rightly declared by the Blessed one.

³⁷ S 35:71, for example, explains how seeing the subjective sense-spheres in terms of ‘this is mine, this I am, this is my self’ (*etaṃ mama, eso ’ham asmi, eso me attā*) leads to rebirth; in S 35:136, for instance, explains that so long as one sees the objective sense-spheres as permanent, and believes of visual forms (and so on) that ‘it exists’ (*atthi*), there is suffering.

The ‘far and near shores’ in Dhammapada v.385

This interpretation of *orapāra* in terms of the subjective and objective sense realms is given as an alternative explanation [2] in the Pāli commentaries discussed above, though without any elaboration. However, the commentary on another early Buddhist verse, *Dhammapada* v.385, also concerning the ‘far and near shores’, explicitly elaborates this interpretation. *Dhammapada* v.385 runs:

yassa pāraṃ apāraṃ vā pārāpāraṃ na vijjati
vītaddaraṃ viṣaṃyuttaṃ taṃ ahaṃ brūmi brāhmaṇaṃ³⁸

For whom exist neither far or near shores, nor both far shore and near shore,
Without distress, without attachment – him I call a brāhmaṇa.

John Brough (1962: 202) claims that it is ‘difficult to see how DhP v.385 could be understood in any other way’ than as a pseudo-profound metaphysical paradox akin to Mahāyāna thought like the refrain from the *uruga* verses. Norman (1997: 155) once again states his belief that the ‘near shore’ and the ‘far shore’ refer to this world and the next. Yet the Pāli commentary interprets the *gāthā* more or less as we would expect if we were to understand the ‘near shore’ and the ‘far shore’ in terms of the ‘stream of the Dharma’ metaphor:

‘In this stanza, “the far shore” is the six subjective sense spheres. “The near shore” is the six objective sense spheres. “Far and near shore” is them both. “Does not exist” means that for whom, through the non-existence of grasping in terms of “I” or “mine”, this “everything” does not exist, through the disappearance of afflictions and distress, that person is “without distress” and “without attachment” to all afflictions: I call that person a *brāhmaṇa* – that is the meaning.’³⁹

I say ‘more or less as we would expect’, because the commentary appears to have exchanged the references of ‘near shore’ and ‘far shore’. Assuming that this was not deliberate but was rather a mistake,⁴⁰ we see that, for the commentary, the

³⁸ With close parallels in PDhp, GDhp and Ud-V (Ānandajyoti 2007: 171).

³⁹ DhP-a iv.141: *tattha pāraṃ ti ajjhattikāni cha āyatanāni. Apāraṃ ti bāhirāni cha āyatanāni. Pārāpāraṃ ti tadubhayaṃ. na vijjatīti yassa sabbam p’etaṃ ahaṃ’ti vā mamaṃ’ti vā gahaṇābhāvena natthi, taṃ kilesadarathānaṃ viḡamena vītaddaraṃ sabbakilēsehi viṣaṃyuttaṃ ahaṃ brāhmaṇaṃ vadāmi’ti attho.*

⁴⁰ The error, if it is one, is preserved in both Be and PTS, so may not be recent; Brough (1962: 202) noticed the inconsistency.

juxtaposition of ‘near shore’ and ‘far shore’ is not a metaphysical paradox, nor a reference to this world and the next, but a reference to the ‘stream of Dharma’ metaphor as we also find it in the *Simile of the Great Tree Trunk* discourse. In relation to this metaphor, the commentary has to explain in what sense the near and far shores do not exist for the *brāhmaṇa* or spiritual person; the commentary does so by explaining that it is the grasping in terms of ‘I’ and ‘mine’ that does not exist, an interpretation that could also apply to the *uruga* verses refrain.

However, it is noticeable that the story prefixed to the commentary on the verse appears to understand the ‘far shore’ in terms of the ‘crossing the flood’ metaphor:

‘For whom the far shore’ – the teacher gave this Dharma-teaching while living in the Jeta grove, at the instigation of Māra. One day, appearing to be a person, he approached the teacher and asked: ‘Lord, people say “the far shore, the far shore (*pāraṃ pāraṃ*)”’. What is it that is called “the far shore”? The teacher, knowing that it was Māra, said: ‘Evil One, what have you to do with the far shore? It can only be attained by those without passion.’ And he spoke this stanza...⁴¹

This suggests that it was by no means obvious to the composer of the story that the *gāthā* was to be interpreted in terms of the ‘stream of the Dharma’ metaphor; rather, the mention of the ‘far shore’ prompted the association with the ‘crossing the flood’ metaphor as the only one available. This may suggest that the story belonged to a different commentarial tradition from the word commentary.

The role of metaphor in the *uruga* verses

I have discussed two possible interpretations of *orapāra*, as meaning ‘this world and the next’, and as meaning ‘the near and far shores’, but within the ‘stream of the Dharma’ metaphor. There is no way to establish the original meaning of the *uruga* verses refrain, but I have tried to show how the *Simile of the Great Tree Trunk Discourse* and *Dhammapada* v.385 provide some evidence for the second interpretation. I will conclude this discussion of the meaning of *orapāra*

⁴¹ Dhṛ-a iv. 140–1: *yassa pāraṇ ti imaṃ dhammadesanaṃ satthā jetavane viharanto māraṃ ārabha kathesi. so kir’ ekasmiṃ divase aññataro puriso viya hutvā satthāraṃ upasaṅkamitvā pucchi bhante, pāraṃ pāraṇ ti vuccati, kin nu kho etaṃ pāraṃ nāmā’ti. satthā māro ayan’ti viditvā, pāpima, kiṃ tava pārena, tañ hi vītarāgehi pattabban’ti vatvā imaṃ gātham āha...* Also translated in Burlingame 1921: 277.

with a reconstruction of the poetic purpose of the *uraga* verses refrain, based on this second interpretation, suggesting how the original hearers and reciters of the verses may have appreciated them. It implies that the composer(s) of the *uraga* verses assumed a knowledge of both the ‘crossing the flood’ metaphor and the ‘stream of the Dharma’ metaphor, and made use of their overlap for poetic effect.

It is curious to notice that a component of the ‘crossing the flood’ metaphor appears embedded in the imagery of the *uraga* verses. In v.15 of the Pāli version we read:⁴²

yassa darathajā na santi keci
oraṃ āgamanāya paccayāse...

In whom there aren’t any [states] born of distress
which are causes for returning to the near shore – [that *bhikkhu*...]

The word *ora* here has the unmistakable metaphorical connotation of *samsāra*. The commentary here (Pj II 24) glosses *ora* as ‘personality’ (*sakkāya*), quoting S 35: 238, already cited, in which the Buddha is said to explain the ‘crossing the flood’ metaphor, saying that “‘The near shore dangerous and insecure,’ monks, is a designation for personality.’ Other components of the ‘crossing the flood’ metaphor also appear in the *uraga* verses, but without their meaning in that context. That *bhikkhu* cuts off craving ‘having dried up a fast-flowing river’:⁴³ the river of craving is akin to the flood of *samsāra*. That *bhikkhu* tears apart conceit ‘like a great flood (*ogha*) a very weak pontoon made of reeds’:⁴⁴ here the ‘flood’ does not represent *samsāra* but effort. Finally, that *bhikkhu* has ‘crossed over (*tiṇṇa*) doubt’,⁴⁵ where the image of ‘crossing over’ implies a flood to be crossed. The effect of these almost subliminal allusions to the ‘crossing

⁴² Also at GDhp-K 88b, though with a first *pāda* corresponding to Pāli *yassānusayā na santi keci* = Sn v.14a.

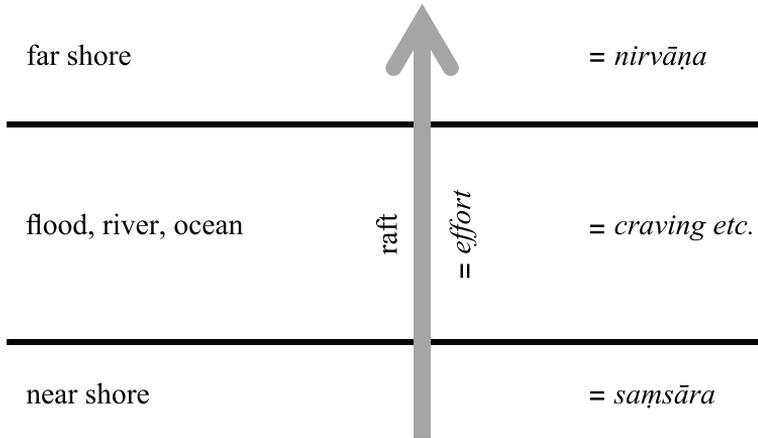
⁴³ *saritaṃ sīghasaraṃ visosayitvā* (Sn v.3); the *pāda* is also in GDhp-K 84, PDhp 410 and Ud-V 32.74. Norman 2001: 148 and Brough 1962: 200 read *va sosayitvā* for *visosayitvā*, ‘as if drying up a fast-flowing river’, which would be a preferable reading, though it is unattested.

⁴⁴ *naḷasetuṃ va sudubbalaṃ mahogho* (Sn v.4); the *pāda* is also in GDhp-K 85 and Ud-V 32.71.

⁴⁵ *tiṇṇakathaṃkatho* (Sn v.17); however, the parallel at Ud-V 32.76 reads *chinnakathaṃkatho* ‘he has cut off doubt’, and the parallel in GDhp-L 13, reconstructed by Lenz, reads *vidakasakasa* = Pāli *vītakathaṃkatho* ‘without doubt’; Lenz (2003: 76) proposes that *vidakasakasa* should be adopted for the parallel at GDhp-K 90.

the flood’ metaphor is to reinforce its presence in the mind of the reader. The metaphor is both spatial and dynamic, and its components together with its implication of movement between them can be represented diagrammatically as follows:

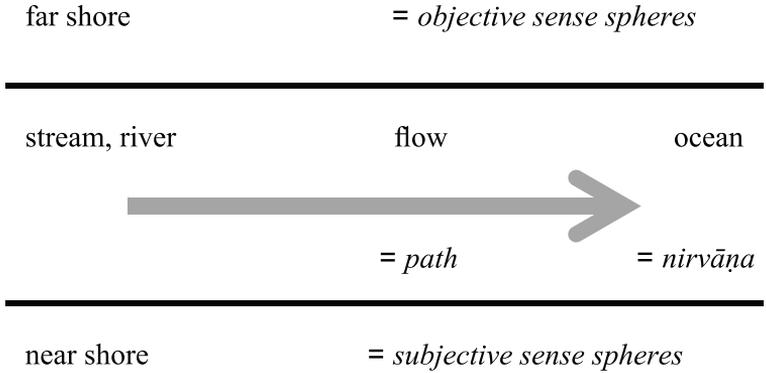
‘crossing the flood’ metaphor



This metaphor was no doubt highly familiar to early Buddhists hearing or reciting the *uruga* verses, since it is ubiquitous in early Buddhist literature; and it has evidently remained familiar to later Buddhists and scholars. However, when one comes upon the refrain of the *uruga* verses, *so bhikkhu jahāti orapāraṃ*, ‘that *bhikkhu* lets go both the near and far shores’, the expectations produced by the association of the ‘near shore’ and ‘far shore’ with the ‘crossing the flood’ metaphor are suddenly thwarted. If the *bhikkhu* lets go of the far shore, he or she will thereby not ‘cross the flood’ of *saṃsāra* and will not reach *nirvāṇa*. The reader or reciter would thereby experience a cognitive dissonance, since the idea of letting go of the far shore as well as the near shore conflicts with the idea of letting go of the near shore in order to reach the far shore. This dissonance would, I suggest, initiate a process akin to puzzle-solving in the mind of the hearer, until he or she realised, either through familiarity or instruction, that the metaphorical context of the refrain was the ‘stream of the Dharma’ metaphor rather than the ‘crossing

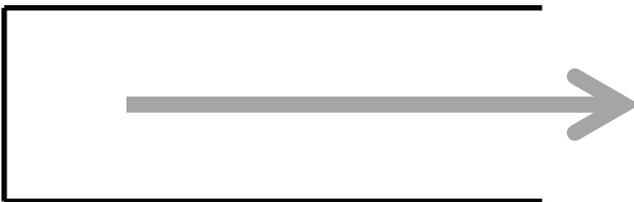
the flood’ one. The ‘stream of the Dharma’ metaphor is also spatial and dynamic and can be represented like this:

‘stream of the Dharma’ metaphor



Once the hearer realizes the correct metaphorical context for the refrain ‘that *bhikkhu* lets go both near and far shores’, it suddenly makes sense: the *bhikkhu*’s letting go of the ‘near and far shores’ is precisely how he or she practises the path that leads, or rather flows, to *nirvāṇa*. And then, I suggest, there is confirmation of this understanding in the final verse of the refrain, which compares a *bhikkhu* letting go the near and far shores to a serpent shedding its skin. A diagrammatic representation of this image proves the point:

serpent shedding its skin



This diagram is not supposed to replace the imaginative effect of encountering the image of a serpent shedding its skin, which presumably would have been familiar to hearers and reader in ancient India through their experience of snakes in the natural world around them. Rather, the diagram makes explicit the dynamic similarity of the ‘stream of the Dharma’ metaphor to the image of a serpent shedding its skin. Recognising this similarity, even implicitly, the hearer would find that their interpretation of the refrain in terms of the ‘stream of the Dharma’ metaphor is confirmed. By contrast, not only does the image of a *bhikkhu* letting go of both near and far shores produce cognitive dissonance when understood in terms of the ‘crossing the flood’ metaphor, but the dynamism of this metaphor is not readily comparable with the image of a serpent shedding its skin.

It might thereby appear that the image of a serpent shedding its skin was merely a naturalistic image used to illustrate the ‘stream of the Dharma’ metaphor. I will conclude this section on the role of metaphor in the *uraga* verses by showing how the image of the serpent is integral to the poem’s message. The word *uraga* means ‘chest-going’, but this beast should be distinguished from the snake (*sappa*) which appears in one of the *gāthās*:⁴⁶

yo uppatitaṃ vineti kodhaṃ
 visataṃ sappavisam va osadhehi
 so bhikkhu jahāti...

One who controls anger when it has arisen
 as if with remedies a snake’s spread venom –

Jayawickrama (1977: 15–16) explains the mysterious significance of the *uraga*. As the commentary (Pj II 13) tells us, some *uragas* can change shape at will, and may be creatures of land or water. Elsewhere the Buddha explains that one should respect the *uraga* that may bite unexpectedly, for ‘The *uraga* moves in fierce glory in whatever guise it likes’ (S 3:1).⁴⁷ Such semi-divine shape-shifters are related to the *nāgas* of Buddhist mythology, serpent-dragons of immense power and size (e.g. S 46:1; discussed in Sutherland 1991: 38f.). The *bhikkhu* who lets go of both near and far shores is thus compared to a shape-shifting semi-divine serpent, not merely to a snake.⁴⁸

⁴⁶ Sn v.1, with parallels in PDhp 399–403, GDhp-K 84 and Ud-V 32.62–5.

⁴⁷ PTS S i.69 *uccāvacehi vaṇṇehi urago carati tejasī*.

⁴⁸ The simile of an *uraga* shedding its skin in the *uraga* verses is to be distinguished from

Conclusion: early Buddhist non-dualism

Nyanaponika Thera detects in the phrase *orapāra* an antithesis to be overcome, seeing the overcoming of opposites and the detachment from extremes as one of the recurrent themes of the *Sutta-nipāta* as a whole (1955: 235; 1977). Though Nyanaponika follows commentarial tradition in translating *orapāra* as ‘the here and the beyond’, his point is equally valid if we translate *orapāra* as ‘the near and far shores’, and if we interpret these as the subjective and objective sense spheres. Nyanaponika’s interpretation suggests that the *uraga* verses point to an experience beyond antitheses or opposites, which we may call non-dual. However, the idea that we might express the goal of Buddhist practice in terms of a non-dual experience, or, in other words, in terms of the realization of reality as non-dual, is not part of the orthodox Theravāda worldview. Bhikkhu Bodhi, for instance, distinguishing the Theravāda approach from non-dual philosophies, writes that ‘the Theravāda makes the antithesis of *saṃsāra* and *nirvāṇa* the starting point of the entire quest for deliverance’ (Bodhi 1998).⁴⁹ This point is evidently borne out by the Theravādin commentary on the *uraga* verses, which, as we have seen, attempt to characterise the meaning of the ‘near and far shores’ in terms of ‘crossing the flood’ of *saṃsāra* to the goal of *nirvāṇa*.

However, the ‘near and far shores’ of the *uraga* verses may be understood as referring to the ‘stream of the Dharma’ and not ‘crossing the flood’. Once we go on to identify the ‘near shore’ with the subjective sense spheres and the ‘far shore’ with the objective sense spheres, and the *bhikkhu* as letting go of them both, it would appear that such a practitioner has let go of a fundamental

a superficially similar use of the simile in in both Buddhist and non-Buddhist literature. In the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* (4.4.7) we read ‘As the cast-off skin of a snake lies dead on an ant-hill, given up, likewise lies this corpse. And this non-bodily immortal life-breath (*prāṇa*) is reality (*brahman*) indeed, is splendour indeed.’ The simile is here used to illustrate the duality of mortal body (the snake’s cast-off skin) and immortal true Self. The simile is used in the same way in the late-canonical Buddhist work, the *Petavatthu* (1.12.1): ‘Just as the snake travels on, having let go of its worn out skin, its body, so does the departed his useless body once it has died.’ But in the *uraga* verses, there is no dualism between body and spirit: instead there is an implied comparison between the serpent’s skin and unwholesome mental and emotional states. Having shaken off such blemishes the *bhikkhu* slips free in the unfixing shape of a magical beast.

⁴⁹ He goes so far as to claim that: ‘The teaching of the Buddha as found in the Pali canon does not endorse a philosophy of non-dualism of any variety, nor, I would add, can a non-dualistic perspective be found lying implicit within the Buddha’s discourses’ (Bodhi 1998).

duality found in unawakened experience. As the Buddha is reported to have said (S 35:92, PTS iv.67):

‘Monks, I will teach you the duality (*dvaya*), so listen. What, monks, is the duality? Just the eye and forms, just the ear and sounds, just the nose and smells, just the tongue and tastes, just the body and tangibles, just the mind and mental objects. Monks, this is said to be the duality.’

Although the experience of such a monk is never described in terms of non-duality (*advaya*) in the Pāli discourses, such an experience is clearly implied by the *uraga* verses.

Later Buddhists made explicit what was thus left implicit in the early discourses. In the Mahāyāna *sūtra* called the *Vimalakīrti-nirdeśa*, for instance, the Bodhisattva Pramati describes an ‘approach to the Dharma-door of non-duality’ (*advayadharmamukhapraveśa*) in terms of the duality of the subjective and objective sense-spheres:

‘Eye and form are two. But clearly understanding the eye (*cakṣuparijñayā*) and not having either craving (*rāga*) for or hatred (*dveṣa*) for or delusion (*moha*) concerning form, this is calm (*śānta*). Equally, ear and sound, nose and odour, tongue and taste, body and tangible, mind and objects, are two-fold. But clearly understanding the mind and feeling neither craving for, nor hatred for, nor delusion concerning form, this is calm. Being thus established in calm is entering into non-duality.’ (Lamotte 1976: 196–7, slightly altered)

While this is only one approach to the *sūtra*’s teaching of non-duality, and not even the highest,⁵⁰ it is suggestive of how the overcoming of the duality of the objective and subjective sense spheres constitutes a profound entry into the Dharma, characterised as non-dual. By implication, then, the *bhikkhu* who lets go both the near and far shores, and who has neither gone too far nor gone back, has entered into non-duality – in the image of a mysterious serpent which has shed its old skin.

We see then how the *uraga* verses, as an example of early Buddhist poetry, preserve a way of putting the Dharma (a *dhammapariyāya*) that was later excluded from the Theravāda, though it was preserved or revived in the Mahāyāna.⁵¹

⁵⁰ In fact, Mañjuśrī says that this, like the other such accounts, still implies duality, since it uses words, implying the duality of what is said and what is meant (Lamotte 1976: 202).

⁵¹ Gomez 1976 has also identified ‘proto-Mādhyamika’ thought in the *Aṭṭhakavagga* of the *Sutta-nipāta*. But I would agree with Bhikkhu Bodhi that the denial of the duality of *saṃsāra* and *nirvāṇa* that is made in Mahāyāna is not to be found in the Pāli canon.

Of course, early Buddhist thought as it has been preserved in the *nikāyas* is dominated by a pragmatic, developmental model of spiritual life resting on a common-sense realist metaphysics. Yet the *uraga* verses also demonstrate the presence of a mystical poetry of non-duality at the very beginning of the Buddhist tradition.

Appendix: another problem in the *uraga* verses

Here I consider another problem in the *uraga* verses: the meaning of the *pāda*, *naccasārī na paccasārī*, ‘he has neither gone too far nor gone back’⁵² (Sn v.8–13).⁵³ This too has puzzled commentators. The problem is understanding what is meant by ‘gone too far’ and ‘gone back’. Again, while commentators old and new have put forward various interpretations, there is no agreement on what the verse means. I propose, however, that it is possible to understand ‘gone too far’ and ‘gone back’ in relation to the metaphor of the stream of the Dharma: the *bhikkhu* should neither go too far, going towards the ‘far shore’, nor go back, going towards the ‘near shore’, but should remain in the flowing stream.

The Pāli commentator (Pj II 21) firstly re-defines the two terms:

‘Now “who has not gone too far” (*nāccasārī*)⁵⁴ in this context means “who has not run ahead (*atidhāvi*)”.⁵⁵ “Who has not gone back” (*na paccasārī*)⁵⁶ means “has not been left behind (*ohīyi*)”.⁵⁷

However, as Norman (1974: 175) points out, the verbs with which the commentary glosses *accasārī* and *paccasārī* are not synonyms but are reminiscent of another canonical passage at *Udāna* 2.22:

⁵² *accasārī* and *paccasārī* are past-tense (aorist) forms of *ati-sarati* and *paṭi-sarati*. Grammatically this suggests verbal actions preceding the action of the present-tense verb *jahāti* ‘lets go’ in the refrain. However, the use of the past-tense form *samūhatāse* in Pāli Sn v.14b prompts the commentator (Pj II 23) to invoke a grammatical rule that a present-tense verb used in the same sentence as a past-tense form can be understood as denoting actions taking place at the same time: *vattamānasamīpe vattamānavacanalakkhaṇena* (discussed in Pind 1990: 193–6).

⁵³ The first *pāda* recurs in Sn v.8–13, and in PDhp 411–12, GDhp-K 86–7, Ud-V 32.55.

⁵⁴ DOP i.69 s.v. *atisarati* ‘goes past, beyond; overlooks; goes too far, oversteps, transgresses’.

⁵⁵ DOP i.63 s.v. *atidhavati* ‘runs past, outstrips; goes too far; goes against, transgresses’.

⁵⁶ PED 401 s.v. *paṭisarati* ¹ ‘[*paṭi* + *sr*] to run back, stay back, lag behind’ (the latter def. from the comm.); *paṭisarati* ² ‘[*prati* + *smṛ*] to think back upon, to mention’. See also n.57 on this derivation.

⁵⁷ DOP i.599 s.v. *ohīyati* ‘is left behind; falls behind; falls back; hangs back’.

‘Monks, overcome by two forms of speculative views, some gods and human beings fall behind (*olīyanti*), some run ahead (*atidhāvanti*), while those with vision see.’⁵⁸

This gloss may not be limited to the Theravādin commentarial tradition, since the composer of the Ud-V has, once again, taken the opportunity to re-write the presumably incomprehensible *pāda* as *yo nātyasaraṃ na cātyalīyaṃ* (Ud-V 32.55a). While *nātyasaraṃ* would be the Sanskrit equivalent of Pāli *nāccasārī*, *cātyalīyaṃ* (i.e. *ca + ati+a+līyaṃ*), ‘he has become slack’,⁵⁹ would appear to be a Sanskrit word comparable to the Pāli *olīyati* of Ud 2.22, cited above. Having glossed *accasārī* and *paccasārī* in a way that, like Ud-V 32.55a, makes more sense in the context of canonical Buddhism, the Pāli commentary can further gloss them in terms of five pairs of extremes to be avoided:

‘Why was this said? Because [1] one goes too far, falling into agitation through exerting excess effort; one goes back, falling into indolence through excess slackness. [2] Thus one goes too far distressing oneself through craving for existence; one goes back being devoted to sensual pleasure. [3] One goes too far through holding an eternalist view; one goes back by holding an annihilationist view. [4] One goes too far through regretting what has passed; one goes back by longing for what is to come. [5] One goes too far through speculation about the past; one goes back through speculation about the future. Therefore, one who, avoiding both these extremes, practises the middle way ‘neither goes too far nor goes back’ – for this reason this was said.’⁶⁰

The commentarial strategy here is thus to re-define the two words *accasārī* and *paccasārī* in terms of different words, found elsewhere in the canonical literature, that present two extremes to be avoided; and then to gloss *accasārī* and *paccasārī* with meanings that would be appropriate if it were glossing those other familiar words.

⁵⁸ PTS Ud 49 = Iti 49, PTS Iti 43 *dvīhi bhikkhave diṭṭhigatehi pariyuṭṭhitā devamanussā olīyanti eke atidhāvanti eke cakkhumanto ca passanti.*

⁵⁹ Cf. BHSD 9 s.v. *atīyate* ‘(cf. Pali *atīna*) becomes slack’.

⁶⁰ PTS Pj II 21: *kiṃ vuttaṃ hoti: accāradhāviriyaena hi uddhacce patanto accāsarati, atisithilena kosajje patanto paccāsarati, tathā bhavataṇhāya attānaṃ kilamento accāsarati kāmataṇhāya kāmasukham anuyuñjanto paccāsarati, sassatadiṭṭhiyā accāsarati ucchedadiṭṭhiyā paccāsarati, atītaṃ anusocanto accāsarati anāgataṃ paṭikaṃkhanto paccāsarati, pubbanānudiṭṭhiyā accāsarati, aparantānudiṭṭhiyā paccāsarati, tasmā yo ete ubho ante vajjētvā majjhimaṃ paṭipadaṃ paṭipajjanto nāccasārī na paccasārī ti evaṃ vuttaṃ hoti.*

John Brough takes issue with this strategy in his comments on GDhp-K 87–8, where the *pāda* appears in the form: *yo necasari na precasari*.⁶¹ He points out that *precasari* (= *paccasārī*, from *paṭisarati*) does not actually mean ‘one is left behind’ (*ohīyī*), and points out that, while the two verbs, *accasārī* and *paccasārī*, must form some kind of antithesis, ‘we may conclude that the commentator has demonstrated that he had no genuine information about the intended sense of the verse, which thus remains open to further conjecture’ (Brough 1962: 201). He then argues that the antithesis that must have been intended between *atisarati* and *paṭisarati* was presumably similar to that between *ora* and *pāra*, which, as we have seen, he regards as rhetorically pseudo-profound. He goes on to discuss the possibility that *atisarati* would originally have been understood in the sense of ‘transgress’, and that *paṭisarati* may originally have been understood in the sense of ‘to pay attention to something, to occupy one’s mind with it’,⁶² and hence that the *pāda* should be understood:

‘who has neither sinned nor paid any heed (to morality – since he is beyond good and evil); [but in addition the more fundamental sense] ‘who has neither transcended (the world) nor regarded it’, since, as the next line [of GDhp-K 86] says, ‘he knows here and now (*loke*) that all this is unreal’ (Brough 1962: 203).

Brough’s analysis continues, exploring Tibetan and Chinese translations of the text, but these need not concern us here, since in any case I am going to propose a quite different interpretation.

K.R. Norman (1974: 175, 2001: 151) agrees with Brough’s assessment of the Pāli commentary, but offers his own interpretation of the *pāda*. He does so in two steps. First he proposes that the Pāli *accasārī* should rather read *accasarī*, which would in fact be metrically correct, despite *accasārī* in all Pāli eds. The fact that PDhp 411–2 reads *nāccasarī* and that Ud-V 32.55 reads *nātyasaram* provides support for this emendation of the Pāli *metri causa*. Second he proposes that we read *paccasārī* as *p’accasārī* (i.e. *pi accasārī*) so that we can read an antithesis between a simple verb stem *sar* and its causative stem *sār*. Hence we should read the *pāda* as *yo naccasarī na p’accasārī*; and taking *atisarati* in the sense of ‘transgress’ we should translate, ‘who has not transgressed nor even (*pi*) caused [another] to transgress’.

⁶¹ The *e* in Gāndhārī Prakrit is merely a ‘feature within the dialect itself, of palatalization in the neighbourhood of a palatal consonant’ (Brough 1962: 201).

⁶² Brough cites BHSD 472 s.v. *paṭisarati* ‘(lit. returns to;) attends to, refers to’. Edgerton denies, *pace* PED, that *paṭisarati* could be from *prati-smṛ*.

Timothy Lenz, however, working with the recently discovered GDhp-L, has put forward the view that Norman's reading is incompatible with the Gāndhārī text, and therefore is most probably not correct. He re-states the problem of making sense of this *pāda* as well as Norman's proposed interpretation before drawing some conclusions. The GDhp-L fragment reads (**yo na a-*) /// [*ca*]hari *na pracahari*, from which Lenz draws the following conclusion:

'Norman's proposal of *na p'accasārī* does not correspond with *na pracahari* in the [GDhp-L]. The scribe of the [GDhp-L] does not use post-consonantal *r* promiscuously; whenever he writes *pr*, it is etymologically justified. Therefore, the second verb in verse 9a must be interpreted as having the prefix *prati* plus an *a* augment or *ā* prefix (Skt. *prati + a = pratyā > P pacca/G praca* or *prati + ā = pratyā > P paccā/G praca*).' (Lenz 2003: 68)

Norman (1974: 175) had of course taken note of GDhp-K, which reads *na precasari*, but had hypothesised that 'the G[āndhārī] redactor misunderstood his exemplar and produced a hyperform *prec-*'.⁶³ Despite the positive result of having shown that the Pāli form *na paccasārī* is to be understood as equivalent to GDhp-L *na precahari*, GDhp-K *na precasari* and PDhp *na preccasārī*, as well as Ud-V Subaṣi 517 *na pretyasārī*, and thus clarifying that the *pāda* should be read in terms of the antithesis of *atisarati* and *pratisarati*, Lenz concludes that the now-established content of the *pāda* does little to illuminate its meaning. He puts forward yet another tentative view about the meaning of the *pāda* as follows:

'one can interpret (**a*)[*ca*]hari as "gone beyond"; the prefix (**a*)[*ca*] = Skt. *ati* means "beyond", and the root *sr* can mean "go". *Pracahari* can be interpreted as meaning "moved toward"; the prefix *praca* = Skt. *prati + a* means "toward", and the root *sr* can also mean "move". Accordingly, it is possible to translate (**yo na a-*) /// [*ca*]hari *na pracahari* as "[that monk] who has neither gone beyond [this world] nor moved toward it." Presumably, the sense here is something like "that monk who neither desires nor shuns this world", which is consistent with the tenor of the verse as a whole.' (Lenz 2003: 69)

This interpretation agrees with that of Brough, while holding that Norman's interpretation cannot be correct, and thus all three modern commentators believe the Pāli commentator to be incorrect.

⁶³ Neither Norman nor Lenz seem to have taken into account PDhp 411–12, which reads *na preccasārī*. Cone (1986: 630) follows Norman in his proposal to amend the *pāda*, and hence presumes PDhp *precca-*, GDhp-K *preca-*, and Ud-V Subaṣi *pretya-* to be misinterpretations of their exemplar.

Yet another perspective on this difficult-to-understand *pāda* comes from considering the pair *naccasārī–paccasārī* in terms of the echo-like effect produced by the repetition of similar sounds. Bryan Levman hypothesises that the Pāli *pāda* and its Prakrit parallels may be what he calls an ‘echo-type construction’ (Levman 2013: 151), typical of Indian languages like Pāli but not found in other Indo-European languages like Iranian. If this is the case, then *yo naccasārī na paccasārī* means ‘who has not transgressed and the like’ (Levman 2014: 512). There appears to be some evidence for this view in that we find a *Jātaka* verse (no. 439, PTS Ja iv.6) with a similar construction:

*atisaro paccasaro mittavinda suṇohi me.
cakkam te sirasim āviddham na taṃ jīvaṃ pamokkhasi*

While the commentator glosses *atisaro* here as ‘who has gone too far (*atisarī*)’ and ‘who will go too far (*atisarissati*)’ (Ja iv.6), he glosses *paccasaro* simply as a synonym of *atisaro* (*paccasaro ṭi tass’ eva vevacanam*).⁶⁴ This would support the idea that *paccasaro* is no more than an echo of *atisaro*.

However, there may be a simple solution to the problem of the meaning of *naccasārī na paccasārī*, based on the second interpretation of *orapāra* above. If we understand *atisarati* and *paṭisarati* quite straightforwardly in terms of their surface meanings of ‘goes too far’ and ‘goes back’, then we can see a connection with the extended ‘stream of the Dharma’ metaphor in the *Simile of the Great Tree-Trunk* discourse. There it was said that if a monk does not ‘go towards’ (*upagacchati*) the far bank of the river, nor go towards the near bank of the river, and avoids other obstacles, he will be carried to the ocean of *nirvāṇa*. Hence, relating *naccasārī na paccasārī* to this discourse we can make the following associations:

- (i) the monk who *naccasārī* ‘has not gone too far’ can be related to the monk who *na upagacchati* ‘does not go towards’ the far shore (*pāra*);
- (ii) the monk who *na paccasārī* ‘has not gone back’ can be related to the monk who *na upagacchati* ‘does not go towards’ the near shore (*ora*).

⁶⁴ A translation of this obscure *gāthā* might go: ‘Going too far, going too far, Mittavinda, listen to me: the wheel has whirled around your head, your life will not be freed.’ For the strange story in which this stanza is embedded see Rouse 1901: 1–4.

Correlating this surface meaning of *naccasārī na paccasārī* to the the ‘stream of the Dharma’ metaphor, we can therefore gloss the *pāda* as: ‘Who has neither gone too far [towards the far shore] nor gone back [towards the near shore].’

I propose that a reader familiar with the ‘stream of the Dharma’ metaphor would associate *naccasārī* with identification with and grasping at the objective sense spheres (*bāhirāni āyatanāni*), and *paccasārī* with identification with and grasping at the subjective sense spheres (*ajjhakkāni āyatanāni*). Therefore, *naccasārī na paccasārī*, on the surface level of meaning, recapitulates the meaning of *so bhikkhu jahāti orapāraṃ*. However, it does so with (at least) two additional levels of aural and verbal implication:

(i) the monk who *naccasārī na paccasārī* ‘has not transgressed and the like’ (following Levman’s hypothesis that the *pāda* is an echo-type construction);

(ii) the monk who *naccasārī na paccasārī* ‘has neither gone beyond [this world] nor moved towards it’ (following both Brough and Lenz in their interpretations).

With these additional levels of meaning, the *pāda* contributes to the density of association in the *uruga* verses as a whole as well as to its phonetic qualities.

This proposed solution to the problem of the meaning of *naccasārī na paccasārī* may be confirmed by an interpretation of the broader associations of the following *pāda* in Sn 8 (and in PDhp 411), *sabbaṃ accagamā imaṃ papañcaṃ*, ‘[who] has overcome all this proliferation...’. While this English translation leads the reader simply to hear the word ‘all’ (*sabbaṃ*) as an adjective qualifying ‘this proliferation’ (*imaṃ papañcaṃ*), a reader of the Pāli or Prakrit who was familiar with early Buddhist teachings may also have heard in *sabbaṃ* a pronoun connected to the metaphorical associations of near and far shores implied by the preceding *pāda*. At S 35:23 (PTS iv.15) the Buddha is reported to have said:

‘Monks, I will teach you the all (*sabbaṃ*), so listen. And what is the all? Just the eye and forms, the ear and sounds, the nose and smells, the tongue and tastes, the body and tangibles, the mind and mental objects. This, monks, is called the all.’

That is to say, the subjective sense spheres together with the objective sense spheres are together called ‘the all’ (*sabbaṃ*), meaning, that the two sense spheres together constitute the entirety of the experienced world. And in the following *sutta*, S 35:24, the Buddha is said to ‘teach the Dharma for the letting go of the all’ (*sabbappahānāya dhammaṃ desessāmi*). With these associations

in mind we can therefore gloss the implications of the surface level of meanings of Sn v.8 as follows:

*yo nāccasārī na paccasārī
sabbam accagamā imaṃ papañcam
so bhikkhu jahāti orapāram
urago jiṇṇam iva ttacam purāṇam*

‘Who has neither gone too far [towards the far shore, the objective sense spheres], nor come back [towards the near shore, the subjective sense spheres], who has overcome the all [both the subjective and objective sense spheres], which is this proliferation [of emotions and views]⁶⁵ – that *bhikkhu* lets go of the near and far shores [subjective and objective sense spheres, the all], like a serpent its worn-out old skin.’ And this *bhikkhu*, attained to right view, thus continues in the stream of the Dharma towards the boundless ocean which is *nirvāṇa*.

Abbreviations

A	Āṅguttara-nikāya, translated as <i>Numerical Discourses of the Buddha</i> (Bodhi 2012); Pāli Text Society (PTS) ed. of Pāli vols.1–5 (Morris and Hardy 1885–1900)
BHSD	<i>Buddhist Hybrid Sanskrit Dictionary</i> (Edgerton 1953)
D	Dīgha-nikāya: translated as <i>Long Discourses of the Buddha</i> (Walshe 1987), PTS eds. vol. 1 (Rhys Davids and Carpenter 1889), vol. 2 (Rhys Davids and Carpenter 1903), vol.3 (Carpenter 1910)
Dhp	Dhammapada (Hinüber and Norman 1994)
Dhp-a	Dhammapada-aṭṭhakathā (H. C. Norman 1970)
DOP	<i>Dictionary of Pāli</i> vol.1 (Cone 2001) vol.2 (Cone 2010)
Ja	Jātaka (Fausbøll 1877–96)
M	Majjhima-nikāya, translated as <i>Middle Length Discourses of the Buddha</i> (Ñāṇamoli and Bodhi 1995), PTS eds. vol.1 (Trenckner 1888), vol.2 (Trenckner 1896), vol.3 (R. Chalmers 1899)

⁶⁵ This is not the place to expand on the meaning of *papañca*, ‘proliferation’, but suffice to say that the commentary (Pj II 21) glosses *papañca* as ‘the threefold proliferation reckoned as craving, conceit and views, with its source in feeling, perception and thought’.

Miln	Milindapañha (Trenckner 1880)
Nidd 1	Niddesa I Mahāniddesa vols.1 & 2 (de la Vallée Poussin and Thomas 1916)
Nidd 2	Niddesa II Cullaniddesa (Stede 1918)
Pj II	Paramatthajotikā II vol.1 (Smith 1916) vol.2 (Smith 1917)
S	Samyutta-nikāya, translated as <i>Connected Discourses of the Buddha</i> (Bodhi 2000), PTS eds. vols.1–5 (Féer 1884–98)
Sn	Sutta-nipāta (Andersen and Smith 1913)

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