Aggannasutta

A brief introduction

- > Sutta is a Pali word. In Hinduism sutra means a brief aphoristic composition
- > The collected Buddhist scriptures known as "Tipitaka" in Pali, "Tripitaka" in Sanskrit and "The Three Baskets" in English is mainly divided into 3 parts:
 - a. Vinaya Pitaka (basket of discipline)
 - b. Sutta Pitaka (basket of discourse)
 - c. Abhidhamma (basket of special doctrine)
- There are 5 Nikayas (collections/ discourses/divisions) in Sutta Pitaka
- Amongst the 5 Nikayas, Digha Nikaya is the larger collection/discourse which consists of 34 suttas
- Aggannasutta is the 27th sutta of Digha Nikaya collection.

Tipitaka-Buddhist scriptures

Vinaya Pitaka

Sutta Pitaka

Abhidhamma

5 Nikayas

DIGHA NIKAYA is the largest one

Aggannasutta (27th)

Aggannasutta:

- ▶The 27th sutta of Digha-nikaya collection.
- Aggannasutta talks about the origin/beginning of life on earth, the birth of social order and the theory of kingship



- The sutta begins when Buddha is staying in Savathhi temple
- Two Brahmins- Bharadwaja & Vasettha were training with the monks and aimed to be member of the Sangha
- They left their Brahmin Brahmin caste communities & faced floods of insult
- They said to Buddha that they were told that Brahmin caste is the best- they have high social status, radiant complexions and are born from the mouth of God and the other castes are born from the feet of Brahma

- Buddha replied- brahmins have forgotten that women in the Brahmin can get pregnant, give birth & take care of their children.... Therefore their words are untrue... they will reap bad result from their own deeds.
- The Brahmins are not speaking truthfully...
- If people from any caste do the following deeds:

Killing, taking anything that is not given, take part in sexual misconduct, lying, speaking rough words or nonsense or hurtful, greedy, cruel, practicing wrong beliefs, those people will not earn respect and will reap bad results.... It does not matter which caste they belong to...

 Those who are not involved in the above mentioned deeds will earn respect, and will be seen as wise people in the society... Brahmins cannot be considered as the best caste...

Because anyone from the 4 caste, if they left the worldly affairs and become a monk and due to their disciple and struggle, they become arahant (people who conquer their mind's stains).... He is the best among others based on truth (dhamma)

"Dhamma is the best thing for people in this life and the next as well"

Whoever has established belief in Tathagatha-(an enlightened one/ finder or seeker of truth)...he can declare himself as the child of God, born from the mouth of Dhamma....Body of Dhamma, the Body of Brahma.....

THE BEGINNING OF LIFE ON EARTH: (How Human beings came to dwell on Earth)

- Human beings were born in Abhassara Brahma world....there they dwell...they were self luminous, moving through the air
- ➤They floated above & around the Earth... they had not seen the Moon &the Sun...no names, identity, no male female distinction...creatures were only creatures
- At that period there was just one mass of water & darkness was there....but then savory earth spread itself over the waters where those beings were...
- It just looked like the skin that forms itself over hot milk as it cools....it was endowed with color smell & taste..it was the color of fine ghee, butter & it was very sweet like pure wild honey
- Some of the creatures of light (the Abhassaras) who had curiousity & greedy nature began to taste the Savory Earth's substance

- Creatures found out that it tasted so delicious.. So they started to eath the mud substances voraciously...
- As they ate & ate their luminous body began to be coated with mud substance & formed a coarser body.. & suddenly the sum, moon were seen.. day & night began..seasons & years also appeared to them...
- Their body was still coarse & roughly shaped
- Then mushroom like plants began to grow so fast that they replaced the mud-like ocean...
- Then the mud-like creatures began to devour the mushroom like plants & found it delicious like sweet milk & honey....
- ➤ Their body hardened more
- Mushrooms began to be exhausted, replaced by cassava or turnip-like plants... they began to devour them day and night and began to notice differences amongst them

- There were changes in their bodies which were varied... the concept of differences arose amongst them...beautiful& ugly were born...
- >The beautiful ones became arrogant because of their appearance
- >Turnips were also to be exhausted then they rice plants started to grow on earth
- >The creatures started to eat the rice plants.. The rice plants were without husk & kernel
- They started eating rice and the greedy, lazy people started to reserve rice for 6 to 8days
- ➤ Because of karmic power, the rice plants which took one day to grow now grow slower and there were husk & kernels
- The rice grew in kernels & husks for which the creatures had to work, harvest, & cook in order to obtain white rice...
- >By the time, their bodies become finely evolved

- >There was the distinction of male female
- They were attracted to each other, desires arouse and engaged in sexual relationships...
- ▶ People who saw a couple engaged in sexual activity scolded them...
- >So they realised of building closed dwellings where they indulged in in sexual activity.

THE BIRTH OF SOCIAL ORDER

- ➤ The Khattiya Caste (Rulers)
- >The Brahmin Caste
- >The Vessa Caste
- >The Sudda Caste
- >The Ascetics

THE KHATTIYA CASTE

- >The rice plants began to grow in separate plots & people began to divide lands...
- ▶Evil & greed were aroused, there were people who began stealing others' crops...
- >The others warned the culprits at first... but the culprits repeated again...
- > People began punishing the culprits with fist, stones, sticks...
- >That was the origin of punishment form in society
- ➤ People realised that they were busy to heed every crime & abuse that happened in society and they grieved on the rising of evil amongst the people
- So they decided someone to appoint someone to rectify what is right, wrong, give warnings who needed, give punishment who deserves to get, & in return they will give a share of their rice
- So they went to the fairest, ablest, most likeable, intelligent person and appointed him to do judgibg & passing out sentences on the reward of a share of rice

The appointed person thus agreed & the people bestowed upon him the title of MAHA SAMMATA which means the People's Choice...

Another title was bestowed that is "KHATTIYA" which means "Lord of the Rice Field &

finally the third title "RAJA" which means "Who gladdens people with Dhamma"

THE BRAHMIN CASTE

- Some people thought that evil deeds like theft, lies, sexual abuses, punishment etc has risen amongst us
- So they decided to set aside evil, unuseful, impolite things
- Here the word Brahmins come...
- Those were the Brahmins meaning "they who put aside evil & unwholesome things"
- They set up retreats & huts in the forest & meditated there
- They came to city at mornings & evenings, gather food & again they returned to their huts & meditated...
- Those who meditated were called Jhayanti or Jhayaka
- There are other people who didn't meditate & dwelled on huts in forests but compiled books..those were called Ajjhayaka

THE VESSA/ VAISHYA AND THE SUDDA/ SHUDRA CASTE

- The people who settled and had families... they adopted various trades... fishing, hunting...
- They were called as Vessas
- Those who adopted the profession of hunting to survive their lives they were called as Sudda? Shudras

THE ASCETICS

- From the 4 clans/ castes, there were people who were not satisfied with their living, left their homes, & became celibate ascetics...
- These are the origin of fifth caste formed from all the four castes' people who left their lay life and became an ascetic

Theory of Kingship

Origin of kingship

- According to Aggannasutta, kingship originated as a genuine political need of the society.....
- At a certain juncture of evolution, the logical need to show what mother nature offered, to arrest the diminishing of natural resources due to greed, to stop stealing and other vices prompted a genuine social need for a charismatic leader to attribute whenever such a situation arose....
- Hence the king was a chosen figure and approved by the people (Mahasammata)...
 a logical outcome of a social need

Definition of a king

- Definition of a king as given in Aggannasutta is "One who makes others happy by righteousness"
- A king had to honour, respect and hold righteousness in high esteem
- Consensus among people gave authority to the king and all the power he has, was that of people... this was the emergence of democracy
- There were written norms, political law givers, chaplains (purohits) and others to advise the king and keep him off from indulging in excess or becoming a dictator

Qualities of a king

- 1. Dana
- 2. Sila
- 3. Pariccaga
- 4. Ajjava
- 5. Maddava
- 6. Tapa
- 7. Akkodha
- 8. Ahimsa
- 9. Khanti
- 10. Avirodha

KING'S QUALIFICATIONS

- Abhiriipatara- the most handsome
- Dassantyatara- the best favored
- Pasadikatara- the most attractive
- Mahesakkhatara- the most capable

- Duties for the kings
- Indignation- The king should be wrathful when indignation is right
- Censure- The king should censure that, which should rightly be censured
- Punishmemt- The king should banish him who deserves to be banished

THEORY OF KINGSHIP

- Origin of kingship
- Definition of king
- Qualifications of kingship
- Duties of king
- Qualities of king