

HANDFUL OF LEAVES 3



HANDFUL *of* LEAVES

VOLUME THREE:

An Anthology from the
SAṂYUTTA NIKĀYA

translated by

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(Geoffrey DeGraff)

Once the Blessed One was staying at Kosambī in the simsapā forest. Then, picking up a few simsapā leaves with his hand, he asked the monks, “What do you think, monks? Which are more numerous, the few simsapā leaves in my hand or those overhead in the simsapā forest?”

“The leaves in the hand of the Blessed One are few in number, lord. Those overhead in the forest are far more numerous.”

“In the same way, monks, those things that I have known with direct knowledge but haven’t taught are far more numerous (than what I have taught). And why haven’t I taught them? Because they aren’t connected with the goal, don’t relate to the rudiments of the holy life, and don’t lead to disenchantment, to dispassion, to cessation, to stilling, to direct knowledge, to self-awakening, to unbinding. That’s why I haven’t taught them.

“And what have I taught? ‘This is stress ... This is the origination of stress ... This is the cessation of stress ... This is the path of practice leading to the cessation of stress’: This is what I have taught. And why have I taught these things? Because they are connected with the goal, relate to the rudiments of the holy life, and lead to disenchantment, to dispassion, to cessation, to stilling, to direct knowledge, to self-awakening, to unbinding. This is why I have taught them.”

—SN 56:31

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Abbreviations

<i>AN</i>	<i>Aṅguttara Nikāya</i>
<i>CDB</i>	<i>The Connected Discourses of the Buddha</i>
<i>Cv</i>	<i>Cullavagga</i>
<i>Dhp</i>	<i>Dhammapada</i>
<i>DN</i>	<i>Dīgha Nikāya</i>
<i>Iti</i>	<i>Itivuttaka</i>
<i>Khp</i>	<i>Khuddakapāṭha</i>
<i>KS</i>	<i>The Book of Kindred Sayings</i>
<i>MN</i>	<i>Majjhima Nikāya</i>
<i>Mv</i>	<i>Mahāvagga</i>
<i>PTS</i>	<i>Pali Text Society</i>
<i>SN</i>	<i>Saṃyutta Nikāya</i>
<i>Sn</i>	<i>Sutta Nipāta</i>
<i>Thag</i>	<i>Theragāthā</i>
<i>Thig</i>	<i>Therīgāthā</i>
<i>Ud</i>	<i>Udāna</i>

References to DN, Iti, and MN are to discourse (sutta).

Those to Dhp are to verse. Those to Cv and Mv are to chapter, section, and sub-section. References to other texts are to section (saṃyutta, nipāta, or vagga) and discourse.

All translations are based on the Royal Thai Edition of the Pali Canon (Bangkok: Mahāmakut Rājavidyālaya, 1982).

The Saṃyutta Nikāya, a collection of short to medium-length discourses, takes its name from the way the discourses are organized into groups connected (saṃyutta) by a particular theme. In some cases, the theme is a topic. In others it may be the name of an interlocutor, a place, a group of people, or—as in the Simile-Connected discourses—a formal attribute of the discourses themselves. The complete collection, counting all its formulaic expansions, contains more than 2,900 discourses, of which 375 are translated here.

Crossing over the Flood

Ogha-taraṇa Sutta (SN 1:1)

I have heard that on one occasion the Blessed One was staying near Sāvattthī in Jeta’s Grove, Anāthapiṇḍika’s monastery. Then a certain devatā, in the far extreme of the night, her extreme radiance lighting up the entirety of Jeta’s Grove, went to the Blessed One. On arrival, having bowed down to him, she stood to one side. As she was standing there, she said to him, “Tell me, dear sir, how you crossed over the flood.”

“I crossed over the flood without pushing forward, without staying in place.”

“But how, dear sir, did you cross over the flood without pushing forward, without staying in place?”

“When I pushed forward, I was whirled about. When I stayed in place, I sank. And so I crossed over the flood without pushing forward, without staying in place.”

The devatā:

“At long last I see
a brahman, totally unbound,
who
 without pushing forward,
 without staying in place,
has crossed over
 the entanglements
 of the world.”

That is what the devatā said. The Teacher approved. Realizing that “The Teacher has approved of me,” she bowed down to him, circumambulated him—keeping him to her right—and then vanished right there.

See also: MN 138; Ud 8:1

Freedom

Nimokkha Sutta (SN 1:2)

Near Sāvattthī... Then a certain devatā, in the far extreme of the night, her extreme radiance lighting up the entirety of Jeta’s Grove, went to the Blessed One. On arrival, having bowed down to him, she stood to one side. As she was standing there, she said to him, “Do you know, dear sir, freedom, liberation, seclusion for beings?”

“Yes, friend, I know freedom, liberation, seclusion for beings.”

“But how, dear sir, do you know freedom, liberation, seclusion for beings?”

The Buddha:

“From the destruction of delight in becoming,
from the ending of perception & consciousness,
from the cessation, stilling, of feelings:

That’s how I know

freedom,

liberation,

seclusion

for beings.”

See also: DN 15

Unpenetrated

Appaṭivīditā Sutta (SN 1:7)

By comparing the penetration of phenomena to the act of awakening (bujjhati) from sleep, this verse shows that the Pali words related to bujjhati, such as bodhi and buddha, are better translated as “awakening” and “awakened” than as “enlightenment” and “enlightened.”

Standing to one side, a devatā addressed the Blessed One with a verse:

“Those in whom
phenomena are unpenetrated,
who may be led
by the teachings of others:
Asleep are they;
they haven’t awakened.
It’s time for them
to awaken.”

The Buddha:

“Those in whom
phenomena are well-penetrated,
may not be led
by the teachings of others.
Awakened
through right knowing,
they go among the discordant
harmoniously.”¹

NOTE

1. “Dissonant” and “harmoniously” translate *visama* and *sama*, which literally mean, “uneven” and “even.” Throughout ancient cultures, the terminology of music was used to describe the moral quality of people and actions. Discordant intervals or poorly-tuned musical instruments were metaphors for evil; harmonious intervals and well-tuned instruments, metaphors for good. In Pali, the term *sama*—“even”—described an instrument tuned on-pitch. There is a famous passage (AN 6:55) where the Buddha reminds Soṇa Kōḷivisa—who had been over-exerting himself in the practice—that a lute sounds appealing only if the strings are neither too taut or too lax, but “evenly” tuned. This image would have special resonances with the Buddha’s teaching on the middle way. It also adds meaning to the term *samaṇa*—monk or contemplative—which the texts frequently mention as being derived from *sama*. The word *sāmañña*

—“evenness,” the quality of being in tune—also means the quality of being a contemplative: The true contemplative is always in tune with what is proper and good.

This verse has an added play on words, in that the term “well-penetrated” can also mean “well-tuned.”

See also: MN 41; MN 61; MN 97; AN 6:55; AN 6:63

Fond of Conceit *Manakāma Sutta (SN 1:9)*

Standing to one side, a devatā addressed the Blessed One with a verse:

“Here there’s no taming
for one fond of conceit,
no sagacity
for one unconcentrated.
One dwelling alone in the wilderness
heedlessly
won’t cross over beyond
Deaths’ realm.

The Buddha:

“Abandoning conceit,
his mind well-concentrated,
well-aware, everywhere
released,¹
one dwelling alone in the wilderness
heedfully:
He will cross over beyond
Death’s realm.

NOTE

1. For a discussion of the implications of this phrase, see *The Paradox of Becoming*, chapter 7.

The Wilderness

Arañña Sutta (SN 1:10)

Standing to one side, a devatā addressed the Blessed One with a verse:

“Living in the wilderness,
staying peaceful, remaining chaste,
eating just one meal a day:
why are their faces
so bright & serene?”

The Buddha:

“They don’t sorrow over the past,
don’t long for the future.
They survive on the present.
That’s why their faces
are bright & serene.
From longing for the future,
from sorrowing over the past,
fools wither away
like a green reed cut down.”

See also: AN 3:35; Ud 2:10; Thag 1:14; Thag 1:41; Thag 1:49; Thag 18

Shame

Hiri Sutta (SN 1:18)

This pair of verses provides an answer to the question posed and left unanswered in Dhp 143.

“Who in the world
is a man constrained by shame,
who awakens to censure

like a fine stallion to the whip?”

“Those restrained by shame
are rare—
those who go through life
always mindful.
Having reached the end
of suffering & stress,
they go among the discordant
harmoniously.”

About Samiddhi

Samiddhi Sutta (SN 1:20)

The Pali Canon is unique in its approach to the spirit world. While confirming the existence of spirits and other more refined levels of beings, it insists that they are not worthy of worship. The Buddha, after all, is the teacher not only of human beings but also of heavenly beings; and many heavenly beings are not especially knowledgeable or spiritually advanced, in spite of their refined state. The Canon illustrates this point in a number of gentle satires. The most famous is the Kevatta Sutta (DN 11), where the ignorance & pomposity of a supposedly all-knowing creator is lampooned.

This discourse is another entertaining example of the same genre, pointing out the difficulties of teaching more advanced Dhamma to any being—human or divine—who is obsessed with sensual pleasures. On hearing some verses concerning the awakened one’s state of mind—which is not subject to time and is visible here & now—the devatā cannot understand them, and is able to grasp only a few very basic principles of Dhamma practice. It’s unusual for the Buddha to aim his words so far over the heads of his listeners. Perhaps in this case, as in [SN 1:1](#), he wants to subdue the devatā’s pride. At any rate, there is hope for her: As the Commentary points out, her understanding covers in a rudimentary fashion all the elements of the noble eightfold path. If she follows through with her understanding, she’s on the road to the higher attainments.

This discourse also contains some word play on the words “time” (kāla) and “subject to time” (kālika). “Time” can mean not only time in the general sense, but also one’s time of death (a person who has died is said to have “done his/her time”). These two meanings of the word underlie the first exchange between Ven. Samiddhi and the devatā. “Subject to time” can mean “obtainable only after a certain time” or “good only for a certain length of time”: These meanings underlie their second exchange. There is also word play on the phrase, “visible here & now.” The devatā, assuming that Ven. Samiddhi is denying himself human sensuality for the sake of a reward after death, uses this phrase to describe human sensuality. Ven. Samiddhi, who has tasted the deathless, uses the same phrase to describe his actual goal: unbinding. The devatā’s inability to understand the meaning of Ven. Samiddhi’s words shows clearly that, in spite of her fortunate birth, she still has a great deal to learn.

* * *

I have heard that on one occasion the Blessed One was staying near Rājagaha at Tapodā monastery. Then Ven. Samiddhi, as night was ending, got up & went to the Tapodā Hot Springs to bathe his limbs. Having bathed his limbs and gotten out of the springs, he stood wearing only his lower robe, letting his limbs dry.

Then a certain devatā, in the far extreme of the night, her extreme radiance lighting up the entire Tapodā Hot Springs, went to Ven. Samiddhi. On arrival, while standing in the air, she addressed him with this verse:

“Without having enjoyed
(sensual pleasures),
you go for alms, monk.
You don’t go for alms
after having enjoyed.
Having enjoyed, monk,
then go for alms.
Don’t let time pass you by.”

Ven. Samiddhi:

“I don’t know my time.

My time
is hidden.
It can't be seen.
That's why, not having enjoyed,
I go for alms:
Don't let my time pass me by."

Then the devatā, coming down to earth, said to Ven. Samiddhi, "You have gone forth while young, monk—black-haired, endowed with the blessings of youth in the first stage of life—without having played with sensuality. Enjoy human sensuality, monk. Don't drop what is visible here & now in pursuit of what's subject to time."

"My friend, I'm not dropping what's visible here & now in pursuit of what's subject to time. I'm dropping what's subject to time in pursuit of what's visible here & now. For the Blessed One has said that sensuality is subject to time, of much stress, much despair, & greater drawbacks; whereas this Dhamma is well taught by the Blessed One, visible here & now, timeless, inviting verification, pertinent, to be experienced by the observant for themselves."

"But, monk, in what way has the Blessed One said that sensuality is subject to time, of much stress, much despair, & greater drawbacks? And how is this Dhamma visible here & now, timeless, inviting verification, pertinent, to be experienced by the observant for themselves?"

"I'm new, my friend, not long gone forth, only recently come to this Dhamma & discipline. I can't explain it in detail. But the Blessed One, worthy & rightly self-awakened, is staying here near Rājagaha at Tapodā monastery. Having gone to him, ask him this matter. As he explains it, that's how you should remember it."

"Monk, it's not easy for us to go to the Blessed One, as he is surrounded by other devas of great influence. But if you go to the Blessed One and ask him this matter, I will come along to hear the Dhamma."

Responding to the devatā, "As you say, my friend," Ven. Samiddhi went to the Blessed One. On arrival, having bowed down to the Blessed One, he sat to one side. As he was sitting there [he told the Blessed One

his entire conversation with the devatā]. “Now, lord, if that devatā was telling the truth, she is not far from here.”

When this was said, the devatā said to Ven. Samiddhi, “Ask, monk! Ask! I’ve gotten through.”

Then the Blessed One recited this verse to the devatā:

“Perceiving in terms of signs, beings
take a stand on signs.
Not fully comprehending signs, they
come into the bonds
of death.
But fully comprehending signs, one
doesn’t suppose
a signifier.¹
Yet nothing exists for him
by which one would say,
‘To him no thought occurs.’
If you know this, spirit, then say so.”

“I don’t understand, lord, the detailed meaning of the Blessed One’s brief statement. It would be good if the Blessed One would speak in such a way that I would understand the detailed meaning of the Blessed One’s brief statement.”

The Buddha:

“Whoever supposes
‘equal,’
‘superior,’ or
‘inferior,’
by that he’d dispute.
Whereas to one unaffected by these three,
‘equal’
‘superior’
do not occur.²
If you know this, spirit, then say so.”

“I don’t understand, lord, the detailed meaning of the Blessed One’s brief statement. It would be good if the Blessed One would speak in such a way that I would understand the detailed meaning of the Blessed One’s brief statement.”

The Buddha:

“Having
 shed classifications,
 gone beyond conceit,
he has here
 cut
through craving
 for name
 & form:
This one—
his bonds cut through,
free
 from trouble,
 from longing—
though they search, they can’t find him,
 human beings & devas,
 here & beyond,
 in heaven
 or any abode.³

If you know this, spirit, then say so.”

“Lord, here’s how I understand the detailed meaning of the Blessed One’s brief statement:

In all the world,
 every world,
you should do no evil
with speech,
 body,
 or mind.
Having abandoned sensuality

—mindful, alert—
don't consort
with suffering & stress,
with what doesn't pertain
to the goal.”⁴

Notes

1. This verse is from Iti 63.
2. This verse is from Sn 4:9.
3. This verse is also found in SN 1:40.
4. This verse is also found in SN 1:34.

*See also: DN 11; MN 54; [SN 5:1](#); [SN 5:4](#); [SN 5:7](#); [SN 9:1](#); [SN 9:14](#); [SN 35:127](#);
AN 5:75–76; Iti 63; Sn 4:7; Sn 4:9; Sn 5:6; Thag 7:1*

An Arahant

Arahanta Sutta (SN 1:25)

“An arahant monk,
one who is done,
effluent-free, bearing his last body:
Would he say, ‘I speak’?
Would he say, ‘They speak to me?’”

“An arahant monk,
one who is done,
effluent-free, bearing his last body:
He *would* say, ‘I speak’;
would say, ‘They speak to me’

Skillful,
knowing harmonious gnosis
with regard to the world,
he uses expressions
just as expressions.”

“An arahant monk,

one who is done,
effluent-free, bearing his last body:
Is it from conceit
that he'd say, 'I speak'?—
that he'd say, 'They speak to me?'¹
“For one whose conceit is abandoned,
whose knot of conceit is dispersed,
no knots exist
 at all.
He, beyond any concept, wise,
would say, 'I speak';
would say, 'They speak to me.'
Skillful,
knowing harmonious gnosis
with regard to the world,
he uses expressions
just as expressions.”

NOTE

1. This question confuses the conceit, “I am” (*asmimāna*) with the simple concept, “I.” The former is a fetter, in that it involves one in a tangle of views as to what the “I” is, and what it means to be. (See MN 2.) The latter, as this verse shows, is simply a conventional expression, and if it can be separated from the conceit “I am,” it need not fetter the mind.

See also: DN 9; MN 102; AN 4:159; AN 4:200; AN 6:13; AN 9:1; AN 10:13

The Stone Sliver

Sakalika Sutta (SN 1:38)

Cullavagga VII tells of how Devadatta, the Buddha's cousin, tried unsuccessfully in various ways to wrest leadership of the Saṅgha from the Buddha. In Cv VII.3.9, he tries to kill the Buddha by hurling a rock down a mountainside. The rock is crushed, and so misses the Buddha, but sends out a

splinter that pierces the Buddha's foot, drawing blood. According to the Commentary, this discourse together with [SN 4:13](#) describe the Buddha's reaction to this attempt on his life.

* * *

I have heard that on one occasion the Blessed One was staying near Rājagaha in the Maddakucchi Deer Reserve. Now at that time his foot had been pierced by a stone sliver. Excruciating were the bodily feelings that developed within him—painful, fierce, sharp, wracking, repellent, disagreeable—but he endured them mindful, alert, & unperturbed. Having had his outer robe folded in four and laid out, he lay down on his right side in the lion's posture, with one foot placed on top of the other, mindful & alert.

Then 700 devatās from the Satullapa retinue, in the far extreme of the night, their extreme radiance lighting up the entirety of Maddakucchi, went to the Blessed One. On arrival, having bowed down to him, they stood to one side.

As she was standing there, one of the devatās exclaimed in the Blessed One's presence: "What a nāga is Gotama the contemplative! And like a nāga, when bodily feelings have arisen—painful, fierce, sharp, wracking, repellent, disagreeable—he endures them mindful, alert, & unperturbed!"

Then another devatā exclaimed in the Blessed One's presence: "What a lion is Gotama the contemplative! And like a lion, when bodily feelings have arisen—painful, fierce, sharp, wracking, repellent, disagreeable—he endures them mindful, alert, & unperturbed!"

Then another devatā exclaimed in the Blessed One's presence: "What a thoroughbred is Gotama the contemplative! And like a thoroughbred, when bodily feelings have arisen—painful, fierce, sharp, wracking, repellent, disagreeable—he endures them mindful, alert, & unperturbed!"

Then another devatā exclaimed in the Blessed One's presence: "What a peerless bull is Gotama the contemplative! And like a peerless bull, when bodily feelings have arisen—painful, fierce, sharp, wracking,

repellent, disagreeable—he endures them mindful, alert, & unperturbed!”

Then another devatā exclaimed in the Blessed One’s presence: “What a strong burden-carrier is Gotama the contemplative! And like a strong burden-carrier, when bodily feelings have arisen—painful, fierce, sharp, wracking, repellent, disagreeable—he endures them mindful, alert, & unperturbed!”

Then another devatā exclaimed in the Blessed One’s presence: “What a tamed one is Gotama the contemplative! And like a tamed one, when bodily feelings have arisen—painful, fierce, sharp, wracking, repellent, disagreeable—he endures them mindful, alert, & unperturbed!”

Then another devatā exclaimed in the Blessed One’s presence: “See a concentration well-developed, a mind well released— neither pressed down nor forced back, nor with mental fabrication kept blocked or suppressed. Whoever would think that such a nāga of a man, lion of a man, thoroughbred of a man, peerless bull of a man, strong burden-carrier of a man, such a tamed man should be violated: What else is that if not blindness?”

“Five-Veda Brahmins,
living austerely
for 100 years:
Their minds
are not rightly released.
Lowly by nature,
they’ve not gone beyond.

Overpowered by craving,
bound up in habits & practices,
performing wretched austerities
for 100 years:
Their minds
are not rightly released.
Lowly by nature,
they’ve not gone beyond.

For one fond of conceit,

there's no taming;
for one uncentered,
no sagacity.
Though alone in the wilderness,
if one lives heedlessly,
one won't cross over, beyond Māra's sway.
But having abandoned conceit,
well-centered within,
with right awareness
everywhere
fully released,
alone in the wilderness,
heedfully living,
one will cross over, beyond Māra's sway."

See also: [SN 4:13](#); [SN 36:6](#); AN 5:129

On Fire

Āditta Sutta (SN 1:41)

I have heard that on one occasion the Blessed One was staying near Sāvattthī in Jeta's Grove, Anāthapiṇḍika's monastery. Then a certain devatā, in the far extreme of the night, her extreme radiance lighting up the entirety of Jeta's Grove, went to the Blessed One and, on arrival, having bowed down to him, stood to one side. As she was standing there, she recited these verses in the Blessed One's presence:

"When a house is on fire,
the vessel salvaged
is the one that will be of use,
not the one left there to burn.

So when the world is on fire
with aging & death,
one should salvage (one's wealth) by giving:

what's given is well salvaged.
What's given bears fruit as pleasure.
What isn't given does not:
thieves take it away, or kings;
it gets burnt by fire or lost.
Then in the end
one leaves the body
together with one's possessions.
Knowing this, the intelligent man
enjoys possessions & gives.
Having enjoyed & given
in line with his means,
uncensured he goes
to the heavenly state.”

See also: [SN 3:19–20](#); AN 5:34; AN 7:6-7; Khp 8; Iti 26; Iti 75

A Giver of What Kindada Sutta (SN 1:42)

A deva:

“A giver of what is a giver of strength?
A giver of what, a giver of beauty?
A giver of what, a giver of ease?
A giver of what, a giver of vision?
And who is a giver of everything?
Being asked, please explain this to me.”

The Buddha:

“A giver of food is a giver of strength.
A giver of clothes, a giver of beauty.
A giver of a vehicle, a giver of ease.
A giver of a lamp, a giver of vision.
And the one who gives a residence

is the one who's a giver of everything.
But the one who teaches the Dhamma
is a giver of
the Deathless."

See also: AN 5:34, 36, 37; Dhṛp 354

Old Age

Jarā Sutta (SN 1:51)

"What is good all the way through old age?
What is good when established?
What is the treasure of human beings?
What can't be stolen by thieves?"

The Buddha:

"Virtue is good all the way through old age.
Conviction is good when established.
Discernment is the treasure of human beings.
Merit can't be stolen by thieves."

See also: AN 7:6–7; Dhṛp 151; Dhṛp 333

Engendered

Jana Sutta (SN 1:55)

"What engenders a person?
What does one have that runs around?
What rushes toward the wandering-on?
What does one have
as one's great danger?"

The Buddha:

"Craving engenders a person."

One's mind is what runs around.
A being rushes toward the wandering-on.
Suffering is one's great danger."

See also: [SN 23:2](#); *Khp* 4

Engendered (2)

Jana Sutta (SN 1:56)

"What engenders a person?
What does one have that runs around?
What rushes toward the wandering-on?
From what is one not yet released?"

The Buddha:

"Craving engenders a person.
One's mind is what runs around.
A being rushes toward the wandering-on.
From suffering one's not yet released."

See also: [SN 22:22](#)

Engendered (3)

Jana Sutta (SN 1:57)

"What engenders a person?
What does one have that runs around?
What rushes toward the wandering-on?
What does one have
 as one's support?"

The Buddha:

"Craving engenders a person.
One's mind is what runs around.

A being rushes toward the wandering-on.
Action is one's support."

Fettered

Saññojana Sutta (SN 1:64)

"With what is the world fettered?
What is its exploration?
With the abandoning
of what
 is there said,
 'unbinding'?"

The Buddha:

"Fettered with delight is the world.
Directed thought is its exploration.
With the abandoning
of craving
 is there said,
 'unbinding.'"

Desire

Icchā Sutta (SN 1:69)

"With what is the world tied down?
With the subduing
of what is it freed?
With the abandoning
of what
 are all bonds
 cut through?"

The Buddha:

“With desire the world is tied down.
With the subduing
of desire it’s freed.
With the abandoning
of desire
 all bonds
 are cut through.”

Having Killed Chetvā Sutta (SN 1:71)

As she was standing to one side, a devatā recited this verse to the Blessed One:

“Having killed what
do you sleep in ease?
Having killed what
do you not grieve?
Of the slaying
of what one thing
does Gotama approve?”

The Buddha:

“Having killed anger
you sleep in ease.
Having killed anger
you do not grieve.
The noble ones praise
the slaying of anger
—with its honeyed crest
& poison root—
for having killed it
you do not grieve.”

See also: MN 21; [SN 7:2](#); AN 7:60

Kassapa the Deva's Son

Kassapa Sutta (SN 2:2)

Near Sāvattṭhi in the monastery... Standing to one side, Kassapa the deva's son recited this verse in the Blessed One's presence:

“A monk should have jhāna,
be released in mind,
if he wants the heart's attainment:
knowing the arising & passing away of the world,
good in his awareness, independent,
aimed at that reward.”

See also: [SN 12:15](#)

Pañcālacaṇḍa the Deva's Son

Pañcālacaṇḍa Sutta (SN 2:7)

The first verse in this discourse focuses on jhāna as a crucial element in the path to release. The Buddha's “awakening to jhāna” apparently refers to two points in his career as a bodhisatta: (1) the point when, realizing the futility of self-torture, he surmised that jhāna might form the path to awakening; and (2) his realization of the extent to which jhāna actually could lead to the knowledge that yielded in full awakening. (For details on both of these points, see MN 35.) In the second verse, the Buddha expands on Pañcālacaṇḍa's understanding of the practice of jhāna by pointing out that it has to be endowed with mindfulness to be genuinely right concentration. This point is related to the fact that the various lists of activities that constitute the path—such as the five faculties, the seven factors for awakening, and the noble eightfold path—always place right mindfulness before right concentration. It's also related to the statement in MN 44 that the four satipaṭṭhānas—

establishings of mindfulness—form the nimitta, or theme, of right concentration.

AN 9:42 contains an explanation of the first verse here, in which Ven. Ānanda identifies the first jhāna as the opening away from the confining place of sensual pleasures, and each successive level of jhāna as the opening away from the confining place of the preceding jhāna. Finally, he says, the cessation of perception & feeling acts as the ultimate opening away from all forms of confinement.

* * *

Near Sāvattthī. As he was standing to one side, Pañcālacaṇḍa the deva's son recited this verse in the Blessed One's presence:

“Truly in a confining place, he found an opening—
the one of extensive wisdom,
the awakened one who awakened to jhāna,¹
the chief bull, withdrawn,
the sage.”

The Buddha:

“Even in a confining place they find it,
[Pañcālacaṇḍa,” said the Blessed One,]
“the Dhamma for the attainment of unbinding.
Those who have gained mindfulness
are rightly well-centered.”²

NOTES

1. In CDB, this phrase is translated as “who discovered jhāna,” but the verb is *abuddhi*: “awakened to.”

2. In CDB, this sentence is translated as a continuation of the preceding one: “those who have acquired mindfulness, those perfectly well concentrated.” However, the Pali is constructed of two clauses in the *ye... te...* form that constitutes a separate sentence.

Subrahma the Deva's Son *Subrahma Sutta (SN 2:17)*

Standing to one side, Subrahma the deva's son recited this verse to the Blessed One:

“Constantly troubled is this mind,
constantly trembling this heart,
 over duties¹ that have yet to arise,
 and those already arisen.
If there is an Untroubled,
 point it out to me, when asked.”

The Buddha:

“Apart from the factors for awakening, austerity,²
apart from sense-faculty restraint,
apart from relinquishing the all,³
 I see no safety
 for living beings.”

That is what the Blessed One said... the deva disappeared right there.

NOTES

1. Reading *kiccesu* with the Thai version. The Burmese version has *kicchesu*, “troubles.”

2. Reading *bojjhaṅga-tapasā* with the Thai version. The Burmese version has *bojjhā tapasā*, “from awakening, from austerity.” The Commentary notes that *bojjhaṅga/bojjhā* refers to the development of the factors of awakening (see MN 118). *Tapasā*, it says, refers to undertaking the dhutaṅga practices (see Thag 16:7).

3. On the definition of the all, see [SN 35:23](#).

Uttara the Deva's Son

Uttara Sutta (SN 2:19)

Near Rājagaha. As he was standing to one side, Uttara the deva's son recited this verse in the Blessed One's presence:

“Life is swept along,
next-to-nothing its span.
For one swept on by aging
no shelters exist.
Perceiving this danger in death,
one should do deeds of merit
that bring about bliss.”

The Buddha:

“Life is swept along,
next-to-nothing its span.
For one swept to old age
no shelters exist.
Perceiving this danger in death,
one should drop the world's bait
and look for peace.”

Khema the Deva's Son

Khema Sutta (SN 2:22)

Standing to one side, Khema the deva's son recited these verses in the Blessed One's presence.

“Foolish people, lacking wisdom,
behave like enemies to themselves.
They do¹ evil deeds

that bear bitter fruit.

It's not good,
the doing of the deed
that, once it's done,
you regret,
whose result you reap crying,
your face in tears.

It's good,
the doing of the deed
that, once it's done,
you don't regret,
whose result you reap gratified,
 happy at heart.²

You should do prudently, right away,
what you know is for your own benefit.
A thinker, enlightened, you shouldn't strive
for the sake of the cart driver's thinking.

Just as a cart driver who—having left
the smoothed,³ even highway,
and climbed onto an uneven path—
 his axle broken, broods;
in the same way,
a fool—having departed from Dhamma
to follow non-Dhamma,
having fallen into the mouth of death—
 his axle broken, broods.”

NOTES

1. Reading *karonti* with the Thai edition.

2. These two verses = Dhp 67–68.

3. Reading *maṭṭham* with the Burmese edition. The Thai has *pasattham*, “recommended,” which makes sense, but *pasattham* doesn't fit the meter. The PTS edition has *pantham*, “road.”

Young

Dahara Sutta (SN 3:1)

I have heard that on one occasion the Blessed One was staying near Sāvattthī in Jeta’s Grove, Anāthapiṇḍika’s monastery. Then King Pasenadi Kosala went to the Blessed One and, on arrival, exchanged courteous greetings with him. After this exchange of friendly greetings & courtesies, he sat to one side. As he was sitting there he said to the Blessed One: “Now then, does Master Gotama claim, ‘I have awakened to the unexcelled right self-awakening’?”

“If, great king, one speaking rightly could say of anyone, ‘He has awakened to the unexcelled right self-awakening,’ one could rightly say that of me. For I, great king, have awakened to the unexcelled right self-awakening.”

“But Master Gotama, those contemplatives & brahmans, each with his group, each with his community, each the teacher of his group, an honored leader, well-regarded by people at large—i.e., Pūraṇa Kassapa, Makkhali Gosāla, Ajita Kesakambalin, Pakudha Kaccāyana, Sañjaya Velatṭhaputta, and the Nigaṇṭha Nātaputta: Even they, when I asked them whether they claimed to have awakened to the unexcelled right self-awakening, didn’t make that claim. So who is Master Gotama to do so when he is still young & newly gone forth?”

“There are these four things, great king, that shouldn’t be despised & disparaged for being young. Which four? A noble warrior, great king, shouldn’t be despised & disparaged for being young. A snake... A fire... And a monk shouldn’t be despised & disparaged for being young. These are the four things that shouldn’t be despised & disparaged for being young.”

That is what the Blessed One said. Having said that, the One Well-Gone, the Teacher, said further:

“You shouldn’t look down on
—for being young—

a noble warrior of consummate birth,
a high-born prince of great status.
A person shouldn't disparage him.

For it's possible
that this lord of human beings,
this noble warrior,
will gain the throne
and, angered at that disparagement,
come down harshly
with his royal might.
So, guarding your life,
avoid him.

You shouldn't look down on
—for being young—
a serpent you meet
in village or wilderness:
A person shouldn't disparage it.

As that potent snake slithers along
with vibrant colors,
it may someday burn the fool,
whether woman or man.
So, guarding your life,
avoid it.

You shouldn't look down on
—for being young—
a blaze that feeds on many things,
a flame with its blackened trail:
A person shouldn't disparage it.
For if it gains sustenance,
becoming a great mass of flame,
it may someday burn the fool,
whether woman or man.
So, guarding your life,
avoid it.

When a fire burns down a forest
—that flame with its blackened trail—
the shoots there
take birth once more
with the passage of days & nights.

But if a monk,
his virtue consummate,
burns you with his potency,¹
you won't acquire sons or cattle
nor will your heirs enjoy wealth.
They become

barren,
heir-less,
like palmyra stumps.

So a person who's wise,
out of regard for his own good,
should always show due respect
for

a serpent,
a fire,
a noble warrior with high status,
& a monk, his virtue consummate.”

When this was said, King Pasenadi Kosala said to the Blessed One:
“Magnificent, lord! Magnificent! Just as if he were to place upright what
was overturned, to reveal what was hidden, to show the way to one who
was lost, or to carry a lamp into the dark so that those with eyes could
see forms, in the same way has the Blessed One—through many lines of
reasoning—made the Dhamma clear. I go to the Blessed One for refuge,
to the Dhamma, and to the Saṅgha of monks. May the Blessed One
remember me as a lay follower who has gone to him for refuge, from
this day forward, for life.”

NOTE

1. The “potency” of a virtuous monk is his unwillingness to seek redress
when he has been treated wrongly. The bad kamma of having mistreated a

monk pure in his virtue is what returns to burn the person who did it.

See also: MN 82

Dear

Piya Sutta (SN 3:4)

Near Sāvattthī. As he was sitting to one side, King Pasenadi Kosala said to the Blessed One: “Just now, lord, while I was alone in seclusion, this train of thought arose in my awareness: ‘Who are dear to themselves, and who are not dear to themselves?’ Then it occurred to me: ‘Those who engage in bodily misconduct, verbal misconduct, & mental misconduct are not dear to themselves. Even though they may say, “We are dear to ourselves,” still they aren’t dear to themselves. Why is that? Of their own accord, they act toward themselves as an enemy would act toward an enemy; thus they aren’t dear to themselves. But those who engage in good bodily conduct, good verbal conduct, & good mental conduct are dear to themselves. Even though they may say, “We aren’t dear to ourselves,” still they are dear to themselves. Why is that? Of their own accord, they act toward themselves as a dear one would act toward a dear one; thus they are dear to themselves.”

“That’s the way it is, great king! That’s the way it is! Those who engage in bodily misconduct, verbal misconduct, & mental misconduct are not dear to themselves. Even though they may say, ‘We are dear to ourselves,’ still they aren’t dear to themselves. Why is that? Of their own accord, they act toward themselves as an enemy would act toward an enemy; thus they aren’t dear to themselves. But those who engage in good bodily conduct, good verbal conduct, & good mental conduct are dear to themselves. Even though they may say, ‘We aren’t dear to ourselves,’ still they are dear to themselves. Why is that? Of their own accord, they act toward themselves as a dear one would act toward a dear one; thus they are dear to themselves.”

That is what the Blessed One said. Having said that, the One Well-Gone, the Teacher, said further:

“If you hold yourself dear
then don’t fetter yourself
 with evil,
for happiness isn’t easily gained
 by one who commits
 a wrong-doing.

When seized by the End-maker
 as you abandon the human state,
what’s truly your own?
What do you take along when you go?
What follows behind you
 like a shadow
 that never leaves?

Both the merit & evil
that you as a mortal
perform here:
That’s
 what’s truly your own,
 what you take along when you go;
that’s
 what follows behind you
 like a shadow
 that never leaves.

So do what is admirable,
as an accumulation
 for the future life.
Deeds of merit are the support for beings
 when they arise
 in the other world.”

See also: MN 41; Ud 5:1; Iti 22; Dhṛp 1–2; Iti 60

Self-protected

Atta-rakkhita Sutta (SN 3:5)

Near Sāvattthī. As he was sitting to one side, King Pasenadi Kosala said to the Blessed One: “Just now, lord, while I was alone in seclusion, this train of thought arose in my awareness: ‘Who have themselves protected, and who leave themselves unprotected?’ Then it occurred to me: ‘Those who engage in bodily misconduct, verbal misconduct, & mental misconduct leave themselves unprotected. Even though a squadron of elephant troops might protect them, a squadron of cavalry troops, a squadron of chariot troops, a squadron of infantry troops might protect them, still they leave themselves unprotected. Why is that? Because that’s an external protection, not an internal one. Therefore they leave themselves unprotected. But those who engage in good bodily conduct, good verbal conduct, & good mental conduct have themselves protected. Even though neither a squadron of elephant troops, a squadron of cavalry troops, a squadron of chariot troops, nor a squadron of infantry troops might protect them, still they have themselves protected. Why is that? Because that’s an internal protection, not an external one. Therefore they have themselves protected.’”

“That’s the way it is, great king! That’s the way it is! Those who engage in bodily misconduct, verbal misconduct, & mental misconduct leave themselves unprotected. Even though a squadron of elephant troops might protect them, a squadron of cavalry troops, a squadron of chariot troops, a squadron of infantry troops might protect them, still they leave themselves unprotected. Why is that? Because that’s an external protection, not an internal one. Therefore they leave themselves unprotected. But those who engage in good bodily conduct, good verbal conduct, & good mental conduct have themselves protected. Even though neither a squadron of elephant troops, a squadron of cavalry troops, a squadron of chariot troops, nor a squadron of infantry troops might protect them, still they have themselves protected. Why is that?

Because that's an internal protection, not an external one. Therefore they have themselves protected."

That is what the Blessed One said. Having said that, the One Well-Gone, the Teacher, said further:

"Restraint with the body is good,
good is restraint with speech.
Restraint with the heart is good,
good is restraint everywhere.
Restrained everywhere,
conscientious,
one is said to be
protected."

See also: AN 3:110; AN 4:128; AN 10:17; AN 11:16; Khp 5

Few

Appaka Sutta (SN 3:6)

Near Sāvattthī. As he was sitting to one side, King Pasenadi Kosala said to the Blessed One: "Just now, lord, while I was alone in seclusion, this train of thought arose in my awareness: 'Few are those people in the world who, when acquiring lavish wealth, don't become intoxicated & heedless, don't become greedy for sensuality, and don't mistreat other beings. Many more are those who, when acquiring lavish wealth, become intoxicated & heedless, become greedy for sensuality, and mistreat other beings.'"

"That's the way it is, great king! That's the way it is! Few are those people in the world who, when acquiring lavish wealth, don't become intoxicated & heedless, don't become greedy for sensuality, and don't mistreat other beings. Many more are those who, when acquiring lavish wealth, become intoxicated & heedless, become greedy for sensuality, and mistreat other beings."

That is what the Blessed One said. Having said that, the One Well-Gone, the Teacher, said further:

“Impassioned with sensual possessions,
greedy, dazed by sensual pleasures,
they don’t awaken to the fact
that they’ve gone too far—
like deer into a trap laid out.
Afterwards it’s bitter for them:
Evil for them
the result.”

See also: MN 13–14

In Judgment

Atthakaraṇa Sutta (SN 3:7)

Near Sāvatthī. As he was sitting to one side, King Pasenadi Kosala said to the Blessed One: “Just now, lord, as I was sitting in judgment, I saw that even affluent nobles, affluent brahmans, & affluent householders—rich, with great wealth & property, with vast amounts of gold & silver, vast amounts of valuables & commodities, vast amounts of wealth & grain—tell deliberate lies with sensuality as the cause, sensuality as the reason, simply for the sake of sensuality. Then, the thought occurred to me: ‘I’ve had enough of this judging! Let some other fine fellow be known for his judgments!’”

“That’s the way it is, great king! That’s the way it is! Even affluent nobles, affluent brahmans, & affluent householders... tell deliberate lies with sensuality as the cause, sensuality as the reason, simply for the sake of sensuality. That will lead to their long-term harm & pain.”

That is what the Blessed One said. Having said that, the One Well-Gone, the Teacher, said further:

“Impassioned with sensual possessions,

greedy, dazed by sensual pleasures,
they don't awaken to the fact
that they've gone too far—
like fish into a trap set out.
Afterwards it's bitter for them:
Evil for them
the result.”

Sacrifice

Yañña Sutta (SN 3:9)

At Sāvattthī. Now on that occasion a great sacrifice had been arranged for King Pasenadi Kosala. Five hundred bulls, five hundred bullocks, five hundred cows, five hundred goats, & five hundred rams had been led to the pillar for the sacrifice. And his slaves, servants, & workers—threatened with punishment, threatened with danger—were making preparations, weeping, their faces stained with tears.

Then in the early morning, a large number of monks adjusted their under robes and—carrying their bowls & outer robes—went into Sāvattthī for alms. Having gone for alms in Sāvattthī, after the meal, returning from their alms round, they went to the Blessed One and, on arrival, having bowed down to him, sat to one side. As they were sitting there, they said to the Blessed One, “Lord, a great sacrifice has now been arranged for King Pasenadi Kosala. Five hundred bulls, five hundred bullocks, five hundred cows, five hundred goats, & five hundred rams have been led to the pillar for the sacrifice. And his slaves, servants, & workers—threatened with punishment, threatened with danger—are making preparations, weeping, their faces stained with tears.”

Then, on realizing the significance of that, the Blessed One on that occasion spoke these verses:

The horse sacrifice, the human sacrifice,
*sammāpāsa, vājapeyya, niraggala*¹

—great sacrifices, greatly violent—
bear no great fruit.

Where goats, rams, & cattle
of various kinds are killed:
Those of right conduct, great seers,
don't attend that sacrifice.

But sacrifices free from violence,
offered always in line with family custom,
where goats, rams, & cattle
of various kinds are not killed:
Those of right conduct, great seers,
attend that sacrifice.

The wise person should offer that.
This sacrifice bears great fruit.
For one who offers this,
things get better, not worse.
The sacrifice is abundant,
and the devatās are appeased.

NOTE

1. Three types of sacrifice defined by details in the equipment used.

See also: MN 60; Sn 2:7

Bonds

Bandhana Sutta (SN 3:10)

At Sāvattḥī. Now on that occasion a great group of people had been put into bondage by King Pasenadi Kosala—some with ropes, some with wooden shackles, some with chains.

Then in the early morning, a large number of monks adjusted their under robes and—carrying their bowls & outer robes—went into Sāvattḥī for alms. Having gone for alms in Sāvattḥī, after the meal,

returning from their alms round, they went to the Blessed One and, on arrival, having bowed down to him, sat to one side. As they were sitting there, they said to the Blessed One, “Lord, a great group of people has now been put into bondage by King Pasenadi Kosala—some with ropes, some with wooden shackles, some with chains.”

Then, on realizing the significance of that, the Blessed One on that occasion spoke these verses:

That’s not a strong bond
—so say the enlightened—
the one made of iron, of wood, or of grass.
To be smitten, enthralled,
 with jewels & ornaments,
 longing for children & wives:
That’s the strong bond,
—so say the enlightened—
one that’s constraining,
 elastic,
 hard to untie.
But having cut it, they
—the enlightened—go forth,
free of longing, abandoning
 sensual ease.¹

NOTE

1. These verses = Dhp 345–346.

Coiled-hair Ascetics

Jaṭila Sutta (SN 3:11)

I have heard that on one occasion the Blessed One was staying near Sāvattthī at the Eastern Monastery, the palace of Migāra’s mother. And on that occasion the Blessed One, having emerged from his seclusion in the late afternoon, was sitting outside the doorway of the porch. Then King

Pasenadi Kosala went to the Blessed One and, on arrival, having bowed down to him, sat to one side.

Now on that occasion seven coiled-hair ascetics, seven Jain ascetics, seven cloth-less ascetics, seven one-cloth ascetics, & seven wanderers—their nails, armpit-hair, & body-hair grown long, carrying containers on poles [over their shoulders]—walked past, not far from the Blessed One. Then King Pasenadi got up from his seat, arranged his upper robe over one shoulder, knelt down with his right knee on the ground, paid homage to the seven coiled-hair ascetics, seven Jain ascetics, seven cloth-less ascetics, seven one-cloth ascetics, & seven wanderers with his hands palm-to-palm in front his heart, and announced his name three times: “I am the king, venerable sirs, Pasenadi Kosala. I am the king, venerable sirs, Pasenadi Kosala. I am the king, venerable sirs, Pasenadi Kosala.”

Then not long after the seven coiled-hair ascetics, seven Jain ascetics, seven cloth-less ascetics, seven one-cloth ascetics, & seven wanderers had passed, King Pasenadi Kosala went to the Blessed One and, on arrival, having bowed down to him, sat to one side. As he was sitting there he said to the Blessed One, “Of those in the world who are arahants or on the path to arahantship, are these among them?”

“Great king, as a layman enjoying sensual pleasures; living confined with children; using Kāsi fabrics & sandalwood; wearing garlands, scents, & creams; handling gold & silver, it’s hard for you to know whether these are arahants or on the path to arahantship.

“It’s through living together that a person’s virtue may be known, and then only after a long period, not a short period; by one who is attentive, not by one who is inattentive; by one who is discerning, not by one who is not discerning.

“It’s through trading with a person that his purity may be known, and then only after a long period, not a short period; by one who is attentive, not by one who is inattentive; by one who is discerning, not by one who is not discerning.

“It’s through adversity that a person’s endurance may be known, and then only after a long period, not a short period; by one who is attentive, not by one who is inattentive; by one who is discerning, not by one who is not discerning.

“It’s through discussion that a person’s discernment may be known, and then only after a long period, not a short period; by one who is attentive, not by one who is inattentive; by one who is discerning, not by one who is not discerning.”

“Amazing, lord! Astounding!—how well that was put by the Blessed One! ‘Great king, as a layman enjoying sensual pleasures; living confined with children; using Kāsi fabrics & sandalwood; wearing garlands, scents, & creams; handling gold & silver, it’s hard for you to know whether these are arahants or on the path to arahantship.

“It’s through living together that a person’s virtue may be known, and then only after a long period, not a short period; by one who is attentive, not by one who is inattentive; by one who is discerning, not by one who is not discerning.

“It’s through trading with a person that his purity may be known, and then only after a long period, not a short period; by one who is attentive, not by one who is inattentive; by one who is discerning, not by one who is not discerning.

“It’s through adversity that a person’s endurance may be known, and then only after a long period, not a short period; by one who is attentive, not by one who is inattentive; by one who is discerning, not by one who is not discerning.

“It’s through discussion that a person’s discernment may be known, and then only after a long period, not a short period; by one who is attentive, not by one who is inattentive; by one who is discerning, not by one who is not discerning.’

“These men, lord, are my spies, my scouts, returning after going out through the countryside. They having gone out first, I go out afterward. Now, when they have scrubbed off the dirt & mud, are well-bathed & well-perfumed, have trimmed their hair and beards, and have put on white clothes, they will go about endowed and provided with the five strings of sensuality.”

Then, on realizing the significance of that, the Blessed One on that occasion recited these verses:

Not by appearance

is a man rightly known,
nor should trust be based
on a quick glance,
—for, disguised as well-restrained,
the unrestrained go through this world.
A counterfeit earring made of clay,
a bronze half-dollar coated in gold:
They go about in this world
hidden all around—
 impure inside,
 beautiful out.¹

NOTE

1. Ud 6:2 tells a nearly identical version of this story, but replaces this verse with the following:

One
 should not make an effort everywhere,
 should not be another's hireling,
 should not live dependent on another,
 should not go about
 as a trader in the Dhamma.

See also: MN 95; MN 110; AN 4:192

A Battle (1)

Saṅgāma Sutta (SN 3:14)

Staying near Sāvattthī. Then King Ajātasattu of Magadha, the son of Queen Videha, raising a fourfold army, marched toward Kāsi against King Pasenadi Kosala. King Pasenadi heard, “King Ajātasattu of Magadha, the son of Queen Videha, they say, has raised a fourfold army and is marching toward Kāsi against me.” So King Pasenadi, raising a fourfold army, launched a counter-attack toward Kāsi against King Ajātasattu. Then King Ajātasattu & King Pasenadi fought a battle, and in

that battle King Ajātasattu defeated King Pasenadi. King Pasenadi, defeated, marched back to his capital at Sāvattthī.

Then in the early morning, a large number of monks, having adjusted their lower robes, and taking their bowls & outer robes, went into Sāvattthī for alms. Having gone for alms in Sāvattthī, after the meal, returning from their alms round, they went to the Blessed One and, on arrival, having bowed down to him, sat to one side. As they were sitting there, they said to the Blessed One: “Just now, lord, King Ajātasattu of Magadha, the son of Queen Videha, raising a fourfold army, marched toward Kāsi against King Pasenadi Kosala. King Pasenadi heard, ‘King Ajātasattu of Magadha, the son of Queen Videha, they say, has raised a fourfold army and is marching toward Kāsi against me.’ So King Pasenadi, raising a fourfold army, launched a counter-attack toward Kāsi against King Ajātasattu. Then King Ajātasattu & King Pasenadi fought a battle, and in that battle King Ajātasattu defeated King Pasenadi. King Pasenadi, defeated, marched back to his capital at Sāvattthī.”

“Monks, King Ajātasattu has evil friends, evil comrades, evil companions, whereas King Pasenadi has fine friends, fine comrades, fine companions. Yet for now, King Pasenadi will lie down tonight in pain, defeated.”

That is what the Blessed One said. Having said that, the One Well-Gone, the Teacher, said further:

“Winning gives birth to hostility.
Losing, one lies down in pain.
The calmed lie down with ease,
having set
winning & losing
aside.”

A Battle (2)

Saṅgāma Sutta (SN 3:15)

Staying near Sāvattthī. Then King Ajātasattu of Magadha, the son of Queen Videha, raising a fourfold army, marched toward Kāsi against King Pasenadi Kosala. King Pasenadi heard, “King Ajātasattu of Magadha, the son of Queen Videha, they say, has raised a fourfold army and is marching toward Kāsi against me.” So King Pasenadi, raising a fourfold army, launched a counter-attack toward Kāsi against King Ajātasattu. Then King Ajātasattu & King Pasenadi fought a battle, and in that battle King Pasenadi defeated King Ajātasattu and captured him alive.

The thought then occurred to King Pasenadi: “Even though King Ajātasattu has wronged me when I have done him no wrong, still he is my nephew. What if I, having confiscated all his elephant troops, all his cavalry, all his chariots, & all his infantry, were to let him go with just his life?” So King Pasenadi—having confiscated all his elephant troops, cavalry, chariots, & infantry—let King Ajātasattu go with just his life.

Then in the early morning, a large number of monks, having adjusted their lower robes and taking their bowls & outer robes, went into Sāvattthī for alms. Having gone for alms in Sāvattthī, after the meal, returning from their alms round, they went to the Blessed One and, on arrival, having bowed down to him, sat to one side. As they were sitting there, they [reported these events to the Blessed One].

Then, on realizing the significance of that, the Blessed One on that occasion exclaimed:

“A man may plunder
as long as it serves his ends,
but when others are plundered,
he who has plundered
gets plundered in turn.

A fool thinks,
‘Now’s my chance,’
as long as his evil
has yet to ripen.
But when it ripens,
the fool

falls
into pain.
Killing, you gain
your killer.
Conquering, you gain one
who will conquer you;
insulting, insult;
harassing, harassment.
And so, through the cycle of action,
he who has plundered
gets plundered in turn.”

See also: Mv X.2.3–20; [SN 42:3](#); Dhṛp 69.

Heedfulness

Appamāda Sutta (SN 3:17)

Near Sāvattṥī. As he was sitting to one side, King Pasenadi Kosala said to the Blessed One: “Is there, lord, any one quality that keeps both kinds of benefits secure—benefits in this life & benefits in lives to come?”

“There is one quality, great king, that keeps both kinds of benefits secure— benefits in this life & benefits in lives to come.”

“But what, lord, is that one quality...?”

“Heedfulness, great king. Just as the footprints of all living beings with legs can be encompassed by the footprint of the elephant, and the elephant’s footprint is declared to be supreme among them in terms of its great size; in the same way, heedfulness is the one quality that keeps both kinds of benefits secure—benefits in this life & benefits in lives to come.”

That is what the Blessed One said. Having said that, the One Well-Gone, the Teacher, said further:

“For one who desires

long life, health,
beauty, heaven, & noble birth,
—lavish delights, one after another—
the wise praise heedfulness
in doing acts of merit.

When heedful, wise,
you achieve both kinds of benefit:
benefits in this life,
& benefits in lives to come.

By breaking through to your benefit,
you're called enlightened,
wise.

See also: MN 97; [SN 48:56](#); [SN 55:40](#); AN 4:113; AN 6:19–20; AN 10:15; Iti 23

Heirless (1)

Aputtaka Sutta (SN 3:19)

Near Sāvatthī. Then King Pasenadi Kosala went to the Blessed One in the middle of the day and, on arrival, having bowed down to the Blessed One, sat to one side. As he was sitting there the Blessed One said to him, “Well now, great king, where are you coming from in the middle of the day?”

“Just now, lord, a money-lending householder died in Sāvatthī. I have come from conveying his heirless fortune to the royal palace: eight million in silver, to say nothing of the gold. But even though he was a money-lending householder, his enjoyment of food was like this: He ate broken rice & pickle brine. His enjoyment of clothing was like this: He wore three lengths of hempen cloth. His enjoyment of a vehicle was like this: He rode in a dilapidated little cart with an awning of leaves.”

“That’s the way it is, great king. That’s the way it is. When a person of no integrity acquires lavish wealth, he doesn’t provide for his own pleasure & satisfaction, nor for the pleasure & satisfaction of his parents,

nor for the pleasure & satisfaction of his wife & children; nor for the pleasure & satisfaction of his slaves, servants, & assistants; nor for the pleasure & satisfaction of his friends. He doesn't institute for contemplatives & brahmans offerings of supreme aim, heavenly, resulting in happiness, leading to heaven. When his wealth isn't properly put to use, kings make off with it, or thieves make off with it, or fire burns it, or water sweeps it away, or hateful heirs make off with it. Thus his wealth, not properly put to use, goes to waste and not to any good use.

“Just as with a pond in a place haunted by non-human beings, with clear water, cool water, fresh water, clean, with good fords, delightful: No people would draw water from it or drink it or bathe in it or apply it to their needs. And so that water, not properly put to use, would go to waste and not to any good use. In the same way, when a person of no integrity acquires lavish wealth... his wealth, not properly put to use, goes to waste and not to any good use.

“But when a person of integrity acquires lavish wealth, he provides for his own pleasure & satisfaction, for the pleasure & satisfaction of his parents, the pleasure & satisfaction of his wife & children; the pleasure & satisfaction of his slaves, servants, & assistants; and the pleasure & satisfaction of his friends. He institutes for contemplatives & brahmans offerings of supreme aim, heavenly, resulting in happiness, leading to heaven. When his wealth is properly put to use, kings don't make off with it, thieves don't make off with it, fire doesn't burn it, water doesn't sweep it away, and hateful heirs don't make off with it. Thus his wealth, properly put to use, goes to a good use and not to waste.

“Just as with a pond not far from a town or village, with clear water, cool water, fresh water, clean, with good fords, delightful. People would draw water from it or drink it or bathe in it or apply it to their needs. And so that water, properly put to use, would go to a good use and not to waste. In the same way, when a person of integrity acquires lavish wealth... his wealth, properly put to use, goes to a good use and not to waste.”

That is what the Blessed One said. Having said that, the One Well-Gone, the Teacher, said further:

As for the moneylender mentioned in this discourse, even though his inability to enjoy his wealth can be traced to attitudes in the past, his unwillingness to make merit in this lifetime is not the fault of his past kamma. People are always free to choose to practice the Dhamma at any time. In his case, he chose not to. Thus he got no legitimate use out of his wealth at all.

* * *

Near Sāvattthī. Then King Pasenadi Kosala went to the Blessed One in the middle of the day and, on arrival, having bowed down to the Blessed One, sat to one side. As he was sitting there the Blessed One said to him, “Well now, great king, where are you coming from in the middle of the day?”

“Just now, lord, a money-lending householder died in Sāvattthī. I have come from conveying his heirless fortune to the royal palace: ten million in silver, to say nothing of the gold. But even though he was a money-lending householder, his enjoyment of food was like this: He ate broken rice & pickle brine. His enjoyment of clothing was like this: He wore three lengths of hempen cloth. His enjoyment of a vehicle was like this: He rode in a dilapidated little cart with an awning of leaves.”

“That’s the way it is, great king. That’s the way it is. Once in the past that money-lending householder provided alms for the Private Buddha named Tagarasikhi. Saying (to his servant), ‘Give alms to the contemplative,’ he got up from his seat and left. After giving, though, he felt regret: ‘It would have been better if my slaves or servants had eaten those alms.’ And he also murdered his brother’s only heir for the sake of his fortune. Now, the result of his action in having provided alms for the Private Buddha named Tagarasikhi was that he appeared seven times in a good destination, a heavenly world. And through the remaining result of that action he acted as moneylender seven times in this very same Sāvattthī. But the result of his action in feeling regret after giving (those) alms—‘It would have been better if my slaves or servants had eaten those alms’—was that his mind didn’t lend itself to the lavish enjoyment of food, didn’t lend itself to the lavish enjoyment of clothing, didn’t lend itself to the lavish enjoyment of a vehicle, didn’t lend itself to the lavish enjoyment of the five strings of sensuality. The result of his action in

having murdered his brother's only heir for the sake of his fortune was that he boiled in hell for many years, many hundreds of years, many thousands of years, many hundred-thousands of years. And through the remaining result of that action he has left this seventh heirless fortune to the royal treasury.

"Now, because of the wasting away of that money-lending householder's old merit and his non-accumulation of new merit, he is today boiling in the Great Roruva hell."

"So he has reappeared in the Great Roruva hell, lord?"

"Yes, great king. He has reappeared in the Great Roruva hell."

That is what the Blessed One said. Having said that, the One Well-Gone, the Teacher, said further:

"Grain, wealth, silver, gold,
or whatever other belongings you have;
slaves, servants, errand-runners,
& any dependents:
You must go without taking
 any of them;
you must leave
 all of them
 behind.

What you do
with body, speech, or mind:
 that is yours;
 taking
 that you go;
 that's
your follower,
 like a shadow
 that never leaves.

Thus you should do what is fine
as a stash for the next life.

Acts of merit
are the support for beings

in their after-death world.”

See also: MN 82; MN 130; AN 9:20; Dhṛp 1–2; Ud 5:3; Iti 22

(Qualities of) the World *Loka Sutta (SN 3:23)*

Near Sāvattṥhī. As he was sitting to one side, King Pasenadi Kosala said to the Blessed One: “How many qualities of the world that, when arising, arise for harm, stress, & discomfort?”

“Three qualities of the world, great king, when arising, arise for harm, stress, & discomfort. Which three? Greed, great king, is a quality of the world that, when arising, arises for harm, stress, & discomfort. Aversion... Delusion is a quality of the world that, when arising, arises for harm, stress, & discomfort. These are the three qualities of the world, great king, that when arising, arise for harm, stress, & discomfort.”

That is what the Blessed One said. Having said that, the One Well-Gone, the Teacher, said further:

“Greed, aversion, & delusion
—born from oneself—
destroy
the person of evil awareness,
as its own fruit, the reed.”

See also: MN 95; AN 3:66; AN 8:6–8; Dhṛp 164–165; Dhṛp 240

Archery Skills *Issatṥha Sutta (SN 3:24)*

Near Sāvattṥhī. As he was sitting to one side, King Pasenadi Kosala said to the Blessed One: “Where, lord, should a gift be given?”

“Wherever the mind feels confidence, great king.”¹

“But a gift given where, lord, bears great fruit?”

“This (question) is one thing, great king—‘Where should a gift be given?’—while this—‘A gift given where bears great fruit?’—is something else entirely. What is given to a virtuous person—rather than to an unvirtuous one—bears great fruit. In that case, great king, I will ask you a counter-question. Answer as you see fit.

“What do you think, great king? There is the case where you have a war at hand, a battle imminent. A noble-warrior youth would come along—untrained, unpracticed, undisciplined, undrilled, fearful, terrified, cowardly, quick to flee. Would you take him on? Would you have any use for a man like that?”

“No, lord, I wouldn’t take him on. I wouldn’t have any use for a man like that.”

“Then a brahman youth... a merchant youth... a laborer youth would come along—untrained, unpracticed, undisciplined, undrilled, fearful, terrified, cowardly, quick to flee. Would you take him on? Would you have any use for a man like that?”

“No, lord, I wouldn’t take him on. I wouldn’t have any use for a man like that.”

“Now, what do you think, great king? There is the case where you have a war at hand, a battle imminent. A noble-warrior youth would come along—trained, practiced, disciplined, drilled, fearless, unterrified, not cowardly, not quick to flee. Would you take him on? Would you have any use for a man like that?”

“Yes, lord, I would take him on. I would have use for a man like that.”

“Then a brahman youth... a merchant youth... a laborer youth would come along—trained, practiced, disciplined, drilled, fearless, unterrified, not cowardly, not quick to flee. Would take you him on? Would you have any use for a man like that?”

“Yes, lord, I would take him on. I would have use for a man like that.”

“In the same way, great king. When someone has gone forth from the home life into homelessness—no matter from what clan—and he has abandoned five factors and is endowed with five, what is given to him bears great fruit.

“And which five factors has he abandoned? He has abandoned sensual desire... ill will... sloth & drowsiness... restlessness & anxiety... uncertainty. These are the five factors he has abandoned. And with which five factors is he endowed? He is endowed with the aggregate of virtue of one beyond training... the aggregate of concentration of one beyond training... the aggregate of discernment of one beyond training... the aggregate of release of one beyond training... the aggregate of knowledge & vision of release of one beyond training. These are the five factors with which he is endowed.

“What is given to one who has abandoned five factors and is endowed with five factors in this way bears great fruit.”

That is what the Blessed One said. Having said that, the One Well-Gone, the Teacher, said further:

“As a king intent on battle
would hire a youth
in whom there are
 archery skills,
 persistence,
 & strength,
and not, on the basis of birth,
 a coward;
so, too, you should honor
a person of noble conduct, wise,
in whom are established
 composure
 & patience,
even though
his birth may be lowly.
Let donors build
pleasant hermitages
and there invite the learned to stay.
Let them make reservoirs
 in dry forests
and walking paths

where it's rough.
Let them, with a clear, calm awareness,
give food, drink, snacks,
clothing, & lodgings
to those who've become
straightforward.
Just as a hundred-billowed,
lightning-garlanded,
thundering cloud,
raining down on the wealth-bearing [earth],
fills the highlands & low,
even so
a person of conviction & learning,
wise,
having stored up provisions,
satisfies wayfarers
with food & drink.
Delighting in distributing alms,
‘Give to them!
Give!’
he says.

That
is his thunder,
like a raining cloud's.
That shower of merit,
abundant,
rains back on the one
who gives.”

NOTE

1. The non-offense clauses to Nissaggiya Pācittiya 30 state that, when donors ask a monk where they should give an intended gift, he should say, “Give wherever your gift would be used, or would be well-cared for, or would last long, or wherever your mind feels confidence.” In other words, monks should not tell lay people where to give their donations.

See also: MN 93; AN 3:58; AN 5:31; AN 5:34; AN 5:37; AN 7:49; Iti 22; Iti 75

The Simile of the Mountains

Pabbatopama Sutta (SN 3:25)

Near Sāvattthī. Then King Pasenadi Kosala went to the Blessed One in the middle of the day and, on arrival, having bowed down to him, sat to one side. As he was sitting there, the Blessed One said to him: “Well now, great king, where are you coming from in the middle of the day?”

“Just now, lord, I was engaged in the sort of royal affairs typical of head-anointed noble-warrior kings intoxicated with the intoxication of sovereignty, obsessed by greed for sensuality, who have attained stable control in their country, and who rule having conquered a great sphere of territory on earth.”

“What do you think, great king? Suppose a man, trustworthy & reliable, were to come to you from the east and on arrival would say: ‘If it please your majesty, you should know that I come from the east. There I saw a great mountain, as high as the clouds, coming this way, crushing all living beings (in its path). Do whatever you think should be done.’ Then a second man were to come to you from the west... Then a third man were to come to you from the north... Then a fourth man were to come to you from the south and on arrival would say: ‘If it please your majesty, you should know that I come from the south. There I saw a great mountain, as high as the clouds, coming this way, crushing all living beings. Do whatever you think should be done.’ If, your majesty, such a great peril should arise, such a terrible destruction of human life—the human state being so hard to obtain—what should be done?”

“If, lord, such a great peril should arise, such a terrible destruction of human life—the human state being so hard to obtain—what else should be done but Dhamma-conduct, right conduct, skillful deeds, meritorious deeds?”

“I inform you, great king, I announce to you, great king: aging & death are rolling in on you. When aging & death are rolling in on you,

what should be done?”

“As aging & death are rolling in on me, lord, what else should be done but Dhamma-conduct, right conduct, skillful deeds, meritorious deeds?”

“There are, lord, elephant battles (fought by) head-anointed noble-warrior kings intoxicated with the intoxication of sovereignty, obsessed by greed for sensuality, who have attained stable control in their country, and who rule having conquered a great sphere of territory on earth; but there is no use for those elephant battles, no scope for them, when aging & death are rolling in. There are cavalry battles... chariot battles... infantry battles... but there is no use for those infantry battles, no scope for them, when aging & death are rolling in. In this royal court there are counselors who, when the enemies arrive, are capable of dividing them by their wits; but there is no use for those battles of wits, no scope for them, when aging & death are rolling in. In this royal court there is abundant bullion & gold stored in vaults & depositories, and with such wealth we are capable of buying off enemies when they come; but there is no use for those battles of wealth, no scope for them, when aging & death are rolling in. As aging & death are rolling in on me, lord, what else should be done but Dhamma-conduct, right conduct, skillful deeds, meritorious deeds?”

“So it is, great king! So it is, great king! As aging & death are rolling in on you, what else should be done but Dhamma-conduct, right conduct, skillful deeds, meritorious deeds?”

That is what the Blessed One said. Having said that, the One Well-Gone, the Teacher, further said this:

“Like massive boulders,
mountains pressing against the sky,
moving in from all sides,
crushing the four directions,
so aging & death
come rolling over living beings:
noble warriors, brahmans, merchants,
workers, outcastes, & scavengers.

They spare nothing.
They trample everything.
Here elephant troops can hold no ground,
nor can chariots or infantry,
nor can a battle of wits
or wealth win out.
So a wise person,
seeing his own good,
steadfast, secures confidence
in the Buddha, Dhamma, & Saṅgha.
One who practices the Dhamma
in thought, word, & deed,
receives praise here on earth
and after death rejoices in heaven.”

See also: MN 82; [SN 3:5](#); AN 6:19–20; Khp 8

Delight

Nandana Sutta (SN 4:8)

In this discourse, Māra and Buddha are speaking different languages. By “acquisitions” Māra means one’s family and physical possessions. The Buddha uses the same word to mean a sense of possession for anything—physical or mental—at all.

* * *

I have heard that on one occasion the Blessed One was staying near Sāvattthī in Jeta’s Grove, Anāthapiṇḍika’s monastery. Then Māra the Evil One went to the Blessed One and recited this verse in his presence:

“Those with children
delight
because of their children.

Those with cattle
delight
because of their cows.
A person's delight
comes from acquisitions,
since a person with no acquisitions
doesn't delight."

The Buddha:

"Those with children
grieve
because of their children.
Those with cattle
grieve
because of their cows.
A person's grief
comes from acquisitions,
since a person with no acquisitions
doesn't grieve."

Then Māra the Evil One—sad & dejected at realizing, "The Blessed One knows me; the One Well-Gone knows me"—vanished right there.

See also: MN 87; [SN 1:20](#); AN 5:49; Ud 2:7; Ud 8:8; Sn 1:2

The Stone Sliver

Sakalika Sutta (SN 4:13)

See the introductory note to [SN 1:38](#).

* * *

I have heard that on one occasion the Blessed One was staying near Rājagaha in the Maddakucchi Deer Reserve. Now at that time his foot had been pierced by a stone sliver. Excruciating were the bodily feelings that developed within him—painful, fierce, sharp, wracking, repellent,

disagreeable—but he endured them mindful, alert, & unperturbed. Having had his outer robe folded in four and laid out, he lay down on his right side in the lion’s posture—with one foot placed on top of the other—mindful & alert.

Then Māra the Evil One went to the Blessed One and recited this verse in his presence:

“Are you lying there in a stupor,
or drunk on poetry?
Are your goals so very few?
All alone in a secluded lodging,
what is this dreamer, this sleepy-face?”

The Buddha:

“I lie here,
not in a stupor,
nor drunk on poetry.
My goal attained,
I am sorrow-free.
All alone in a secluded lodging,
I lie down with sympathy
for all beings.

Even those pierced in the chest
with an arrow,
their hearts rapidly,
rapidly
beating:
even they with their arrows
are able to sleep.

So why shouldn’t I,
with my arrow removed?

I’m not awake with worry,
nor afraid to sleep.
Days & nights
don’t oppress me.
I see no threat of decline

in any world at all.
That's why I sleep
with sympathy
for all beings."

Then Māra the Evil One—sad & dejected at realizing, "The Blessed One knows me; the One Well-Gone knows me"—vanished right there.

See also: [SN 1:38](#); [SN 5:1–10](#); [SN 36:6](#); AN 5:129

The Farmer

Kassaka Sutta (SN 4:19)

Near Sāvattthī. Now at that time the Blessed One was instructing, urging, rousing, & encouraging the monks with a Dhamma talk concerning unbinding. The monks—attentive, interested, lending ear, focusing their entire awareness—were listening to the Dhamma.

Then the thought occurred to Māra, the Evil One: "Gotama the contemplative is instructing, urging, rousing, & encouraging the monks with a Dhamma talk concerning unbinding. The monks—attentive, interested, lending ear, focusing their entire awareness—are listening to the Dhamma. What if I were to go to Gotama the contemplative to obscure his vision?"

Then Māra the Evil One, taking on the form of a farmer with a large plowshare over his shoulder, carrying a long goad stick—his hair disheveled, his clothes made of coarse hemp, his feet splattered with mud—went to the Blessed One and, on arrival, said, "Hey, contemplative. Have you seen my oxen?"

"And what are your oxen, Evil One?"

"Mine alone is the eye, contemplative. Mine are forms, mine is the dimension of consciousness & contact at the eye. Where can you go to escape me? Mine alone is the ear... the nose... the tongue... the body... Mine alone is the intellect, contemplative. Mine are ideas, mine is the

dimension of consciousness & contact at the intellect. Where can you go to escape me?”

“Yours alone is the eye, Evil One. Yours are forms, yours is the sphere of consciousness & contact at the eye. Where no eye exists, no forms exist, no dimension of consciousness & contact at the eye exists: There, Evil One, you cannot go. Yours alone is the ear... the nose... the tongue... the body... Yours alone is the intellect, Evil One. Yours are ideas, yours is the dimension of consciousness & contact at the intellect. Where no intellect exists, no ideas exist, no dimension of consciousness & contact at the intellect exists: There, Evil One, you cannot go.”

Māra:

“Of what they say,
‘This is mine’;
and those who say,
‘Mine’:
If your intellect’s here,
contemplative,
you can’t escape
from me.”

The Buddha:

“What they speak of
isn’t mine,
and I’m not one of those
who speak it.
Know this, Evil One:
You won’t even see
my tracks.”

Then Māra the Evil One—sad & dejected at realizing, “The Blessed One knows me; the One Well-Gone knows me”—vanished right there.

See also: MN 49; [SN 35:115](#); [SN 35:117](#); [SN 35:202](#); Dhṛp 92–93; Ud 1:10; Sn 5:15

Rulership

Rajja Sutta (SN 4:20)

I have heard that on one occasion the Blessed One was staying among the Kosalans in a wilderness hut in a Himalayan district. Then, as he was alone in seclusion, this train of thought arose in his awareness: “Is it possible to exercise rulership without killing or causing others to kill, without dispossessing or causing others to dispossess, without sorrowing or causing others sorrow—righteously?”

Then Māra, the Evil One, knowing with his awareness the train of thought in the Blessed One’s awareness, went to him and on arrival said to him: “Exercise rulership, Blessed One! Exercise rulership, O One Well-Gone!—without killing or causing others to kill, without dispossessing or causing others to dispossess, without sorrowing or causing others sorrow—righteously!”

“But what do you see in me, Evil One, that you say to me, ‘Exercise rulership, Blessed One! Exercise rulership, O One Well-Gone!—without killing or causing others to kill, without dispossessing or causing others to dispossess, without sorrowing or causing others sorrow—righteously!’?”

“Lord, the Blessed One has developed the four bases of power,¹ pursued them, given them a means of transport, given them a grounding, steadied them, consolidated them, and undertaken them well. If he wanted to, he could resolve on the Himalayas, king of mountains, as gold, and it would become a mountain of gold.”²

The Buddha:

“The entirety
of a mountain of gold,
of solid bullion:
Even twice that
wouldn’t suffice

for one person.
Knowing this,
live evenly,
in tune with the contemplative life.

When you see stress,
and from where it comes,
how can you incline
to sensuality?
Knowing acquisition
to be a bond in the world,
train for
its subduing.”

Then Māra the Evil One—sad & dejected at realizing, “The Blessed One knows me; the One Well-Gone knows me”—vanished right there.

NOTES

1. The foundations for psychic abilities. See [SN 51:20](#).
2. The implication here is that, with so much gold, the Buddha could cure the world’s miseries and buy off his enemies.

See also: MN 82; [SN 35:199](#); AN 3:70; Dhṛp 186–187

A Large Number *Sambahula Sutta (SN 4:21)*

I have heard that on one occasion the Blessed One was staying among the Sakyans at Silāvatī. And on that occasion a large number of monks were staying not far from the Blessed One: heedful, ardent, & resolute.

Then Māra the Evil One, assuming the appearance of a brahman—with a large coiled top-knot, clad in an antelope hide, aged, crooked like a roof support, wheezing, holding a staff of fig wood—went to the monks and, on arrival, said to them, “You have gone forth while young, masters—black-haired, endowed with the blessings of youth in the first

stage of life—without having played with sensuality. Enjoy human sensuality, monks. Don't drop what is visible here-&-now in pursuit of what's subject to time."

"Brahman, we're not dropping what's visible here-&-now in pursuit of what's subject to time. We're dropping what's subject to time in pursuit of what's visible here-&-now. For the Blessed One has said that sensuality is subject to time, of much stress, much despair, & greater drawbacks; whereas this Dhamma is visible here-&-now, not subject to time, inviting all to come & see, pertinent, to be known by the observant for themselves."

When this was said, Māra the Evil One—shaking his head, wagging his tongue, raising his eyebrows so that his forehead was wrinkled in three furrows—left, leaning on his stick.

So the monks went to the Blessed One and, on arrival, having bowed down to him, sat to one side. As they were sitting there they [told him what had happened].

"That wasn't a brahman, monks. That was Māra the Evil One, come to blind you."

Then, on realizing the significance of that, the Blessed One on that occasion spoke these verses:

One who has seen the cause
from which suffering comes:
How could that person
incline to sensuality?
Having realized
that acquisition is a tie
in the world,
a person should train
to subdue
just that.

See also: [SN 1:20](#); [SN 35:127](#); [Thag 7:1](#)

Sister Ālavikā

Ālavikā Sutta (SN 5:1)

I have heard that on one occasion the Blessed One was staying near Sāvattthī in Jeta’s Grove, Anāthapiṇḍika’s monastery. Then, early in the morning, Ālavikā the nun adjusted her robes and, taking her bowl & outer robe, went into Sāvattthī for alms. When she had gone for alms in Sāvattthī and had returned from her alms round, after her meal she went to the Grove of the Blind, aiming at seclusion.

Then Māra the Evil One, wanting to arouse fear, horripilation, & terror in her, wanting to make her fall away from concentration, approached her & addressed her in verse:

“There’s no
escape
in the world,
so what are you trying to do
with seclusion?
Enjoy sensual delights.
Don’t be someone
who later regrets.”

Then the thought occurred to Ālavikā the nun: “Now who has recited this verse—a human being or a non-human one?” Then it occurred to her: “This is Māra the Evil One who has recited this verse wanting to arouse fear, horripilation, & terror in me, wanting to make me fall away from seclusion.”

Then, having understood that “This is Māra the Evil One,” she replied to him in verses:

“There *is*
an escape in the world,
well touched by me
with discernment—

something that you,
you Evil One,
kinsman of the heedless,
don't know.

Sensual pleasures
are like swords & spears;
the aggregates,
their executioner's block.
What you call *sensual delight*
is *no delight* for me.”

Then Māra the Evil One—sad & dejected at realizing, “Āḷavikā the nun knows me”—vanished right there.

See also: [SN 35:115](#); Ud 8:1; Iti 43; Iti 72

Sister Somā

Somā Sutta (SN 5:2)

Near Sāvatthī. Then, early in the morning, Somā the nun adjusted her robes and, taking her bowl & outer robe, went into Sāvatthī for alms. When she had gone for alms in Sāvatthī and had returned from her alms round, after her meal she went to the Grove of the Blind to spend the day. Having gone deep into the Grove of the Blind, she sat down at the foot of a tree for the day's abiding.

Then Māra the Evil One, wanting to arouse fear, horripilation, & terror in her, wanting to make her fall away from concentration, approached her & addressed her in verse:

“That
which is
to be attained by seers
—the place so very hard to reach—
women

can't
—with their two-inch discernment—
attain.”

Then the thought occurred to Somā the nun: “Now who has recited this verse—a human being or a non-human one?” Then it occurred to her: “This is Māra the Evil One who has recited this verse wanting to arouse fear, horripilation, & terror in me, wanting to make me fall away from concentration.”

Then, having understood that “This is Māra the Evil One,” she replied to him in verses:

“What
difference
does being a woman make
when the mind’s well-centered,
when knowledge is progressing,
seeing clearly, rightly,
into the Dhamma.

Anyone who thinks
‘I’m a woman’
or ‘a man’
or ‘Am I anything at all?’—
that’s who Māra’s
fit to address.”

Then Māra the Evil One—sad & dejected at realizing, “Somā the nun knows me”—vanished right there.

Sister Gotamī

Gotamī Sutta (SN 5:3)

Near Sāvattthī. Then, early in the morning, Kisā Gotamī the nun adjusted her robes and, taking her bowl & outer robe, went into Sāvattthī

for alms. When she had gone for alms in Sāvattthī and had returned from her alms round, after her meal she went to the Grove of the Blind to spend the day. Having gone deep into the Grove of the Blind, she sat down at the foot of a tree for the day's abiding.

Then Māra the Evil One, wanting to arouse fear, horripilation, & terror in her, wanting to make her fall away from concentration, approached her & addressed her in verse:

“Why,
with your sons killed,
do you sit all alone,
your face in tears?
All alone,
immersed in the midst of the forest,
are you looking
for a man?”

Then the thought occurred to Kisā Gotamī the nun: “Now who has recited this verse—a human being or a non-human one?” Then it occurred to her: “This is Māra the Evil One who has recited this verse wanting to arouse fear, horripilation, & terror in me, wanting to make me fall away from concentration.”

Then, having understood that “This is Māra the Evil One,” she replied to him in verses:

“I’ve gotten past
the killing of sons,
have made that the end
to (my search for) men.
I don’t grieve,
I don’t weep—
and I’m not afraid of *you*,
my friend.
It’s everywhere destroyed—delight.
The mass of darkness is shattered.
Having defeated the army of death,

free
of effluents
I dwell.”

Then Māra the Evil One—sad & dejected at realizing, “Kisā Gotamī the nun knows me”—vanished right there.

See also: [SN 47:13](#); *Thig* 10

Sister Vijayā

Vijayā Sutta (SN 5:4)

Near Sāvattthī. Then, early in the morning, Vijayā the nun adjusted her robes and, taking her bowl & outer robe, went into Sāvattthī for alms. When she had gone for alms in Sāvattthī and had returned from her alms round, after her meal she went to the Grove of the Blind to spend the day. Having gone deep into the Grove of the Blind, she sat down at the foot of a tree for the day’s abiding.

Then Māra the Evil One, wanting to arouse fear, horripilation, & terror in her, wanting to make her fall away from concentration, approached her & addressed her in verse:

“You, a beautiful young woman.
I, a young man.
Come, my lady,
let’s enjoy ourselves
to the music of a five-piece band.”

Then the thought occurred to Vijayā the nun: “Now who has recited this verse—a human being or a non-human one?” Then it occurred to her: “This is Māra the Evil One who has recited this verse wanting to arouse fear, horripilation, & terror in me, wanting to make me fall away from concentration.”

Then, having understood that “This is Māra the Evil One,” she replied to him in verses:

“Lovely sights, sounds,
smells, tastes,
& tactile sensations
I leave to
you, Māra.
I
have no need
for them.
I’m disgusted, ashamed
of this putrid body—
disintegrating, dissolving.
Sensual craving
is rooted out.
Beings who have come to form,
& those with a share in the formless,
& the peaceful attainments:
their darkness
is completely destroyed.”

Then Māra the Evil One—sad & dejected at realizing, “Vijayā the nun knows me”—vanished right there.

Sister Uppalavaṇṇā *Uppalavaṇṇā Sutta (SN 5:5)*

Near Sāvattthī. Then, early in the morning, Uppalavaṇṇā the nun adjusted her robes and, taking her bowl & outer robe, went into Sāvattthī for alms. When she had gone for alms in Sāvattthī and had returned from her alms round, after her meal she went to the Grove of the Blind to spend the day. Having gone deep into the Grove of the Blind, she stood at the root of a flowering Sal tree.

Then Māra the Evil One, wanting to arouse fear, horripilation, & terror in her, wanting to make her fall away from concentration, approached her & addressed her in verse:

“You’ve come, nun,
to this Sal tree
with its fine flowering crest,
and stand alone
at its root,
with no one
to match you in beauty.
In your foolishness,
aren’t you afraid
of rape?”

Then the thought occurred to Uppalavaṇṇā the nun: “Now who has recited this verse—a human being or a non-human one?” Then it occurred to her: “This is Māra the Evil One who has recited this verse wanting to arouse fear, horripilation, & terror in me, wanting to make me fall away from concentration.”

Then, having understood that “This is Māra the Evil One,” she replied to him in verses:

“If even a hundred-thousand rapists
came across me like this,
I wouldn’t stir a hair.
I’d feel no terror,
and I’m not afraid of *you*, Māra,
even alone like this.

Here—I disappear.
I slip into your belly
or stand between your eyebrows,
and you
don’t see me.

I have mastery
over the mind,
have well-developed
the bases of power.¹
I’m released from all bonds,
and not afraid of *you*,

my friend.”

Then Māra the Evil One—sad & dejected at realizing, “Uppalavaṇṇā the nun knows me”—vanished right there.

NOTE

1. See [SN 51:20](#)

Sister Cālā

Cālā Sutta (SN 5:6)

Near Sāvattihī. Then, early in the morning, Cālā the nun adjusted her robes and, taking her bowl & outer robe, went into Sāvattihī for alms. When she had gone for alms in Sāvattihī and had returned from her alms round, after her meal she went to the Grove of the Blind to spend the day. Having gone deep into the Grove of the Blind, she sat down at the foot of a tree for the day’s abiding.

Then Māra the Evil One, wanting to arouse fear, horripilation, & terror in her, wanting to make her fall away from concentration, approached her & said, “What is it that you don’t approve of, nun?”

“I don’t approve of birth, my friend.”

Māra:

“Why don’t you approve of birth?

One who is born
enjoys sensual pleasures.

Who on earth
ever persuaded you:

‘Nun, don’t approve of birth?’”

Sister Cālā:

“For one who is born
there’s death.

One who is born
sees pain.

It's a binding, a flogging, a torment.
That's why one shouldn't approve
of birth.

The Awakened One taught me the Dhamma
—the overcoming of birth—
for the abandoning of all pain,
he established me in
the truth.

But beings who have come to form
& those with a share in the formless,
if they don't discern cessation,
return to becoming-again."

Then Māra the Evil One—sad & dejected at realizing, "Cālā the nun knows me"—vanished right there.

See also: MN 106; MN 140; Iti 43; Iti 72

Sister Upacālā

Upacālā Sutta (SN 5:7)

Near Sāvattthī. Then, early in the morning, Upacālā the nun adjusted her robes and, taking her bowl & outer robe, went into Sāvattthī for alms. When she had gone for alms in Sāvattthī and had returned from her alms round, after her meal she went to the Grove of the Blind to spend the day. Having gone deep into the Grove of the Blind, she sat down at the foot of a tree for the day's abiding.

Then Māra the Evil One, wanting to arouse fear, horripilation, & terror in her, wanting to make her fall away from concentration, approached her & said, "Where do you want to reappear [be reborn], nun?"

"I don't want to reappear anywhere, my friend."

Māra:

“The Devas of the Thirty-three,
the Hours, the Contented,
devas who delight in creation,
& devas in control:
Direct your mind there
and it will enjoy
delight.”

Sister Upacālā:

“The Devas of the Thirty-three,
the Hours, the Contented,
devas who delight in creation,
& devas in control:
They are bound
with the bonds of sensuality;
they come again
under Māra’s sway.

The whole world is burning.
The whole world is aflame.
The whole world is blazing.
The whole world is shaken.

The unshaken, untrembling¹
—of which people run-of-the-mill
don’t partake,
where Māra’s
never been—
that’s where my heart
truly delights.”

Then Māra the Evil One—sad & dejected at realizing, “Upacālā the nun knows me”—vanished right there.

NOTE

1. *Acalita*. This word plays on the “cālā” in Upacālā’s name.

See also: MN 49; [SN 4:19](#); [SN 35:202](#)

Sister Sīsūpacālā

Sīsūpacālā Sutta (SN 5:8)

Near Sāvatthī. Then, early in the morning, Sīsūpacālā the nun adjusted her robes and, taking her bowl & outer robe, went into Sāvatthī for alms. When she had gone for alms in Sāvatthī and had returned from her alms round, after her meal she went to the Grove of the Blind to spend the day. Having gone deep into the Grove of the Blind, she sat down at the foot of a tree for the day's abiding.

Then Māra the Evil One approached her & said, "Whose philosophy do you approve of, nun?"

"I don't approve of anyone's philosophy, my friend."

Māra:

"For whose sake
have you shaved your head?
You look like a contemplative
but don't approve of a philosophy,
so why are you wandering here
confused?"

Sister Sīsūpacālā:

"Outside philosophers place
their confidence in views.

I don't approve
of their teaching.

They're not adept
in the Dhamma.

But there is
the Awakened One,
born in the Sakyan clan,
a person without peer:
all-conquering,

Māra's subduer,
everywhere undefeated,
everywhere freed, independent;
 endowed with an Eye
 all-seeing, reaching the end of
 all kamma—
with the ending of acquisitions,
 released.

He, that Blessed One,
 is my teacher.
It's in his Dhamma
 that I delight."

Then Māra the Evil One—sad & dejected at realizing, "Sīsupacālā the nun knows me"—vanished right there.

Sister Selā

Selā Sutta (SN 5:9)

Near Sāvattthī. Then, early in the morning, Selā the nun adjusted her robes and, taking her bowl & outer robe, went into Sāvattthī for alms. When she had gone for alms in Sāvattthī and had returned from her alms round, after her meal she went to the Grove of the Blind to spend the day. Having gone deep into the Grove of the Blind, she sat down at the foot of a tree for the day's abiding.

Then Māra the Evil One, wanting to arouse fear, horripilation, & terror in her, wanting to make her fall away from concentration, approached her & addressed her in verse:

"By whom was this doll created?
Where is the doll's maker?
Where has the doll originated?
Where does it cease?"

Then the thought occurred to Selā the nun: “Now who has recited this verse—a human being or a non-human one?” Then it occurred to her: “This is Māra the Evil One who has recited this verse wanting to arouse fear, horripilation, & terror in me, wanting to make me fall away from concentration.”

Then, having understood that “This is Māra the Evil One,” she replied to him in verses:

“This doll isn’t self-made,
nor is this misery made by another.*
In dependence on a cause
it comes into play.
With the dissolution of the cause
it ceases.

Just as a seed grows
—when planted in a field—
because of the soil’s savor
together with moisture;
in the same way, these
aggregates,
properties,
sense media
—in dependence on a cause—
come into play.
With the dissolution of the cause
they cease.”

Then Māra the Evil One—sad & dejected at realizing, “Selā the nun knows me”—vanished right there.

**Alternative reading:*

This doll, this misery,
isn’t created.

See also: [SN 12:25](#); [SN 22:53–55](#)

Sister Vajirā

Vajirā Sutta (SN 5:10)

This discourse dramatizes a problem that often arises in meditation practice—a speculative question arises that, if followed, pulls one out of concentration. Sister Vajirā shows how to deal with the situation: Recognize that the terms in which the question is expressed are just that—terms—and that whatever reality there is in the issue raised by the question can be reduced to phenomena observable in the immediate present. In ultimate terms, this comes down to the arising and passing away of stress, which should be observed and comprehended to the point where one can see through to that which neither arises nor passes away.

* * *

Near Sāvattthī. Then, early in the morning, Vajirā the nun adjusted her robes and, taking her bowl & outer robe, went into Sāvattthī for alms. When she had gone for alms in Sāvattthī and had returned from her alms round, after her meal she went to the Grove of the Blind to spend the day. Having gone deep into the Grove of the Blind, she sat down at the foot of a tree for the day’s abiding.

Then Māra the Evil One, wanting to arouse fear, horripilation, & terror in her, wanting to make her fall away from concentration, approached her & addressed her in verse:

“By whom was this being created?
Where is the being’s maker?
Where has the being originated?
Where does the being
 cease?”

Then the thought occurred to Vajirā the nun: “Now who has recited this verse—a human being or a non-human one?” Then it occurred to her: “This is Māra the Evil One who has recited this verse wanting to

arouse fear, horripilation, & terror in me, wanting to make me fall away from concentration.”

Then, having understood that “This is Māra the Evil One,” she replied to him in verses:

“What? Do you assume a ‘being,’ Māra?
Do you take a position?
This is purely a pile of fabrications.
Here no being
can be pinned down.
Just as when, with an assemblage of parts,
there’s the word,
chariot,
even so when aggregates are present,
there’s the convention of
a being.
For only stress is what comes to be;
stress, what remains & falls away.
Nothing but stress comes to be.
Nothing ceases but stress.”

Then Māra the Evil One—sad & dejected at realizing, “Vajirā the nun knows me”—vanished right there.

*See also: MN 121; [SN 12:15](#); [SN 22:36](#); [SN 23:2](#); [SN 35:85](#); [SN 35:205](#);
[SN 36:11](#); [SN 38:14](#); Ud 1:10*

The Request

Āyācana Sutta (SN 6:1)

I have heard that on one occasion, when the Blessed One was newly self-awakened, he was staying near Uruvelā on the bank of the Nerañjarā River, at the foot of the Goatherd’s Banyan Tree. Then, while he was alone & in seclusion, this line of thinking arose in his awareness: “This

Dhamma that I have attained is deep, hard to see, hard to realize, peaceful, refined, beyond the scope of conjecture, subtle, to-be-experienced by the observant. But this generation delights in attachment, is excited by attachment, enjoys attachment. For a generation delighting in attachment, excited by attachment, enjoying attachment, this/that conditionality & dependent co-arising are hard to see. This state, too, is hard to see: the pacification of all fabrications, the relinquishing of all acquisitions, the ending of craving; dispassion; cessation; unbinding. And if I were to teach the Dhamma and if others would not understand me, that would be tiresome for me, troublesome for me.”

Just then these verses, unspoken in the past, unheard before, occurred to the Blessed One:

“Enough now with teaching
what
only with difficulty
I reached.
This Dhamma is not easily realized
by those overcome
with aversion & passion.
What is abstruse, subtle,
deep,
hard to see,
going against the flow—
those delighting in passion,
cloaked in the mass of darkness,
won’t see.”

As the Blessed One reflected thus, his mind inclined to dwelling at ease, not to teaching the Dhamma.

Then Brahmā Sahampati, having known with his own awareness the line of thinking in the Blessed One’s awareness, thought: “The world is lost! The world is destroyed! The mind of the Tathāgata, the Arahant, the Rightly Self-awakened One inclines to dwelling at ease, not to teaching the Dhamma!” Then, just as a strong man might extend his flexed arm

or flex his extended arm, Brahmā Sahampati disappeared from the Brahmā world and reappeared in front the Blessed One. Arranging his upper robe over one shoulder, he knelt down with his right knee on the ground, saluted the Blessed One with his hands before his heart, and said to him: “Lord, let the Blessed One teach the Dhamma! Let the One-Well-Gone teach the Dhamma! There are beings with little dust in their eyes who are falling away because they do not hear the Dhamma. There will be those who will understand the Dhamma.”

That is what Brahmā Sahampati said. Having said that, he further said this:

“In the past
there appeared among the Magadhans
an impure Dhamma
devised by the stained.
Throw open the door to the Deathless!
Let them hear the Dhamma
realized by the Stainless One!

Just as one standing on a rocky crag
might see people
all around below,
so, intelligent one, with all-around vision,
ascend the palace
fashioned of Dhamma.
Free from sorrow, behold the people
submerged in sorrow,
oppressed by birth & aging.

Rise up, hero, victor in battle!
O Teacher, wander without debt in the world.
Teach the Dhamma, O Blessed One:
There will be those who will understand.”

Then the Blessed One, having understood Brahmā’s invitation, out of compassion for beings, surveyed the world with the eye of an Awakened One. As he did so, he saw beings with little dust in their eyes and those

with much, those with keen faculties and those with dull, those with good attributes and those with bad, those easy to teach and those hard, some of them seeing disgrace & danger in the other world. Just as in a pond of blue or red or white lotuses, some lotuses—born & growing in the water—might flourish while immersed in the water, without rising up from the water; some might stand at an even level with the water; while some might rise up from the water and stand without being smeared by the water—so too, surveying the world with the eye of an Awakened One, the Blessed One saw beings with little dust in their eyes and those with much, those with keen faculties and those with dull, those with good attributes and those with bad, those easy to teach and those hard, some of them seeing disgrace & danger in the other world.

Having seen this, he answered Brahmā Sahampati in verse:

“Open are the doors to the deathless.
Let those with ears show their conviction.
Let them show their conviction.
Perceiving trouble, O Brahmā,
I did not tell people the refined,
sublime Dhamma.”

Then Brahmā Sahampati, thinking, “I’m the one who created the opportunity for the teaching of the Dhamma by the Blessed One!” bowed down to the Blessed One and, circling him on the right, disappeared right there.

See also: DN 12; MN 26; MN 63; AN 3:22; AN 4:111; AN 10:95; Dhṛp 28

Reverence

Gārava Sutta (SN 6:2)

I have heard that on one occasion, when the Blessed One was newly self-awakened, he was staying near Uruvelā on the bank of the Nerañjarā River, at the foot of the Goatherd’s Banyan Tree. Then, while he was alone & in seclusion, this line of thinking arose in his awareness: “One

suffers if dwelling without reverence or deference. Now on what contemplative or brahman can I dwell in dependence, honoring & respecting him?”

Then the thought occurred to him: “It would be for the sake of perfecting an unperfected aggregate of virtue that I would dwell in dependence on another contemplative or brahman, honoring & respecting him. However, in this world with its devas, Māras, & Brahmās, in this generation with its contemplatives & brahmans, its royalty & commonfolk, I do not see another contemplative or brahman more consummate in virtue than I, on whom I could dwell in dependence, honoring & respecting him.

“It would be for the sake of perfecting an unperfected aggregate of concentration that I would dwell in dependence on another contemplative or brahman, honoring & respecting him. However, in this world with its devas, Māras, & Brahmās, in this generation with its contemplatives & brahmans, its royalty & commonfolk, I do not see another contemplative or brahman more consummate in concentration than I, on whom I could dwell in dependence, honoring & respecting him.

“It would be for the sake of perfecting an unperfected aggregate of discernment that I would dwell in dependence on another contemplative or brahman, honoring & respecting him. However, in this world with its devas, Māras, & Brahmās, in this generation with its contemplatives & brahmans, its royalty & commonfolk, I do not see another contemplative or brahman more consummate in discernment than I, on whom I could dwell in dependence, honoring & respecting him.

“It would be for the sake of perfecting an unperfected aggregate of release that I would dwell in dependence on another contemplative or brahman, honoring & respecting him. However, in this world with its devas, Māras, & Brahmās, in this generation with its contemplatives & brahmans, its royalty & commonfolk, I do not see another contemplative or brahman more consummate in release than I, on whom I could dwell in dependence, honoring & respecting him.

“It would be for the sake of perfecting an unperfected aggregate of knowledge & vision of release that I would dwell in dependence on another contemplative or brahman, honoring & respecting him. However, in this world with its devas, Māras, & Brahmās, in this generation with its contemplatives & brahmans, its royalty & commonfolk, I do not see another contemplative or brahman more consummate in knowledge & vision of release than I, on whom I could dwell in dependence, honoring & respecting him.

“What if I were to dwell in dependence on this very Dhamma to which I have fully awakened, honoring & respecting it?”

Then, having known with his own awareness the line of thinking in the Blessed One’s awareness—just as a strong man might extend his flexed arm or flex his extended arm—Brahmā Sahampati disappeared from the Brahmā world and reappeared in front of the Blessed One. Arranging his upper robe over one shoulder, he saluted the Blessed One with his hands before his heart and said to him: “So it is, Blessed One! So it is, One-Well-Gone! Those who were arahants, Rightly Self-awakened Ones in the past—they, too, dwelled in dependence on the very Dhamma itself, honoring & respecting it. Those who will be arahants, Rightly Self-awakened Ones in the future—they, too, will dwell in dependence on the very Dhamma itself, honoring & respecting it. And let the Blessed One, who is at present the arahant, the Rightly Self-awakened One, dwell in dependence on the very Dhamma itself, honoring & respecting it.”

That is what Brahmā Sahampati said. Having said that, he further said this:

“Past Buddhas,
future Buddhas,
& he who is the Buddha now,
removing the sorrow of many—
all have dwelt,
will dwell, he dwells,
revering the true Dhamma.
This, for Buddhas, is a natural law.

Therefore one who desires his own good,
aspiring for greatness,
should respect the true Dhamma,
recollecting the Buddhas' Teaching."

See also: [SN 11:3](#); AN 7:56; AN 8:2; Khp 6; Iti 90

Total Unbinding *Parinibbāna Sutta (SN 6:15)*

This discourse reports how the Buddha passed away, giving four verses uttered by those who witnessed the event. It is interesting to note that the verses ascribed to heavenly beings make general comments on how the nature of all beings—even a Buddha—is to pass away, whereas the verses ascribed to the monks comment specifically on the Buddha's display of mental mastery immediately prior to the moment of his total unbinding. For some reason, the order of the verses here differs slightly from that in DN 16.

* * *

On one occasion the Blessed One was staying near Kusinārā in Upavattana, the Sal Tree Forest of the Mallans, on the occasion of his total unbinding. Then the Blessed One addressed the monks, "I exhort you, monks: All fabrications are subject to decay. Reach consummation through heedfulness." That was the Tathāgata's last statement.

Then the Blessed One entered the first jhāna. Emerging from that he entered the second jhāna. Emerging from that, he entered the third... the fourth jhāna... the dimension of the infinitude of space... the dimension of the infinitude of consciousness... the dimension of nothingness... the dimension of neither perception nor non-perception. Emerging from that, he entered the cessation of perception & feeling.

Then emerging from the cessation of perception & feeling, he entered the dimension of neither perception nor non-perception. Emerging from that, he entered the dimension of nothingness... the

dimension of the infinitude of consciousness... the dimension of the infinitude of space... the fourth jhāna... the third... the second... the first jhāna. Emerging from the first jhāna he entered the second... the third... the fourth jhāna. Emerging from the fourth jhāna, he immediately totally unbound.

When the Blessed One totally unbound, simultaneously with the total unbinding, Sahampati Brahmā uttered this verse:

“All beings—all—in the world,
will cast off the bodily heap
in the world
where a Teacher like this
without peer in the world
the Tathāgata, with strength attained,
the Rightly Self-Awakened One,
has totally
unbound.”

When the Blessed One totally unbound, simultaneously with the total unbinding, Sakka, ruler of the gods, uttered this verse:

“How inconstant are fabrications!
Their nature: to arise & pass away.
They disband as they are arising.
Their total stilling is bliss.”

When the Blessed One totally unbound, simultaneously with the total unbinding, Ven. Ānanda uttered this verse:

“It was awe-inspiring.
It was hair-raising
when, displaying the foremost
accomplishment in all things,
the Rightly Self-Awakened One
totally unbound.”

When the Blessed One totally unbound, simultaneously with the total unbinding, Ven. Anuruddha uttered this verse:

“He had no in-&-out breathing,
the one who was Such,¹ the firm-minded one,
imperturbable
& bent on peace:
the sage completing his span.
With heart unbowed
he endured the pain.
Like a flame’s unbinding
was the liberation
of awareness.”

NOTE

1. Such (*tādin*): An adjective applied to the mind of one who has attained the goal. It indicates that the mind “is what it is”—indescribable but not subject to change or alteration.

See also: MN 72; Ud 8:10; Thig 5:10

Insult

Akkosa Sutta (SN 7:2)

I have heard that on one occasion the Blessed One was staying near Rājagaha in the Bamboo Forest, the Squirrels’ Sanctuary. Then the brahman Akkosaka [“Insulter”] Bhāradvāja heard that a brahman of the Bhāradvāja clan had gone forth from the home life into homelessness in the presence of the Blessed One. Angered & displeased, he went to the Blessed One and, on arrival, insulted & cursed him with rude, harsh words.

When this was said, the Blessed One said to him: “What do you think, brahman? Do friends & colleagues, relatives & kinsmen come to you as guests?”

“Yes, Master Gotama, sometimes friends & colleagues, relatives & kinsmen come to me as guests.”

“And what do you think? Do you serve them with staple & non-staple foods & delicacies?”

“Yes, sometimes I serve them with staple & non-staple foods & delicacies.”

“And if they don’t accept them, to whom do those foods belong?”

“If they don’t accept them, Master Gotama, those foods are all mine.”

“In the same way, brahman, that with which you have insulted me, who is not insulting; that with which you have taunted me, who is not taunting; that with which you have berated me, who is not berating: that I don’t accept from you. It’s all yours, brahman. It’s all yours.

“Whoever returns insult to one who is insulting, returns taunts to one who is taunting, returns a berating to one who is berating, is said to be eating together, sharing company, with that person. But I am neither eating together nor sharing your company, brahman. It’s all yours. It’s all yours.”

“The king together with his court know this of Master Gotama —‘Gotama the contemplative is an arahant’—and yet still Master Gotama gets angry.”¹

The Buddha:

“Whence is there anger
for one free from anger,
tamed,
living in tune—
one released through right knowing,
calmed
& Such.

You make things worse
when you flare up
at someone who’s angry.
Whoever doesn’t flare up
at someone who’s angry

wins a battle
hard to win.

You live for the good of both
—your own, the other’s—
when, knowing the other’s provoked,
you mindfully grow calm.

When you work the cure of both
—your own, the other’s—
those who think you a fool
know nothing of Dhamma.”

When this was said, the brahman Akkosaka Bhāradvāja said to the Blessed One, “Magnificent, Master Gotama! Magnificent! Just as if he were to place upright what was overturned, to reveal what was hidden, to show the way to one who was lost, or to carry a lamp into the dark so that those with eyes could see forms, in the same way has Master Gotama—through many lines of reasoning—made the Dhamma clear. I go to Master Gotama for refuge, to the Dhamma, & to the Saṅgha of monks. Let me obtain the Going-forth in Master Gotama’s presence, let me obtain Acceptance (into the Saṅgha of monks).”

Then the brahman Akkosaka Bhāradvāja received the Going-forth in the Blessed One’s presence, he gained the Acceptance. And not long after his Acceptance—dwelling alone, secluded, heedful, ardent, & resolute—he in no long time entered & remained in the supreme goal of the holy life, for which clansmen rightly go forth from home into homelessness, directly knowing & realizing it for himself in the here & now. He knew: “Birth is ended, the holy life fulfilled, the task done. There is nothing further for the sake of this world.” And so Ven. Bhāradvāja became another one of the arahants.

NOTE

1. Akkosaka thinks that the Buddha is cursing him—and thus angry—when actually the Buddha is simply stating a fact in line with the law of kamma.

See also: MN 21; MN 28; [SN 1:71](#); [SN 11:5](#); AN 7:60; Dhṛp 133–134

The Tangle

Jaṭā Sutta (SN 7:6)

Near Sāvattthī. Then the brahman Jaṭā [“Tangle”] Bhāradvāja went to the Blessed One and, on arrival, exchanged courteous greetings with him. After this exchange of friendly greetings & courtesies, he sat to one side. As he was sitting there he addressed the Blessed One with a verse:

“A tangle within,
a tangle without,
people are entangled
 in a tangle.

Gotama, I ask you this:
Who can untangle this tangle?”

The Buddha:

“A man established in virtue,
 discerning,
developing discernment & mind,
a monk ardent, astute:

He can untangle this tangle.

Those whose

 passion,
 aversion,
 & ignorance

 have faded away,

arahants, their effluents ended:

For them the tangle’s untangled.

Where name-&-form,

 along with perception
 of impingement & form,

totally stop without trace:

That’s where the tangle

is cut.”

When this was said, the brahman Jaṭā Bhāradvāja said to the Blessed One, “Magnificent, Master Gotama! Magnificent! Just as if he were to place upright what was overturned, to reveal what was hidden, to show the way to one who was lost, or to carry a lamp into the dark so that those with eyes could see forms, in the same way has Master Gotama—through many lines of reasoning—made the Dhamma clear. I go to Master Gotama for refuge, to the Dhamma, & to the Saṅgha of monks. Let me obtain the Going-forth in Master Gotama’s presence, let me obtain Acceptance.”

Then the brahman Jaṭā Bhāradvāja received the Going-forth in the Blessed One’s presence, he gained the Acceptance. And not long after his Acceptance—dwelling alone, secluded, heedful, ardent, & resolute—he in no long time entered & remained in the supreme goal of the holy life, for which clansmen rightly go forth from home into homelessness, directly knowing & realizing it for himself in the here & now. He knew: “Birth is ended, the holy life fulfilled, the task done. There is nothing further for the sake of this world.” And so Ven. Bhāradvāja became another one of the arahants.

Very Rich

Mahāsāla Sutta (SN 7:14)

Near Sāvattthī. Then a certain very rich brahman—shabby, shabbily dressed—went to the Blessed One and, on arrival, exchanged courteous greetings with him. After this exchange of friendly greetings & courtesies, he sat to one side. As he was sitting there the Blessed One said to him, “Why, brahman, are you shabby & shabbily dressed?”

“Just now, Master Gotama, my four sons—at their wives instigation—threw me out of the house.”

“In that case, brahman, memorize these verses and then recite them when a large assembly of people have gathered in the town hall and your sons are sitting there, too.

“Those whose birth
I delighted in
—whose growth I desired—
at their wives instigation
have chased me away,
as dogs would swine.

Wicked & vile,
though they call me ‘Dad’:
demons in the disguise of sons
who abandon me in old age.

As an old horse
of no more use
is deprived of fodder,
so the elderly father
of those foolish boys
begs at other people’s homes.

My staff serves me better
than those disobedient sons.

It fends off
ferocious bulls
& ferocious curs.
In the dark it goes before me;
down steep slopes, it gives support.
Through the power of my staff,
when I stumble
I still stand firm.”

Then the very rich brahman, having memorized these verses in the presence of the Blessed One, recited them when a large assembly of people had gathered in the town hall and his sons were sitting there, too:

“Those whose birth
I delighted in
—whose growth I desired—
at their wives instigation

have chased me away,
as dogs would swine.

Wicked & vile,
though they call me 'Dad':
demons in the disguise of sons
who abandon me in old age.

As an old horse
of no more use
is deprived of fodder,
so the elderly father
of those foolish boys
begs at other people's homes.

My staff serves me better
than those disobedient sons.

It fends off
ferocious bulls
& ferocious curs.
In the dark it goes before me;
down steep slopes, it gives support.
Through the power of my staff,
when I stumble
I still stand firm."

Then the brahman's sons, having led him home, bathed him, and each provided him in a pair of cloths. So the brahman, taking one pair of cloths, went to the Blessed One and, on arrival, exchanged courteous greetings with him. After this exchange of friendly greetings & courtesies, he sat to one side. As he was sitting there he said to the Blessed One, "We brahmans, Master Gotama, look for a teacher's fee for our teacher. May Master Gotama accept this teacher's portion from me."

The Blessed One accepted it out of sympathy.

Then the very rich brahman said to the Blessed One: "Magnificent, Master Gotama! Magnificent! Just as if he were to place upright what was overturned, to reveal what was hidden, to show the way to one who was lost, or to carry a lamp into the dark so that those with eyes could

see forms, in the same way has Master Gotama—through many lines of reasoning—made the Dhamma clear. I go to Master Gotama for refuge, to the Dhamma, & to the Saṅgha of monks. May Master Gotama remember me as a lay follower who has gone for refuge from this day forward, for life.”

See also: AN 2:31–32; Iti 74; Iti 106

The Builder

Navakammika Sutta (SN 7:17)

On one occasion the Blessed One was staying among the Kosalans in a certain forest grove. Now at that time the brahman Navakammika [“Builder”] Bhāradvāja was getting some work done in that forest grove. He saw the Blessed One sitting under a Sal tree—his legs folded crosswise, his body held erect, with mindfulness set to the fore. On seeing him, the thought occurred to the brahman: “Here I am, taking delight in getting work done in this forest grove. But what does this contemplative take delight in getting done?”

So he went to the Blessed One and on arrival recited this verse:

“What jobs are getting done,
monk in the Sal forest?
Alone in the wilderness,
in what does Gotama
find delight?”

The Buddha:

“I have no work
to do in the forest.
The forest of restless dancing about
I’ve cut
at the root.
Though in the forest, I’m
deforested,

de-arrowed.
I delight alone,
discontent cast away.”

When this was said, the brahman Navakammika Bhāradvāja said to the Blessed One: “Magnificent, Master Gotama! Magnificent! Just as if he were to place upright what was overturned, to reveal what was hidden, to show the way to one who was lost, or to carry a lamp into the dark so that those with eyes could see forms, in the same way has Master Gotama—through many lines of reasoning—made the Dhamma clear. I go to Master Gotama for refuge, to the Dhamma, & to the Saṅgha of monks. May Master Gotama remember me as a lay follower who has gone for refuge from this day forward, for life.”

See also: Sn 1:4; Thig 13:2

Firewood-gathering Kaṭṭhahāraka Sutta (SN 7:18)

The poetic exchange in this discourse emphasizes the difference between appearances and actual vision. The brahman addressing the Buddha speaks in terms of conjecture and uses three compounds containing the word “rūpa,” or “appearance”—gambhīra-rūpa, sucāru-rūpa, and acchera-rūpa (deep-looking, very-lovely-looking, and amazing-looking). The Buddha, however, emphasizes not his appearance but what he sees. What’s important about him is not how he looks to others, but how he looks at things.

Another contrast is that, whereas the brahman conjectures about the goal the Buddha is striving for in the wilderness—attaining the heavens of the Brahmās—the Buddha points out that he has already arrived at a goal that is hidden even to Brahmās.

* * *

On one occasion the Blessed One was staying among the Kosalans in a certain forest grove. Then a large number of firewood-gathering youths

—students of a certain brahman of the Bhāradvāja clan—went to the forest grove. On arrival, they saw the Blessed One sitting in the grove—his legs folded crosswise, his body set straight, mindfulness established to the fore. On seeing him, they went to the brahman of the Bhāradvāja clan and, on arrival, said to him, “Sir, you should know that Gotama the contemplative is in that grove over there, sitting with his legs folded crosswise, his body set straight, mindfulness established to the fore.

So the brahman of the Bhāradvāja clan, together with the youths, went to the forest grove. On arrival, he saw the Blessed One sitting in the grove—his legs folded crosswise, his body set straight, mindfulness established to the fore. On seeing him, he went to the Blessed One and, on arrival, addressed him in verse:

“In the deep-looking forest,
teeming with terrors,
having plunged into the wilderness
—desolate, empty—
unflinchingly, steadfastly, compellingly,
you practice jhāna, monk:
How very lovely you look!

Where no song is sung,
where no music is played,
alone in the wilderness:
the forest-dwelling sage.
This looks amazing to me—
that you live alone in the forest
with rapturous mind.

I suppose it’s in longing
for the three heavens unexcelled,
in the company of the ruling lord of the worlds,
that, staying here in the wilderness, desolate,
you practice austerities
for attaining Brahmā.”

The Buddha:

“Whatever the longings or delights

attached—always—
to various levels of being,
or yearnings born
from the root of unknowing:
I’ve destroyed them all,
down to the root.

I—
without longing,
unattached,
uninvolved,
with purified vision
with regard to all things,
having reached self-awakening,
sublime, unexcelled—
practice jhāna hidden from Brahmā,
matured.”¹

NOTE

1. In the PTS edition of the Pali Canon, this last line reads, *jhāyāṃ’aham brāhmaṇa raho vissārado*—“I practice jhāna, brahman, in seclusion, matured.” This, however, does not fit in with the rhythm of the verse, and so for that reason I have followed the Thai edition here—*jhāyāṃ’aham brahma-raho visārado*—which does fit in with the rhythm. This reading also has the advantage of providing a neat contrast to the reference to Brahmā in the brahman’s last line

The compound *brahma-raho*, “Brahmā-private,” can be read in either of two ways: either private like a Brahmā or private to—i.e., hidden from—Brahmā. The first reading would simply convey the fact that the practice of jhāna puts one in a mental state equivalent to a Brahmā. The second reading points to the fact that the Buddha, in having gained awakening, meditates in a way that even Brahmās cannot perceive or understand. I have chosen this latter reading because it parallels the message in AN 11:10.

See also: [SN 1:10](#); [SN 5:4](#); [SN 5:7](#); [SN 7:17](#); [SN 9:6](#); [SN 9:9](#); [SN 35:153](#); *Ud*

Ānanda (Instructions to Vaṅgīsa)

Ānanda Sutta (SN 8:4)

On one occasion Ven. Ānanda was staying near Sāvattthī in Jeta's Grove, Anāthapiṇḍika's monastery. Then early in the morning, having adjusted his lower robe and taking his bowl & outer robe, he went into Sāvattthī for alms with Ven. Vaṅgīsa as his attendant monk. Now at that time dissatisfaction (with the celibate life) had arisen in Ven. Vaṅgīsa. Lust invaded his mind. So he addressed Ven. Ānanda with this verse:

“With sensual lust I burn.
My mind is on fire.
Please, Gotama, from compassion,
 tell me how
 to put it out.”

Ven. Ānanda:

“From distorted perception
your mind is on fire.
Shun the theme of the beautiful
 accompanied by lust.
See mental fabrications as other,
 as stress,
 & not-self.
Extinguish your great lust.
Don't keep burning again & again.
Develop the mind
 —well-centered & one—
 in the foul,
 through the foul.
Have your mindfulness
 immersed in the body.
Be one who pursues
 disenchantment.

Develop the theme-less.¹
Cast out conceit.
Then, from breaking through
conceit,
you will go on your way,
at peace.”

NOTE

1. The themeless concentration of awareness. See MN 121 and [SN 41:7](#).

See also: MN 119; AN 4:163

Seclusion

Viveka Sutta (SN 9:1)

I have heard that on one occasion a certain monk was staying among the Kosalans in a forest grove. Now at that time, as he had gone to spend the day (in the grove), he was thinking unskillful thoughts, connected with the household life.

Then the devatā inhabiting the forest grove, feeling sympathy for the monk, desiring his benefit, desiring to bring him to his senses, approached him and addressed him with this verse:

“Desiring seclusion
you’ve entered the forest,
and yet your mind
goes running outside.
You, a person:
subdue your desire for people.
Then you’ll be happy, free
from passion.
Dispel discontent,
be mindful.
Let me remind you

of that which is good—
for the dust
of the regions below
 is hard to transcend.
Don't let the dust
of the sensual
pull
 you
 down.

As a bird
spattered with dirt
sheds the adhering dust with a shake,
 so a monk
—energetic & mindful—
sheds the adhering dust.”

The monk, chastened by the devatā, came to his senses.

Anuruddha

Anuruddha Sutta (SN 9:6)

I have heard that on one occasion Ven. Anuruddha was staying among the Kosalans in a forest grove. Now at that time, a devatā from the retinue of the heaven of the Thirty-three named Jālinī, one of Ven. Anuruddha's former consorts, went to him and, on arrival, addressed him with this verse:

“Direct your mind
to where you used to live,
among the Devas of the Thirty-three,
empowered
with all sensual pleasures.
Honored, surrounded
by deva maidens,

you
will shine.”

Ven. Anuruddha:

“They’ve gone astray,
deva maidens
established in self-identity.
And they’ve gone astray,
those beings with deva maidens
as their aim.”

Jālinī:

“They don’t know bliss
who haven’t seen Nandana,
abode of the eminent devas,
glorious,
of the Thirty-three.”

Ven. Anuruddha:

“You fool, don’t you know
the arahants’ maxim?—
‘How inconstant are fabrications!
Their nature: to arise & pass away.
They disband as they are arising.
Their total stilling is bliss.’
Jālinī, there is now
in deva company
no further abode
(for me).
With the utter ending
of wandering on in birth,
there is now
no further becoming.”

See also: [SN 5:7](#); SN 6: 15; AN 3:129

The Vajjian Princeling

Vajjīputta Sutta (SN 9:9)

On one occasion a certain monk, a Vajjian princeling, was staying near Vesālī in a forest grove. And on that occasion an all-night festival was being held in Vesālī. The monk—lamenting as he heard the resounding din of wind music, string music, & gongs coming from Vesālī, on that occasion recited this verse:

“I live in the wilderness
all alone
like a log cast away in the forest.
On a night like this,
who could there be
more miserable
than me?”

Then the devatā inhabiting the forest grove, feeling sympathy for the monk, desiring his benefit, desiring to bring him to his senses, approached him and addressed him with this verse:

“As you live in the wilderness all alone
like a log cast away in the forest,
many are those who envy you,
as hell-beings do,
those headed for heaven.”

The monk, chastened by the devatā, came to his senses.

See also: MN 130; [SN 35:135](#); Dhṛp 181

Inappropriate Attention

Ayoniso-manasikāra Sutta (SN 9:11)

I have heard that on one occasion a certain monk was staying among the Kosalans in a forest grove. Now at that time, he spent the day's abiding thinking evil, unskillful thoughts: i.e., thoughts of sensuality, thoughts of ill will, thoughts of doing harm.

Then the devatā inhabiting the forest grove, feeling sympathy for the monk, desiring his benefit, desiring to bring him to his senses, approached him and addressed him with this verse:

“From inappropriate attention
you're being chewed by your thoughts.
Relinquishing what's inappropriate,
contemplate
appropriately.

Keeping your mind on the Teacher,
the Dhamma, the Saṅgha, your virtues,
you will arrive at
joy,
rapture,
pleasure
without doubt.

Then, saturated
with joy,
you will put an end
to suffering & stress.”

The monk, chastened by the devatā, came to his senses.

See also: DN 2; [SN 22:122](#); AN 3:129; AN 4:263; Iti 16

The Thief of a Scent

Padumapuppha Sutta (SN 9:14)

I have heard that on one occasion a certain monk was staying among the Kosalans in a forest grove. Now at that time, after his meal, returning

from his almsround, he went down to a lotus pond and sniffed a red lotus.

Then the devatā inhabiting the forest grove, feeling sympathy for the monk, desiring his benefit, desiring to bring him to his senses, approached him and addressed him with this verse:

“You sniff this water-born flower
that hasn’t been given to you.
This, dear sir, is a factor of stealing.
You are a thief of a scent.”

The monk:

“I don’t take, don’t damage.
I sniff at the lotus
from far away.
So why do you call me
a thief of a scent?
One who
digs up the stalks,
damages flowers,
one of such ruthless behavior:
why don’t you say it of him?”

The devatā:

“A person ruthless & grasping,
smeared like a nursing diaper:
to him
I have nothing to say.
It’s you
to whom I should speak.
To a person unblemished,
constantly searching for purity,
a hair-tip’s worth of evil
seems as large
as a cloud.”

The monk:

“Yes, yakkha, you understand me
and show me sympathy.
Warn me again, yakkha,
whenever again
you see something like this.”

The devatā:

“I don’t depend on you
for my living
nor am I
your hired hand.
You, monk,
you yourself should know
how to go to the good destination.”

The monk, chastened by the devatā, came to his senses.

See also: [*SN 1:20*](#); [*SN 9:1*](#); [*SN 9:9*](#); *AN 4:263*

With Maṇibhadda

Maṇibhadda Sutta (SN 10:4)

Mindfulness is not a cure-all.

* * *

On one occasion the Blessed One was staying among the Magadhans at the Jewel-stand Shrine, the haunt of the yakkha-spirit, Maṇibhadda [Auspicious Jewel].

Then Maṇibhadda the yakkha-spirit went to the Blessed One and, on arrival, recited this verse:

“It’s always auspicious for one who is mindful.
The mindful one prospers happily—always.
The mindful one grows better each day
and is totally freed from animosity.”

The Buddha:

“It’s always auspicious for one who is mindful.
The mindful one prospers happily always.
The mindful one grows better each day
but isn’t totally freed from animosity.
Whoever’s heart, all day, all night,
delights in harmlessness
with goodwill for all beings
has no animosity with anyone at all.

See also: MN 61; [SN 47:19](#); AN 4:96; AN 4:99

About Sudatta (Anāthapiṇḍika)

Sudatta Sutta (SN 10:8)

Many discourses are set in Jeta’s Grove, the monastery donated by Anāthapiṇḍika. Here we learn how Anāthapiṇḍika first met the Buddha. A dramatic point in the story revolves around the fact that most people knew of him by his epithet—Anāthapiṇḍika means “Almsgiver to those without protection”—rather than by his given name. Thus he is surprised to hear the Buddha, at their first meeting, address him correctly.

The Cullavagga (VI) gives this same story in greater detail and adds more incidents: After reciting the verse with which this discourse ends, the Buddha gives Anāthapiṇḍika a step-by-step teaching, culminating in an explanation of the four noble truths. At the end of the teaching, Anāthapiṇḍika attains stream-entry. He then returns home to Sāvattthī, purchases a grove from Prince Jeta at immense price, and establishes a monastery for the Buddha and the Saṅgha. There, according to the commentaries, the Buddha spent more rains retreats than at any other monastery.

* * *

I have heard that on one occasion the Blessed One was staying near Rājagaha in the Cool Forest. Now at that time Anāthapiṇḍika the

householder had arrived in Rājagaha on some business. He heard, “An Awakened One, they say, has appeared in the world,” and he wanted to go right then to see the Blessed One. Then the thought occurred to him, “Today is not the proper time to go to see the Blessed One. Tomorrow I will go to see the Blessed One at the proper time.” With his mindfulness immersed in the Awakened One he lay down to sleep. Three times he got up during the night, thinking it was light. Then he went to the gate to the charnel ground. Non-human beings opened the gate.

When Anāthapiṇḍika the householder had left the city, the light vanished and darkness appeared. Fear, terror, & horripilation arose, and because of that he wanted to turn back. Then Sivaka the yakkha-spirit, invisible, proclaimed:

“A hundred elephants,
a hundred horses,
a hundred mule-drawn carts,
a hundred-thousand maidens
adorned with jewels & earrings
aren’t worth one-sixteenth
of one step forward.

Go forward, householder!
Go forward, householder!
Going forward is better for you,
not back!”

The darkness then vanished for Anāthapiṇḍika and the light appeared. The fear, terror, & horripilation he had felt subsided.

For a second time... a third time, the light vanished and darkness appeared. Fear, terror, & horripilation arose, and because of that Anāthapiṇḍika wanted to turn back. Then for a third time, Sivaka the yakkha-spirit, invisible, proclaimed:

“A hundred elephants,
a hundred horses,
a hundred mule-drawn carts,
a hundred-thousand maidens

adorned with jewels & earrings
aren't worth one-sixteenth
of one step forward.

Go forward, householder!
Go forward, householder!
Going forward is better for you,
not back!"

The darkness then vanished for Anāthapiṇḍika and the light appeared. The fear, terror, & horripilation he had felt subsided.

So Anāthapiṇḍika went to the Cool Forest. Now at that time, the Blessed One—having gotten up as the night was ending—was pacing back & forth in the open air. He saw Anāthapiṇḍika the householder coming from afar. On seeing him, he got down from his meditation path and sat on a seat made ready. As he was sitting there he said to Anāthapiṇḍika, "Come, Sudatta."

Then Anāthapiṇḍika, (thinking,) "The Blessed One is calling me by my given name!" threw himself down right there at the Blessed One's feet and said to him, "Lord, I hope the Blessed One has slept in ease."

The Buddha:

"Always, always,
he sleeps in ease:
the brahman totally unbound,
who doesn't adhere
to sensual pleasures,
who's without acquisitions
& cooled.

Having
cut all ties
& subdued fear in the heart,
calmed,
he sleeps in ease,
having reached peace
of awareness."

See also: AN 3:35; Ud 2:10

To the Ālavaka Yakkha *Ālavaka Sutta (SN 10:12)*

This discourse, which also occurs at Sn 1:10, is the source of many proverbs frequently quoted in Theravadin countries. In 1982, when Thailand was celebrating the 200th anniversary of the founding of the current dynasty, His Majesty the King structured his chief address to the Thai people around the four qualities mentioned in the Buddha's last verse.

* * *

I have heard that on one occasion the Blessed One was staying near Ālavī in the haunt of the Ālavaka yakkha. Then the Ālavaka yakkha went to the Blessed One and on arrival said to him: “Get out, contemplative!”

(Saying,) “All right, my friend,” the Blessed One went out.

“Come in, contemplative!”

(Saying,) “All right, my friend,” the Blessed One went in.

A second time... A third time, the Ālavaka yakkha said to the Blessed One, “Get out, contemplative!”

(Saying,) “All right, my friend,” the Blessed One went out.

“Come in, contemplative!”

(Saying,) “All right, my friend,” the Blessed One went in.

Then a fourth time, the Ālavaka yakkha said to the Blessed One, “Get out, contemplative!”

“I won’t go out, my friend. Do what you have to do.”

“I will ask you a question, contemplative. If you can’t answer me, I will possess your mind or rip open your heart or, grabbing you by the feet, hurl you across the Ganges.”

“My friend, I see no one in the cosmos with its devas, Māras & Brahmās, its contemplatives & brahmans, its royalty & commonfolk,

who could possess my mind or rip open my heart or, grabbing me by the feet, hurl me across the Ganges. But nevertheless, ask me what you wish.”

Ālavaka:

“What is a person’s highest wealth?
What, when well-practiced, brings bliss?
What is the highest of savors?
Living in what way
is one’s life called the best?”

The Buddha:

“Conviction is a person’s highest wealth.
Dhamma, when well-practiced, brings bliss.
Truth is the highest of savors.¹
Living with discernment,
one’s life is called best.”

Ālavaka:

“How does one cross over the flood?
How cross over the sea?
How does one overcome suffering & stress?
How is a person purified?”

The Buddha:

“Through conviction one crosses over the flood.
Through heedfulness, the sea.
Through persistence one overcomes
suffering & stress.
Through discernment a person is purified.”

Ālavaka:

“How does one gain discernment?
How does one find wealth?
How does one attain honor?
How bind friends to oneself?
Passing from this world
to
the next world,

how does one not grieve?”

The Buddha:

“Convinced of the arahants’ Dhamma
for attaining unbinding,
—heedful, observant—
one listening well
gains discernment.

Doing what’s fitting,
enduring burdens,
one with initiative
finds wealth.

Through truth
one attains honor.

Giving
binds friends to oneself.

Endowed with these four qualities,
—truth,
self-control,
stamina,
relinquishment—

a householder of conviction,
on passing away, doesn’t grieve.

Now, go ask others,
common brahmans & contemplatives,
if anything better than
truth,
self-control,
stamina,
& relinquishment
here can be found.”

Ālavaka:

“How could I go ask
common brahmans & contemplatives?—
now that today I understand

what benefits
the next life.
It was truly for my well-being
that the Awakened One came
to stay in Āḷavi.
Today I understand
where what is given
bears great fruit.
I'll wander from village to village,
town to town,
paying homage to the Self-awakened One
& the true rightness of the Dhamma.”

NOTE

1. This is apparently a reference to the concept of “savor” (*rasa*) in Indian aesthetic theory. For more on this topic, see the Introduction to *Dhammapada: A Translation*.

See also: AN 3:48; AN 4:62; AN 8:54; Dhṛp 354

The Top of the Standard *Dhajagga Sutta (SN 11:3)*

I have heard that on one occasion the Blessed One was staying near Sāvattṥi in Jeta’s Grove, Anāthapiṇḍika’s monastery. There he addressed the monks: “Monks!”

“Yes, lord!” the monks responded to him.

The Blessed One said: “Once, monks, the devas & asuras were arrayed for battle. Then Sakka, lord of the devas, addressed the Devas of the Thirty-three: ‘If, dear sirs, when the devas are engaged in battle, there should arise fear, terror, or horripilation, then on that occasion you should look up at the top of my standard. For when you look up at the top of my standard, any fear, terror, or horripilation you may have will be abandoned.’”

“If you don’t look up at the top of my standard, then you should look up at the top of the standard of Pajāpati the deva-king. For when you look up at the top of the standard of Pajāpati the deva-king, any fear, terror, or horripilation you may have will be abandoned.

“If you don’t look up at the top of the standard of Pajāpati the deva-king, then you should look up at the top of the standard of Varuṇa the deva-king. For when you look up at the top of the standard of Varuṇa the deva-king, any fear, terror, or horripilation you may have will be abandoned.

“If you don’t look up at the top of the standard of Varuṇa the deva-king, then you should look up at the top of the standard of Īsāna the deva-king. For when you look up at the top of the standard of Īsāna the deva-king, any fear, terror, or horripilation you may have will be abandoned.

“Monks, in those who look up at the top of the standard of Sakka, lord of the devas; in those who look up at the top of the standard of Pajāpati the deva-king; in those who look up at the top of the standard of Varuṇa, the deva-king; or in those who look up at the top of the standard of Īsāna, the deva-king, any fear, terror, or horripilation they may have might be abandoned, or it might not. Why is that? Because Sakka, lord of the devas, is not free of passion, free of aversion, or free of delusion. He can be frightened, terrorized, cowardly, quick to flee.

“But, monks, I tell you this: If, when you have gone to the wilderness, to the foot of a tree, or to an empty dwelling, there should arise fear, terror, or horripilation, then on that occasion you should recollect me thus: ‘Indeed, the Blessed One is worthy & rightly self-awakened, consummate in clear-knowing & conduct, well-gone, an expert with regard to the cosmos, unexcelled trainer of people fit to be tamed, teacher of devas & human beings, awakened, blessed.’ For when you recollect me, monks, any fear, terror, or horripilation you may have will be abandoned.

“If you don’t recollect me, then you should recollect the Dhamma thus: ‘The Dhamma is well taught by the Blessed One, to be seen here & now, timeless, inviting verification, leading out, to be experienced by the

observant for themselves? For when you recollect the Dhamma, monks, any fear, terror, or horripilation you may have will be abandoned.

“If you cannot recollect the Dhamma, then you should recollect the Saṅgha thus: ‘The Saṅgha of the Blessed One’s disciples who have practiced well, practiced straightforwardly, practice methodically, practiced masterfully, i. e., the four pairs, the eight-types (of noble ones): That is the Saṅgha of the Blessed One’s disciples—deserving of gifts, deserving of hospitality, deserving of offerings, deserving of respect, the unexcelled field of merit for the world.’ For when you recollect the Saṅgha, monks, any fear, terror, or horripilation you may have will be abandoned.

“Why is that? Because the Tathāgata, worthy & rightly self-awakened, is free of passion, free of aversion, free of delusion. He is fearless, cannot be terrorized, bold, not quick to flee.”

This is what the Blessed One said. Having said this, the One Well-Gone, the Teacher, further said this:

“In wilderness, monks,
at the foot of a tree,
or in an empty dwelling,
recollect the Buddha:
You will have no fear.

If you don’t recall the Buddha—
chief of the world,
the bull of men—
then recollect the Dhamma,
leading out,
well taught.

If you don’t recall the Dhamma—
leading out,
well taught—
then recollect the Saṅgha,
the field of merit
unexcelled.

For those who have thus recalled
the Buddha,
Dhamma,
& Saṅgha, monks,
there will be
no terror,
horripilation,
or fear.”

See also: DN 21; MN 4; AN 10:92; AN 11:12–13; Khp 6; Dhṛp 188–192; Iti 90

Victory Through What is Well Spoken *Subhāsita-jaya Sutta (SN 11:5)*

On one occasion the Blessed One was staying near Sāvattṥī at Jeta’s Grove, Anāthapiṇḍika’s monastery. There he addressed the monks, “Monks!”

“Yes, lord,” the monks responded to him.

The Blessed One said, “Once in the past the devas & asuras¹ were arrayed for battle. Then Vepacitti the asura-king said to Sakka the deva-king: ‘Let there be victory through what is well spoken.’

“‘Yes, Vepacitti, let there be victory through what is well spoken.’

“So the devas & asuras appointed a panel of judges, (thinking,) ‘These will decide for us what is well spoken & poorly spoken.’

“Then Vepacitti the asura-king said to Sakka the deva-king, ‘Say a verse, deva-king!’

“When this was said, Sakka the deva-king said to Vepacitti the asura-king, ‘But you are the senior deity here, Vepacitti. You say a verse.’

“When this was said, Vepacitti recited this verse:

‘Fools would flare up even more
if there were no constraints.
Thus an enlightened one

should restrain the fool
with a heavy stick?

“When Vepacitti had said this verse, the asuras applauded but the devas were silent. So Vepacitti said to Sakka, ‘Say a verse, deva-king!’

“When this was said, Sakka recited this verse:

‘This, I think,
is the only constraint for a fool:
When, knowing the other’s provoked,
you mindfully grow calm.’

“When Sakka had said this verse, the devas applauded but the asuras were silent. So Sakka said to Vepacitti, ‘Say a verse, Vepacitti!’

“When this was said, Vepacitti recited this verse:

‘Vāsava 2, I see a fault
in this very forbearance:
When the fool thinks,
“He’s forbearing
out of fear of me,”
the idiot pursues you even more—
as a bull, someone who runs away.’

“When Vepacitti had said this verse, the asuras applauded but the devas were silent. So Vepacitti said to Sakka, ‘Say a verse, deva-king!’

“When this was said, Sakka recited this verse:

‘It doesn’t matter
whether he thinks,
“He’s forbearing
out of fear of me.”
One’s own true good
is the foremost good.
Nothing better
than patience
is found.

Whoever, when strong,
 is forbearing
to one who is weak:
that's the foremost patience.
The weak must constantly endure.
They call that strength
no strength at all:
 whoever's strength
 is the strength of a fool.
There's no reproach
for one who is strong,
guarding—guarded by—Dhamma.
You make things worse
when you flare up
at someone who's angry.
Whoever doesn't flare up
at someone who's angry
 wins a battle
 hard to win.
You live for the good of both
 —your own, the other's—
when, knowing the other's provoked,
 you mindfully grow calm.
When you work the cure of both
 —your own, the other's—
those who think you a fool
know nothing of Dhamma.

“When Sakka had said this verse, the devas applauded but the asuras were silent. Then the deva & asura panel of judges said, ‘The verses said by Vepacitti the asura-king lie in the sphere of swords & weapons—thence arguments, quarrels, & strife. Whereas the verses said by Sakka the deva-king lie outside the sphere of swords & weapons—thence no arguments, no quarrels, no strife. The victory through what is well spoken goes to Sakka the deva-king.’

“And that, monks, is how the victory through what was well spoken went to Sakka the deva-king.”

NOTES

1. The devas & asuras were two groups of deities who fought for control of heaven (like the gods & titans in Greek mythology). The devas eventually won. The asuras, known for their fierce anger, later became classed as angry demons and, in some Buddhist cosmologies, are regarded as a class of being lower than human.

2. Vāsavant (vocative, Vāsava)—“Powerful”—is one of Sakka’s epithets.

See also: DN 21; [SN 1:71](#); [SN 7:2](#); [SN 35:207](#); AN 7:60; Dhṛp 129–134; Sn 3:3; Sn 4:15

An Analysis of Dependent Co-arising *Paṭiccasamuppāda Vibhaṅga Sutta (SN 12:2)*

Staying near Sāvatthī ... “Monks, I will describe & analyze dependent co-arising for you. And what is dependent co-arising?

From ignorance as a requisite condition come fabrications.

From fabrications as a requisite condition comes consciousness.

From consciousness as a requisite condition comes name-&-form.

From name-&-form as a requisite condition come the six sense media.

From the six sense media as a requisite condition comes contact.

From contact as a requisite condition comes feeling.

From feeling as a requisite condition comes craving.

From craving as a requisite condition comes clinging/sustenance.

From clinging/sustenance as a requisite condition comes becoming.

From becoming as a requisite condition comes birth.

From birth as a requisite condition, then aging-&-death, sorrow, lamentation, pain, distress, & despair come into play. Such is the origination of this entire mass of stress & suffering.

“Now which *aging-&-death*? Whatever aging, decrepitude, brokenness, graying, wrinkling, decline of life-force, weakening of the faculties of the various beings in this or that group of beings, that is called aging.

Whatever deceasing, passing away, breaking up, disappearance, dying, death, completion of time, break up of the aggregates, casting off of the body, interruption in the life faculty of the various beings in this or that group of beings, that is called death.

“And which *birth*? Whatever birth, taking birth, descent, coming-to-be, coming-forth, appearance of aggregates, & acquisition of (sense)

media of the various beings in this or that group of beings, that is called birth.

“And which *becoming*? These three becomings: sensual becoming, form becoming, & formless becoming. This is called becoming.

“And which *clinging/sustenance*? These four are clingings: sensuality-clinging, view-clinging, habit-&-practice-clinging, and doctrine-of-self-clinging. This is called clinging. [Or: These four are sustenances: sensuality-sustenance, view-sustenance, habit-&-practice-sustenance, and doctrine-of-self-sustenance.]

“And which *craving*? These six are classes of craving: craving for forms, craving for sounds, craving for smells, craving for tastes, craving for tactile sensations, craving for ideas. This is called craving.

“And which *feeling*? These six are classes of feeling: feeling born from eye-contact, feeling born from ear-contact, feeling born from nose-contact, feeling born from tongue-contact, feeling born from body-contact, feeling born from intellect-contact. This is called feeling.

“And which *contact*? These six are classes of contact: eye-contact, ear-contact, nose-contact, tongue-contact, body-contact, intellect-contact. This is called contact.

“And which *six sense media*? These six are sense media: the eye-medium, the ear-medium, the nose-medium, the tongue-medium, the body-medium, the intellect-medium. These are called the six sense media.

“And which *name-&-form*? Feeling, perception, intention, contact, & attention: This is called name. The four great elements, and the form dependent on the four great elements: This is called form. This name & this form are called name-&-form.

“And which *consciousness*? These six are classes of consciousness: eye-consciousness, ear-consciousness, nose-consciousness, tongue-consciousness, body-consciousness, intellect-consciousness. This is called consciousness.

“And which *fabrications*? These three are fabrications: bodily fabrications, verbal fabrications, mental fabrications. These are called fabrications.

“And which *ignorance*? Not knowing stress, not knowing the origination of stress, not knowing the cessation of stress, not knowing the way of practice leading to the cessation of stress: This is called ignorance.

“Now from the remainderless fading & cessation of that very ignorance comes the cessation of fabrications. From the cessation of fabrications comes the cessation of consciousness. From the cessation of consciousness comes the cessation of name-&-form. From the cessation of name-&-form comes the cessation of the six sense media. From the cessation of the six sense media comes the cessation of contact. From the cessation of contact comes the cessation of feeling. From the cessation of feeling comes the cessation of craving. From the cessation of craving comes the cessation of clinging/sustenance. From the cessation of clinging/sustenance comes the cessation of becoming. From the cessation of becoming comes the cessation of birth. From the cessation of birth, then aging & death, sorrow, lamentation, pain, distress, & despair all cease. Such is the cessation of this entire mass of stress & suffering.”

See also: DN 15; MN 9; Sn 3:12

About Gotama

Gotama Sutta (SN 12:10)

“Monks, before my self-awakening, when I was still just an unawakened bodhisatta, the realization came to me: ‘How this world has fallen on difficulty! It is born, it ages, it dies, it falls away & rearises, but it doesn’t discern the escape from this stress, from this aging & death. O when will it discern the escape from this stress, from this aging & death?’

“Then the thought occurred to me, ‘Aging-&-death exists when what exists? From what as a requisite condition comes aging-&-death?’ From my appropriate attention there came the breakthrough of discernment: ‘Aging-&-death exists when birth exists.¹ From birth as a requisite condition comes aging-&-death.’

Then the thought occurred to me, ‘Birth exists when what exists? From what as a requisite condition comes birth?’ From my appropriate attention there came the breakthrough of discernment: ‘Birth exists when becoming exists. From becoming as a requisite condition comes birth.’ ...

“‘Becoming exists when clinging exists....

“‘Clinging exists when craving exists....

“‘Craving exists when feeling exists....

“‘Feeling exists when contact exists....

“‘Contact exists when the six sense media exist....

“‘The six sense media exist when name-&-form exists....

“‘Name-&-form exists when consciousness exists....

“‘Consciousness exists when fabrications exist....

Then the thought occurred to me, ‘Fabrications exist when what exists? From what as a requisite condition come fabrications?’ From my appropriate attention there came the breakthrough of discernment: ‘Fabrications exist when ignorance exists. From ignorance as a requisite condition come fabrications.

“‘Thus:

From ignorance as a requisite condition come fabrications.

From fabrications as a requisite condition comes consciousness.

From consciousness as a requisite condition comes name-&-form.

From name-&-form as a requisite condition come the six sense media.

From the six sense media as a requisite condition comes contact.

From contact as a requisite condition comes feeling.

From feeling as a requisite condition comes craving.

From craving as a requisite condition comes clinging/sustenance.

From clinging/sustenance as a requisite condition comes becoming.

From becoming as a requisite condition comes birth.

From birth as a requisite condition, then aging & death, sorrow, lamentation, pain, distress, & despair come into play. Such is the origination of this entire mass of stress & suffering. Origination,

origination.' Vision arose, clear knowing arose, discernment arose, knowledge arose, illumination arose within me with regard to things never before heard.

"Then the thought occurred to me, 'Aging & death don't exist when what doesn't exist? From the cessation of what comes the cessation of aging & death?' From my appropriate attention there came the breakthrough of discernment: 'Aging-&-death doesn't exist when birth doesn't exist. From the cessation of birth comes the cessation of aging & death.'

"Then the thought occurred to me, 'Birth doesn't exist when what doesn't exist? From the cessation of what comes the cessation of birth?' From my appropriate attention there came the breakthrough of discernment: 'Birth doesn't exist when becoming doesn't exist. From the cessation of becoming comes the cessation of birth.' ...

"'Becoming doesn't exist when clinging doesn't exist....

"'Clinging doesn't exist when craving doesn't exist....

"'Craving doesn't exist when feeling doesn't exist....

"'Feeling doesn't exist when contact doesn't exist....

"'Contact doesn't exist when the six sense media don't exist....

"'The six sense media don't exist when name-&-form doesn't exist....

"'Name-&-form doesn't exist when consciousness doesn't exist....

"'Consciousness doesn't exist when fabrications don't exist....

Then the thought occurred to me, 'Fabrications don't exist when what doesn't exist? From the cessation of what comes the cessation of fabrications?' From my appropriate attention there came the breakthrough of discernment: 'Fabrications don't exist when ignorance doesn't exist. From the cessation of ignorance comes the cessation of fabrications.

"'Thus:

From the cessation of ignorance comes the cessation of fabrications.

From the cessation of fabrications comes the cessation of consciousness.

From the cessation of consciousness comes the cessation of name-&-form.

From the cessation of name-&-form comes the cessation of the six sense media.

From the cessation of the six sense media comes the cessation of contact.

From the cessation of contact comes the cessation of feeling.

From the cessation of feeling comes the cessation of craving.

From the cessation of craving comes the cessation of clinging/sustenance.

From the cessation of clinging/sustenance comes the cessation of becoming.

From the cessation of becoming comes the cessation of birth. From the cessation of birth, then aging & death, sorrow, lamentation, pain, distress, & despair all cease. Such is the cessation of this entire mass of stress & suffering. Cessation, cessation? Vision arose, clear knowing arose, discernment arose, knowledge arose, illumination arose within me with regard to things never before heard.”

NOTE

1. The statements, “X exists when Y exists” and “X doesn’t exist when Y doesn’t exist” appear as part of the general causal principle—*idappaccayatā*, this/that conditionality—underlying dependent co-arising as a whole. In that principle, these statements are paired with two other statements: “From the arising of X comes the arising of Y” and “From the cessation of X comes the cessation of Y.” This latter pair of statements is expressed in this sutta by the formulae, “From X as a requisite condition comes Y” and “From the cessation of X comes the cessation of Y.”

The first pair of statements can be read in two ways, loosely and precisely. Read loosely, they can mean that the existence of X creates the conditions for Y eventually to exist; when X goes out of existence, that creates the conditions for Y eventually to go out of existence. Read in this way, the statements are equivalent with the second pair of statements. The resulting interpretation of this/that conditionality, however, has very little explanatory

power, for it cannot account for the Buddha's rejection of determinism (see MN 101 and AN 3:62), nor can it account for the complexity of feedback loops in the Buddha's detailed descriptions of causality.

Read as precise statements, however, these statements can mean that Y will come into existence simultaneously with X's coming into existence and that Y will go out of existence simultaneously with X's going out of existence. Read in this way, this/that conditionality contains the interplay of two fairly different causal principles, which goes a great way toward explaining both the complexity and the non-deterministic nature of the causal relationships described in the Buddha's teachings. (See the Introduction to *The Wings to awakening* for a discussion of this point.)

However, it has been argued that this second reading is invalid because it obviously does not apply to the statement that aging-&-death exist when birth exists, for the aging and death of a being can obviously occur many years after its birth. This argument, however, ignores the possibility that the Buddha in this passage is referring to the arising, decay, and passing away of momentary mind-states, which can occur so quickly that the process of aging-&-death on this level would occur simultaneously with the process of birth.

This interpretation is supported by two considerations. The first is that the Buddha terms this insight a "breakthrough of discernment," which would hardly apply to the general observation that aging and death follow on birth. The second consideration is that in [SN 23:2](#), the Buddha states that one becomes a "being" whenever one gets caught up in desire for any of the aggregates. Because this is a purely mental process, and because individual aggregates and their attendant desires can arise and pass away very quickly—[SN 22:95](#) compares the arising and passing away of feelings with the evanescent appearance and disappearance of bubbles caused by rain falling on a body of water—the aging-&-death of a "being" on this level could very easily occur simultaneously with its birth.

See also: [SN 12:65](#)

Nutriment

Āhāra Sutta (SN 12:11)

This discourse incorporates the teaching on the four nutriments (see [SN 12:63–64](#)) into the pattern for dependent co-arising, placing them in the position usually occupied by clinging: after craving and before becoming. Putting nutriment in this position highlights one of the connotations of the Pali word for clinging, upādāna, which can also mean “sustenance.” It also highlights one of the connotations of the Pali word for craving, taṇhā, which can also mean “thirst.”

The Commentary to this discourse tries to fit this teaching into the three-lifetime interpretation of dependent co-arising, emphasizing the role of the four nutriments in the mechanics of death and rebirth, but there is no need to limit the teaching to this interpretation. The teachings both in this discourse and in the following one show the complex interactions and feedback loops among the different factors of dependent co-arising, both between lifetimes and within a single lifetime—even a single moment. Craving is what takes material form, contact, intention, and consciousness—all of which precede it in the chain of dependent co-arising—and turns them into food for further becoming: continued becoming in this lifetime, and future becoming in the next.

* * *

I have heard that on one occasion the Blessed One was staying near Sāvattthī in Jeta’s Grove, Anāthapiṇḍika’s monastery. There he addressed the monks, “Monks, there are these four nutriments for the maintenance of beings who have come into being or for the support of those in search of a place to be born. Which four? Physical food, gross or refined; contact as the second; intellectual intention the third; and consciousness the fourth. These are the four nutriments for the maintenance of beings who have come into being or for the support of those in search of a place to be born.

“Now, these four nutriments have what as their cause, what as their origination, what as their source, what as that which brings them into play? These four nutriments have craving as their cause, craving as their origination, craving as their source, craving as that which brings them into play.

“And this craving has what as its cause, what as its origination, what as its source, what as that which brings it into play? ... Feeling....

“And this feeling has what as its cause...? ... Contact....

“And this contact has what as its cause...? ... The six sense media....

“And these six sense media have what as their cause...? ... Name-&-form....

“And this name-&-form has what as its cause...? ... Consciousness....

“And this consciousness has what as its cause...? ... Fabrication....

“And this fabrication has what as its cause, what as its origination, what as its source, what as that which brings it into play? Fabrication has ignorance as its cause, ignorance as its origination, ignorance as its source, ignorance as that which brings it into play.

“Thus, from ignorance as a requisite condition come fabrications.

“From fabrications as a requisite condition comes consciousness.

“From consciousness as a requisite condition comes name-&-form.

“From name-&-form as a requisite condition come the six sense media.

“From the six sense media as a requisite condition comes contact.

“From contact as a requisite condition comes feeling.

“From feeling as a requisite condition comes craving.

“From craving as a requisite condition comes clinging/sustenance.

“From clinging/sustenance as a requisite condition comes becoming.

“From becoming as a requisite condition comes birth.

“From birth as a requisite condition, then aging & death, sorrow, lamentation, pain, distress, & despair come into play. Such is the origination of this entire mass of stress & suffering.

“Now from the remainderless fading & cessation of that very ignorance comes the cessation of fabrications. From the cessation of fabrications comes the cessation of consciousness. From the cessation of consciousness comes the cessation of name-&-form. From the cessation of name-&-form comes the cessation of the six sense media. From the cessation of the six sense media comes the cessation of contact. From the cessation of contact comes the cessation of feeling. From the cessation of feeling comes the cessation of craving. From the cessation of craving comes the cessation of clinging/sustenance. From the cessation of clinging/sustenance comes the cessation of becoming. From the cessation of becoming comes the cessation of birth. From the cessation of birth, then aging-&-death, sorrow, lamentation, pain, distress, & despair all cease. Such is the cessation of this entire mass of stress & suffering.”

See also: [SN 12:63–64](#)

To Phagguna

Phagguna Sutta (SN 12:12)

Staying near Sāvattthī ... “Monks, there are these four nutriments for the maintenance of beings who have come into being or for the support of those in search of a place to be born. Which four? Physical food, gross or refined; contact as the second; intellectual intention the third; and consciousness the fourth. These are the four nutriments for the maintenance of beings who have come into being or for the support of those in search of a place to be born.

When this was said, Ven. Moliya Phagguna said to the Blessed One, “Lord, who feeds on the consciousness-nutriment?”

“Not a valid question,” the Blessed One said. “I don’t say ‘feeds.’ If I were to say ‘feeds,’ then ‘Who feeds on the consciousness-nutriment?’ would be a valid question. But I don’t say that. When I don’t say that, the valid question is ‘Consciousness-nutriment for what?’ And the valid answer is, ‘Consciousness-nutriment for the production of future

coming-into-being. When that has come into being and exists, then the six sense media. From the six sense media as a requisite condition comes contact.”

“Lord, who makes contact?”

“Not a valid question,” the Blessed One said. “I don’t say ‘makes contact.’ If I were to say ‘makes contact,’ then ‘Who makes contact?’ would be a valid question. But I don’t say that. When I don’t say that, the valid question is ‘From what as a requisite condition comes contact?’ And the valid answer is, ‘From the six sense media as a requisite condition comes contact. From contact as a requisite condition comes feeling.’”

“Lord, who feels?”

“Not a valid question,” the Blessed One said. “I don’t say ‘feels.’ If I were to say ‘feels,’ then ‘Who feels?’ would be a valid question. But I don’t say that. When I don’t say that, the valid question is ‘From what as a requisite condition comes feeling?’ And the valid answer is, ‘From contact as a requisite condition comes feeling. From feeling as a requisite condition comes craving.’”

“Lord, who craves?”

“Not a valid question,” the Blessed One said. “I don’t say ‘craves.’ If I were to say ‘craves,’ then ‘Who craves?’ would be a valid question. But I don’t say that. When I don’t say that, the valid question is ‘From what as a requisite condition comes craving?’ And the valid answer is, ‘From feeling as a requisite condition comes craving. From craving as a requisite condition comes clinging/sustenance.’”

“Lord, who clings?”

“Not a valid question,” the Blessed One said. “I don’t say ‘clings.’ If I were to say ‘clings,’ then ‘Who clings?’ would be a valid question. But I don’t say that. When I don’t say that, the valid question is ‘From what as a requisite condition comes clinging?’ And the valid answer is, ‘From craving as a requisite condition comes clinging. From clinging as a requisite condition comes becoming. From becoming as a requisite condition comes birth. From birth as a requisite condition, then aging-

&-death, sorrow, lamentation, pain, distress, & despair come into play. Such is the origination of this entire mass of stress & suffering.¹

“Now from the remainderless fading & cessation of the six sense media² comes the cessation of contact. From the cessation of contact comes the cessation of feeling. From the cessation of feeling comes the cessation of craving. From the cessation of craving comes the cessation of clinging/sustenance. From the cessation of clinging/sustenance comes the cessation of becoming. From the cessation of becoming comes the cessation of birth. From the cessation of birth, then aging-&-death, sorrow, lamentation, pain, distress, & despair all cease. Such is the cessation of this entire mass of stress & suffering.”

NOTES

1. An alternative translation for this exchange—and one that, in light of the topic of nutriment, might actually be more apt—is:

“Lord, who takes sustenance?”

“Not a valid question,” the Blessed One said. “I don’t say ‘takes sustenance.’ If I were to say ‘takes sustenance,’ then ‘Who takes sustenance?’ would be a valid question. But I don’t say that. When I don’t say that, the valid question is ‘From what as a requisite condition comes sustenance?’ And the valid answer is, ‘From craving as a requisite condition comes sustenance. From sustenance as a requisite condition comes becoming. From becoming as a requisite condition comes birth. From birth as a requisite condition, then aging-&-death, sorrow, lamentation, pain, distress, & despair come into play. Such is the origination of this entire mass of stress & suffering.’”

2. This refers to the moment of awakening, when the six sense media are transcended. See [SN 35:117](#), AN 4:173, and Iti 44, and the discussion of “consciousness without feature” in *The Mind Like Fire Unbound*, chapter 1.

See also: MN 109; [SN 12:35](#); [SN 12:63–64](#)

To Kaccāna Gotta

Kaccānagotta Sutta (SN 12:15)

This sutta discusses a level of right view that apparently lies beyond the four noble truths, and applies to the point in the practice where the path has been fully developed, has done its work, and now has to be abandoned. Whereas the four noble truths carry four different duties, this level of right view reduces all arising and passing away—including, apparently, the arising and passing away of the path—to stress, thus involving only one duty: comprehension to the point of dispassion. It is in this way that all fabricated dhammas are abandoned and unbinding can be fully realized. Other suttas discussing this level of right view include AN 7:58, AN 10:93, and Ud 1:10,

* * *

Staying near Sāvattthī ... Then Ven. Kaccāna Gotta approached the Blessed One and, on arrival, having bowed down, sat to one side. As he was sitting there he said to the Blessed One: “Lord, ‘Right view, right view,’ it is said. To what extent is there right view?”

“By & large, Kaccāna, this world¹ is supported by [takes as its object] a polarity, that of existence & non-existence. But when one sees the origination² of the world as it has come to be with right discernment, ‘non-existence’ with reference to the world does not occur to one. When one sees the cessation of the world as it has come to be with right discernment, ‘existence’ with reference to the world does not occur to one.³

“By & large, Kaccāna, this world is in bondage to attachments, clingings [sustenances], & biases. But one such as this does not get involved with or cling to these attachments, clingings, fixations of awareness, biases, or obsessions; nor is he resolved on ‘my self.’ He has no uncertainty or doubt that mere stress, when arising, is arising; stress, when passing away, is passing away.⁴ In this, his knowledge is independent of others. It’s to this extent, Kaccāna, that there is right view.

“‘Everything exists’: That is one extreme. ‘Everything doesn’t exist’: That is a second extreme.⁵ Avoiding these two extremes, the Tathāgata teaches the Dhamma via the middle: From ignorance as a requisite condition come fabrications.

From fabrications as a requisite condition comes consciousness.
From consciousness as a requisite condition comes name-&-form.
From name-&-form as a requisite condition come the six sense media.
From the six sense media as a requisite condition comes contact.
From contact as a requisite condition comes feeling.
From feeling as a requisite condition comes craving.
From craving as a requisite condition comes clinging/sustenance.
From clinging/sustenance as a requisite condition comes becoming.
From becoming as a requisite condition comes birth.
From birth as a requisite condition, then aging-&-death, sorrow, lamentation, pain, distress, & despair come into play. Such is the origination of this entire mass of stress & suffering.

“Now from the remainderless fading & cessation of that very ignorance comes the cessation of fabrications. From the cessation of fabrications comes the cessation of consciousness. From the cessation of consciousness comes the cessation of name-&-form. From the cessation of name-&-form comes the cessation of the six sense media. From the cessation of the six sense media comes the cessation of contact. From the cessation of contact comes the cessation of feeling. From the cessation of feeling comes the cessation of craving. From the cessation of craving comes the cessation of clinging/sustenance. From the cessation of clinging/sustenance comes the cessation of becoming. From the cessation of becoming comes the cessation of birth. From the cessation of birth, then aging-&-death, sorrow, lamentation, pain, distress, & despair all cease. Such is the cessation of this entire mass of stress & suffering.”

NOTES

1. For the meaning of “world,” here, see [SN 35:82](#).
2. As [SN 22:5](#) shows, “origination” means, not the simple arising of phenomena, but the cause of their arising. See also [SN 56:11](#).
3. There is an apparent discrepancy between the statements in this sutta and this statement in [SN 22:94](#): “Form that’s inconstant, stressful, subject to change is agreed upon by the wise as existing in the world, and I too say, ‘It

exists.’ Feeling that’s inconstant... Perception that’s inconstant... Fabrications that are inconstant... Consciousness that’s inconstant, stressful, subject to change is agreed upon by the wise as existing in the world, and I too say, ‘It exists.’”

The apparent discrepancy here can be resolved when we note that this sutta is describing the state of mind of a person focusing on the origination or cessation of the data of the senses. A person in that state of mind would see nothing in that mode of perception that would give rise to thoughts of existence or non-existence with regard to those sense data. However, when people are engaging in discussions about things that do or do not appear in the world—as the Buddha is describing in [SN 22:94](#)—then the terms “exist” and “do not exist” would naturally occur to them.

In other words, this sutta and [SN 22:94](#) are not making different claims about the ontological status of the world. They are simply describing the types of concepts that do or don’t occur to the mind when regarding the world in different ways.

4. See [SN 5:10](#).

5. See [SN 12:48](#). On the meaning of “everything” (or “all”—*sabba*) here, see [SN 35:23](#).

See also: MN 22; [SN 12:48](#); [SN 22:47](#); [SN 35:80](#); Sn 4:5; Sn 4:8–10; Sn 4:15; Sn 5:15

To the Clothless Ascetic *Acela Sutta (SN 12:17)*

I have heard that on one occasion the Blessed One was staying near Rājagaha in the Bamboo Forest, the Squirrels’ Sanctuary. Then early in the morning the Blessed One, having adjusted his lower robe and taking his bowl & outer robe, went into Rājagaha for alms. Kassapa the clothless¹ ascetic saw him coming from afar. On seeing him, he went to him and, on arrival, exchanged courteous greetings with him. After an exchange of friendly greetings & courtesies, he stood to one side. As he was standing there, he said to the Blessed One, “We would like to

question Master Gotama about a certain point, if he would take the time to answer our question.”

“This is not the time for a question, Kassapa. We have entered among houses.”

A second time.... A third time Kassapa the clothless ascetic said to him, “We would like to question Master Gotama about a certain point, if he would take the time to answer our question.”

“This is not the time for a question, Kassapa. We have entered among houses.”

When this was said, Kassapa the clothless ascetic said, “What we want to ask isn’t much.”

“Then ask as you like.”

“Master Gotama, is pain self-made?”

“Don’t say that, Kassapa.”

“Then is it other-made?”

“Don’t say that, Kassapa.”

“Then is it both self-made and other-made?”

“Don’t say that, Kassapa.”

“Then is it the case that pain, without self-making or other-making, is spontaneously arisen?”

“Don’t say that, Kassapa.”

“Then is there no pain?”

“It’s not the case, Kassapa, that there is no pain. There is pain.”

“Then, in that case, does Master Gotama not know or see pain?”

“Kassapa, it’s not the case that I don’t know or see pain. I know pain. I see pain.”

“Now, Master Gotama, when asked, ‘Is pain self-made?’ you say, ‘Don’t say that, Kassapa.’ When asked, ‘Then is it other-made?’ you say, ‘Don’t say that, Kassapa.’ When asked, ‘Then is it both self-made and other-made?’ you say, ‘Don’t say that, Kassapa.’ When asked, ‘Then is it the case that pain, being neither self-made nor other-made, arises spontaneously?’ you say, ‘Don’t say that, Kassapa.’ When asked, ‘Then is there no pain?’ you say, ‘It’s not the case, Kassapa, that there is no pain.’

There is pain.' When asked, 'Well, in that case, does Master Gotama not know or see pain?' you say, 'Kassapa, it's not the case that I don't know or see pain. I know pain. I see pain.' Then tell me about pain, lord Blessed One. Teach me about pain, lord Blessed One!"

"Kassapa, the statement, 'With the one who acts being the same as the one who experiences, existing from the beginning, pain is self-made': This circles around eternalism. And the statement, 'With the one who acts being one thing, and the one who experiences being another, existing as the one struck by the feeling': This circles around annihilationism.² Avoiding these two extremes, the Tathāgata teaches the Dhamma via the middle:

From ignorance as a requisite condition come fabrications.

From fabrications as a requisite condition comes consciousness.

From consciousness as a requisite condition comes name-&-form.

From name-&-form as a requisite condition come the six sense media.

From the six sense media as a requisite condition comes contact.

From contact as a requisite condition comes feeling.

From feeling as a requisite condition comes craving.

From craving as a requisite condition comes clinging/sustenance.

From clinging/sustenance as a requisite condition comes becoming.

From becoming as a requisite condition comes birth.

From birth as a requisite condition, then aging-&-death, sorrow, lamentation, pain, distress, & despair come into play. Such is the origination of this entire mass of stress & suffering.

"Now from the remainderless fading & cessation of that very ignorance comes the cessation of fabrications. From the cessation of fabrications comes the cessation of consciousness. From the cessation of consciousness comes the cessation of name-&-form. From the cessation of name-&-form comes the cessation of the six sense media. From the cessation of the six sense media comes the cessation of contact. From the cessation of contact comes the cessation of feeling. From the cessation of feeling comes the cessation of craving. From the cessation of craving comes the cessation of clinging/sustenance. From the cessation of

clinging/sustenance comes the cessation of becoming. From the cessation of becoming comes the cessation of birth. From the cessation of birth, then aging-&-death, sorrow, lamentation, pain, distress, & despair all cease. Such is the cessation of this entire mass of stress & suffering.”

When this was said, Kassapa the clothless ascetic said, “Magnificent, lord! Magnificent! Just as if he were to place upright what was overturned, to reveal what was hidden, to show the way to one who was lost, or to carry a lamp into the dark so that those with eyes could see forms, in the same way has the Blessed One—through many lines of reasoning—made the Dhamma clear. I go to the Blessed One for refuge, to the Dhamma, and to the Saṅgha of monks. Let me obtain the Going-forth in the Blessed One’s presence, let me obtain Acceptance [into the Saṅgha of monks].”

“Anyone, Kassapa, who has previously belonged to another sect and who desires the Going-forth & Acceptance in this Dhamma & Vinaya, must first undergo probation for four months. If, at the end of four months, the monks feel so moved, they give him the Going-forth & accept him to the monk’s state. But I know distinctions among individuals in this matter.”

“Lord, if that is so, I am willing to undergo probation for four years. If, at the end of four years, the monks feel so moved, let them give me the going forth & accept me to the monk’s state.”

Then Kassapa the clothless ascetic obtained the Going-forth in the Blessed One’s presence, he obtained Acceptance. And not long after his Acceptance—dwelling alone, secluded, heedful, ardent, & resolute—he in no long time entered & remained in the supreme goal of the holy life, for which clansmen rightly go forth from home into homelessness, directly knowing & realizing it for himself in the here & now. He knew: “Birth is ended, the holy life fulfilled, the task done. There is nothing further for the sake of this world.” And thus Ven. Kassapa became another one of the arahants.”

NOTES

1. *Acela*: “One without cloth.” Often translated as “naked,” but as MN 45 shows, such a person might wear garments made of something other than cloth.

2. This statement tends toward annihilationism in implying that personal identity is simply a series of radically different persons, one disappearing to be replaced by another repeatedly throughout time. In other words, the X who did the action whose fruit X is now experiencing is a radically different X from the X who is now experiencing it. That first X has disappeared and has been replaced by a different one. The Buddha avoids this error—and the eternalist error of self-causation—by refusing to get entangled in questions of personal identity. See MN 109, [SN 12:12](#), and [SN 12:35](#).

See also: [SN 12:18](#); [SN 12:25](#); [SN 12:46](#); [SN 12:67](#)

To Timbarukkha

Timbarukkha Sutta (SN 12:18)

Staying near Sāvattthī ... Then Timbarukkha the wanderer went to the Blessed One and, on arrival, exchanged courteous greetings with him. After an exchange of friendly greetings & courtesies, he sat to one side.

As he was sitting there, Timbarukkha the wanderer said to the Blessed One, “Now, then, Master Gotama, are pleasure & pain self-made?”

“Don’t say that, Timbarukkha,” the Blessed One said.

“Then are pleasure & pain other-made?”

“Don’t say that, Timbarukkha,” the Blessed One said.

“Then are pleasure & pain self-made & other-made?”

“Don’t say that, Timbarukkha,” the Blessed One said.

“Then are pleasure & pain, without self-making or other-making, spontaneously arisen?”

“Don’t say that, Timbarukkha,” the Blessed One said.

“Then is there no pleasure & pain?”

“It’s not the case that there is no pleasure & pain, Timbarukkha. There is pleasure & pain.”

“Then in that case, does Master Gotama not know or see pleasure & pain?”

“It’s not the case that I don’t know, don’t see, pleasure & pain, Timbarukkha. I do know pleasure & pain. I do see pleasure & pain.”

“Now, Master Gotama, when asked, ‘Are pleasure & pain self-made,’ you say, ‘Don’t say that, Timbarukkha.’ When asked, ‘Then are pleasure & pain other-made,’ you say, ‘Don’t say that, Timbarukkha.’ When asked, ‘Then are pleasure & pain, without self-making or other-making, spontaneously arisen?’ you say, ‘Don’t say that, Timbarukkha.’ When asked, ‘Then is there no pleasure & pain?’ you say, ‘It’s not the case that there is no pleasure & pain, Timbarukkha. There is pleasure & pain.’ When asked, ‘Then in that case, does Master Gotama not know or see pleasure & pain?’ you say, ‘It’s not the case that I don’t know, don’t see, pleasure & pain, Timbarukkha. I do know pleasure & pain. I do see pleasure & pain.’ Then tell me about pleasure & pain, Master Gotama. Teach me about pleasure & pain.”

“Timbarukkha, I don’t say that—with the feeling being the same as the one who feels, existing from the beginning—pleasure & pain are self-made.¹ And I don’t say that—with feeling being one thing and the one who feels another, existing as the one struck by the feeling—pleasure & pain are other-made. Avoiding these two extremes, the Tathāgata teaches the Dhamma via the middle:

From ignorance as a requisite condition come fabrications.

From fabrications as a requisite condition comes consciousness.

From consciousness as a requisite condition comes name-&-form.

From name-&-form as a requisite condition come the six sense media.

From the six sense media as a requisite condition comes contact.

From contact as a requisite condition comes feeling.

From feeling as a requisite condition comes craving.

From craving as a requisite condition comes clinging/sustenance.

From clinging/sustenance as a requisite condition comes becoming.

From becoming as a requisite condition comes birth.

From birth as a requisite condition, then aging-&-death, sorrow, lamentation, pain, distress, & despair come into play. Such is the origination of this entire mass of stress & suffering.

“Now from the remainderless fading & cessation of that very ignorance comes the cessation of fabrications. From the cessation of fabrications comes the cessation of consciousness. From the cessation of consciousness comes the cessation of name-&-form. From the cessation of name-&-form comes the cessation of the six sense media. From the cessation of the six sense media comes the cessation of contact. From the cessation of contact comes the cessation of feeling. From the cessation of feeling comes the cessation of craving. From the cessation of craving comes the cessation of clinging/sustenance. From the cessation of clinging/sustenance comes the cessation of becoming. From the cessation of becoming comes the cessation of birth. From the cessation of birth, then aging-&-death, sorrow, lamentation, pain, distress, & despair all cease. Such is the cessation of this entire mass of stress & suffering.”

When this was said, Timbarukkha the wanderer said to the Blessed One: “Magnificent, Master Gotama! Magnificent! Just as if he were to place upright what was overturned, to reveal what was hidden, to show the way to one who was lost, or to carry a lamp into the dark so that those with eyes could see forms, in the same way has Master Gotama—through many lines of reasoning—made the Dhamma clear. I go to Master Gotama for refuge, to the Dhamma, & to the Saṅgha of monks. May Master Gotama remember me as a lay follower who has gone for refuge from this day forward, for life.”

NOTE

1. Notice that the meaning of “self-made” here differs from that in the preceding sutta. There it means, “made by the person who experiences it.” Here it means, “made by itself.”

See also: [SN 12:17](#); [SN 12:25](#); [SN 12:46](#)

The Fool & the Wise Person

Bāla-paṇḍita Sutta (SN 12:19)

Staying near Sāvatthī ... “When a fool is obstructed by ignorance and conjoined with craving, this body thus results. Now there is both this body and external name-&-form. Here, in dependence on this duality, there is contact at the six senses. Touched by these, or one or another of them, the fool is sensitive to pleasure & pain.

“When a wise person is obstructed by ignorance and conjoined with craving, this body thus results. Now there is both this body and external name-&-form. Here, in dependence on this duality, there is contact at the six senses. Touched by these, or one or another of them, the wise person is sensitive to pleasure & pain.

“So what difference, what distinction, what distinguishing factor is there between the wise person & the fool?”

“For us, lord, the teachings have the Blessed One as their root, their guide, & their arbitrator. It would be good if the Blessed One himself would explicate the meaning of this statement. Having heard it from the Blessed One, the monks will remember it.”

“In that case, monks, listen & pay close attention. I will speak.”

“As you say, lord,” the monks responded.

The Blessed One said, “The ignorance with which the fool is obstructed, the craving with which he is conjoined, through which this body results: That ignorance has not been abandoned by the fool; that craving has not been destroyed. Why is that? The fool has not practiced the holy life for the right ending of stress. Therefore, at the break-up of the body, he is headed for a (new) body. Headed for a body, he is not entirely freed from birth, aging, death, sorrow, lamentation, pain, distress, & despair. I tell you, he is not entirely freed from stress & suffering.

“The ignorance with which the wise person is obstructed, the craving with which he is conjoined, through which this body results: That

ignorance has been abandoned by the wise person; that craving has been destroyed. Why is that? The wise person has practiced the holy life for the right ending of stress. Therefore, at the break-up of the body, he is not headed for a (new) body. Not headed for a body, he is entirely freed from birth, aging, death, sorrow, lamentation, pain, distress, & despair. He is, I tell you, entirely freed from stress & suffering.”

See also: [SN 36:6](#); AN 2:21; AN 2:99

Requisite Conditions

Paccaya Sutta (SN 12:20)

Staying near Sāvattthī ... “Monks, I will teach you dependent co-arising & dependently co-arisen phenomena. Listen & pay close attention. I will speak.”

“As you say, lord,” the monks replied.

The Blessed One said: “Now what is dependent co-arising? From birth as a requisite condition comes aging-&-death. Whether or not there is the arising of Tathāgatas, this property stands—this regularity of the Dhamma, this orderliness of the Dhamma, this this/that conditionality. The Tathāgata directly awakens to that, breaks through to that. Directly awakening & breaking through to that, he declares it, teaches it, describes it, sets it forth. He reveals it, explains it, makes it plain, & says, ‘Look! From birth as a requisite condition comes aging-&-death.

“From becoming as a requisite condition comes birth....

“From clinging/sustenance as a requisite condition comes becoming....

“From craving as a requisite condition comes clinging/sustenance....

“From feeling as a requisite condition comes craving....

“From contact as a requisite condition comes feeling....

“From the six sense media as a requisite condition comes contact....

“From name-&-form as a requisite condition come the six sense media....

“From consciousness as a requisite condition comes name-&-form....

“From fabrications as a requisite condition comes consciousness....

“From ignorance as a requisite condition come fabrications. Whether or not there is the arising of Tathāgatas, this property stands—this regularity of the Dhamma, this orderliness of the Dhamma, this this/that conditionality. The Tathāgata directly awakens to that, breaks through to that. Directly awakening & breaking through to that, he declares it, teaches it, describes it, sets it forth. He reveals it, explains it, makes it plain, & says, ‘Look.’ From ignorance as a requisite condition come fabrications. What’s there in this way is a reality, not an unreality, not other than what it seems, conditioned by this/that. This is called dependent co-arising.

“And what are dependently co-arisen phenomena? Aging-&-death are dependently co-arisen phenomena: inconstant, fabricated, dependently co-arisen, subject to ending, subject to passing away, subject to fading, subject to cessation.

“Birth is a dependently co-arisen phenomenon....

“Becoming is a dependently co-arisen phenomenon....

“Clinging/sustenance is a dependently co-arisen phenomenon....

“Craving is a dependently co-arisen phenomenon....

“Feeling is a dependently co-arisen phenomenon....

“Contact is a dependently co-arisen phenomenon....

“The six sense media are dependently co-arisen phenomena....

“Name-&-form is a dependently co-arisen phenomenon....

“Consciousness is a dependently co-arisen phenomenon....

“Fabrications are dependently co-arisen phenomena....

“Ignorance is a dependently co-arisen phenomenon: inconstant, fabricated, dependently co-arisen, subject to ending, subject to passing away, subject to fading, subject to cessation. These are called dependently co-arisen phenomena.

“When a disciple of the noble ones has seen well with right discernment this dependent co-arising & these dependently co-arisen phenomena as they have come to be, it is not possible that he would run

after the past, thinking, ‘Was I in the past? Was I not in the past? What was I in the past? How was I in the past? Having been what, what was I in the past?’ or that he would run after the future, thinking, ‘Shall I be in the future? Shall I not be in the future? What shall I be in the future? How shall I be in the future? Having been what, what shall I be in the future?’ or that he would be inwardly perplexed about the immediate present, thinking, ‘Am I? Am I not? What am I? How am I? Where has this being come from? Where is it bound?’ Such a thing is not possible. Why is that? Because the disciple of the noble ones has seen well with right discernment this dependent co-arising & these dependently co-arisen phenomena as they have come to be.”

See also: MN 2; MN 38; [SN 22:47](#); AN 4:199–200; Ud 5:7; Ud 6:5–6

Prerequisites

Upanisa Sutta (SN 12:23)

Staying near Sāvattthī ... “Monks, the ending of effluents is for one who knows & sees, I tell you, not for one who does not know & does not see. For one who knows what & sees what is there the ending of effluents? ‘Such is form, such its origination, such its disappearance. Such is feeling, such its origination, such its disappearance. Such is perception, such its origination, such its disappearance. Such are fabrications, such their origination, such their disappearance. Such is consciousness, such its origination, such its disappearance.’ The ending of effluents is for one who knows in this way & sees in this way.

“The knowledge of ending in the presence of ending has its prerequisite, I tell you. It is not without a prerequisite. And what is the prerequisite for the knowledge of ending? Release, it should be said. Release has its prerequisite, I tell you. It is not without a prerequisite. And what is its prerequisite? Dispassion.... Disenchantment.... Knowledge & vision of things as they have come to be.... Concentration.... Pleasure.... Serenity.... Rapture.... Joy.... Conviction.... Stress.... Birth.... Becoming.... Clinging.... Craving....

Feeling.... Contact.... The six sense media.... Name-&-form....
Consciousness.... Fabrications.... Fabrications have their prerequisite, I
tell you. They are not without a prerequisite. And what is their
prerequisite? Ignorance, it should be said.

“Thus fabrications have ignorance as their prerequisite,
consciousness has fabrications as its prerequisite,
name-&-form has consciousness as its prerequisite,
the six sense media have name-&-form as their prerequisite,
contact has the six sense media as its prerequisite,
feeling has contact as its prerequisite,
craving has feeling as its prerequisite,
clinging has craving as its prerequisite,
becoming has clinging as its prerequisite,
birth has becoming as its prerequisite,
stress has birth as its prerequisite,
conviction has stress as its prerequisite,
joy has conviction as its prerequisite,
rapture has joy as its prerequisite,
calm has rapture as its prerequisite,
pleasure has calm as its prerequisite,
concentration has pleasure as its prerequisite,
knowledge & vision of things as they have come to be has
concentration as its prerequisite,
disenchantment has knowledge & vision of things as they have come
to be as its prerequisite,
dispassion has disenchantment as its prerequisite,
release has dispassion as its prerequisite,
knowledge of ending has release as its prerequisite.

“Just as when the devas pour rain in heavy drops & crash thunder on
the upper mountains: The water, flowing down along the slopes, fills the
branches of the mountain ravines & gullies. When the branches of the
mountain ravines & gullies are full, they fill the little lakes. When the

little lakes are full, they fill the big lakes... the little rivers... the big rivers. When the big rivers are full, they fill the great ocean. In the same way:

fabrications have ignorance as their prerequisite,
consciousness has fabrications as its prerequisite,
name-&-form has consciousness as their prerequisite,
the six sense media have name-&-form as their prerequisite,
contact has the six sense media as its prerequisite,
feeling has contact as its prerequisite,
craving has feeling as its prerequisite,
clinging has craving as its prerequisite,
becoming has clinging as its prerequisite,
birth has becoming as its prerequisite,
stress has birth as its prerequisite,
conviction has stress as its prerequisite,
joy has conviction as its prerequisite,
rapture has joy as its prerequisite,
calm has rapture as its prerequisite,
pleasure has calm as its prerequisite,
concentration has pleasure as its prerequisite,
knowledge & vision of things as they have come to be has
concentration as its prerequisite,
disenchantment has knowledge & vision of things as they have come
to be as its prerequisite,
dispassion has disenchantment as its prerequisite,
release has dispassion as its prerequisite,
knowledge of ending has release as its prerequisite.”

See also: DN 2; AN 10:61; AN 11:1

To Bhūmija

Bhūmija Sutta (SN 12:25)

Staying near Sāvattthī ... Then Ven. Bhūmija, emerging from his seclusion in the evening, went to Ven. Sāriputta. On arrival, he exchanged courteous greetings with him. After an exchange of friendly greetings & courtesies, he sat to one side. As he was sitting there, he said to Ven. Sāriputta, “Friend Sāriputta, there are some contemplatives & brahmans, teachers of kamma, who declare that pleasure & pain are self-made. There are other contemplatives & brahmans, teachers of kamma, who declare that pleasure & pain are other-made. Then there are other contemplatives & brahmans, teachers of kamma, who declare that pleasure & pain are self-made & other-made. And then there are still other contemplatives & brahmans, teachers of kamma, who declare that pleasure & pain, without self-making or other-making, are spontaneously arisen. In this case, friend Sāriputta, what is the Blessed One’s doctrine? What does he teach? Answering in what way will I speak in line with what the Blessed One has said, not misrepresent the Blessed One with what is unfactual, and answer in line with the Dhamma so that no one whose thinking is in line with the Dhamma will have grounds for criticism?”

“The Blessed One, my friend, has said that pleasure & pain are dependently co-arisen. Dependent on what? Dependent on contact. One speaking in this way would be speaking in line with what the Blessed One has said, would not be misrepresenting the Blessed One with what is unfactual, and would be answering in line with the Dhamma so that no one whose thinking is in line with the Dhamma would have grounds for criticism.

“Whatever contemplatives & brahmans, teachers of kamma, who declare that pleasure & pain are self-made, even that is dependent on contact. Whatever contemplatives & brahmans, teachers of kamma, who declare that pleasure & pain are other-made, even that is dependent on contact. Whatever contemplatives & brahmans, teachers of kamma, who

declare that pleasure & pain are self-made & other-made, even that is dependent on contact. Whatever contemplatives & brahmins, teachers of kamma, who declare that pleasure & pain, without self-making or other-making, are spontaneously arisen, even that is dependent on contact.

“That any contemplatives & brahmins—teachers of kamma who declare that pleasure & pain are self-made—would be sensitive to pleasure & pain otherwise than through contact: That isn’t possible. That any contemplatives & brahmins—teachers of kamma who declare that pleasure & pain are other-made... self-made & other-made... who declare that pleasure & pain, without self-making or other-making, are spontaneously arisen—would be sensitive to pleasure & pain otherwise than through contact: That isn’t possible.”

Now it so happened that Ven. Ānanda overheard this conversation between Ven. Sāriputta & Ven. Bhūmija. Then he went to the Blessed One and, on arrival, having bowed down to him, sat to one side. As he was sitting there he reported the entire conversation to the Blessed One.

(The Blessed One said:) “Excellent, Ānanda. Excellent. One rightly answering would answer as Ven. Sāriputta has done.

“I have said, Ānanda, that pleasure & pain are dependently co-arisen. Dependent on what? Dependent on contact. One speaking in this way would be speaking in line with what I have said, would not be misrepresenting me with what is unfactual, and would be answering in line with the Dhamma so that no one whose thinking is in line with the Dhamma would have grounds for criticism.

“Whatever contemplatives & brahmins, teachers of kamma, who declare that pleasure & pain are self-made, even that is dependent on contact. Whatever contemplatives & brahmins, teachers of kamma, who declare that pleasure & pain are other-made... self-made & other-made... without self-making or other-making, are spontaneously arisen, even that is dependent on contact.

“That any contemplatives & brahmins—teachers of kamma who declare that pleasure & pain are self-made—would be sensitive to pleasure & pain otherwise than through contact: That isn’t possible. That any contemplatives & brahmins—teachers of kamma who declare

that pleasure & pain are other-made... self-made & other-made... without self-making or other-making, are spontaneously arisen —would be sensitive to pleasure & pain otherwise than through contact: That isn't possible.

“When there is a body, pleasure & pain arise internally with bodily intention as the cause; or when there is speech, pleasure & pain arise internally with verbal intention as the cause; or when there is intellect, pleasure & pain arise internally with intellectual intention as the cause.

“From ignorance as a requisite condition, then either of one's own accord one fabricates the bodily fabrication on account of which that pleasure & pain arise internally, or because of others one fabricates the bodily fabrication on account of which that pleasure & pain arise internally. Either one fabricates alert the bodily fabrication on account of which that pleasure & pain arise internally, or one fabricates unalert the bodily fabrication on account of which that pleasure & pain arise internally. [Similarly with verbal & intellectual fabrications.]

“Now, ignorance is bound up in these things. From the remainderless fading & cessation of that very ignorance, there no longer exists (the sense of) the body on account of which that pleasure & pain internally arise. There no longer exists the speech... the intellect on account of which that pleasure & pain internally arise. There no longer exists the field, the site, the dimension, or the issue on account of which that pleasure & pain internally arise.”

See also: MN 109; MN 126; [SN 12:17–18](#); [SN 12:46](#); [SN 12:67](#)

This Has Come Into Being

Bhūtamidaṃ Sutta (SN 12:31)

On one occasion the Blessed One was staying near Sāvattṥī in Jeta's Grove, Anāthapiṇḍika's monastery. There he addressed Ven. Sāriputta, “Sāriputta, it is said in Ajita's Question in the Way to the Further Shore [Sn 5:1]:

‘Those here who have fathomed the Dhamma,
those who are learners,
those who are run-of-the-mill:
When you, dear sir, astute,
are asked this,
tell me their manner of life.’

How is the detailed meaning of this brief statement to be understood?”

When this was said, Ven. Sāriputta remained silent.

A second time A third time the Blessed One addressed Ven. Sāriputta, “Sāriputta, it is said in Ajita’s Question in the Way to the Further Shore:

‘Those here who have fathomed the Dhamma,
those who are learners,
those who are run-of-the-mill:
When you, dear sir, astute,
are asked this,
tell me their manner of life.’

How is the detailed meaning of this brief statement to be understood?”

A third time, Ven. Sāriputta remained silent.

“Do you see, Sāriputta, that ‘this has come into being?’”

“One sees with right discernment as it has come to be, lord, that ‘this has come into being.’ Seeing with right discernment as it has come to be that ‘this has come into being,’ one practices for disenchantment with, for dispassion toward, for the cessation of what has come into being. One sees with right discernment that ‘it has come into being from this nutriment.’ Seeing with right discernment as it has come to be that ‘it has come into being from this nutriment,’ one practices for disenchantment with, for dispassion toward, for the cessation of the nutriment by which it has come into being. One sees with right discernment as it has come to be that ‘from the cessation of this nutriment, what has come into being is subject to cessation.’ Seeing with

right discernment as it has come to be that ‘from the cessation of this nutriment, what has come into being is subject to cessation,’ one practices for disenchantment with, for dispassion toward, for the cessation of what is subject to cessation. This is how one is a learner.

“And how, lord, is one a person who has fathomed the Dhamma?

“One sees with right discernment as it has come to be, lord, that ‘this has come into being.’ Seeing with right discernment as it has come to be that ‘this has come into being,’ one is—through disenchantment, dispassion, cessation, through lack of clinging/sustenance—released from what has come into being. One sees with right discernment as it has come to be that ‘it has come into being from this nutriment.’ Seeing with right discernment as it has come to be that ‘it has come into being from this nutriment,’ one is—through disenchantment, dispassion, cessation, through lack of clinging/sustenance—released from the nutriment by which it has come into being. One sees with right discernment as it has come to be that ‘from the cessation of this nutriment, what has come into being is subject to cessation.’ Seeing with right discernment as it has come to be that ‘from the cessation of this nutriment, what has come into being is subject to cessation,’ one is—through disenchantment, dispassion, cessation, through lack of clinging/sustenance—released from what is subject to cessation. This is how one is a person who has fathomed the Dhamma.

“It is in this way, lord, that I understand the detailed meaning of the brief statement in Ajita’s Question in the Way to the Further Shore:

“Those here who have fathomed the Dhamma,
those who are learners,
those who are run-of-the-mill:
When you, dear sir, astute,
are asked this,
tell me their manner of life.”

“Excellent, Sāriputta. Excellent. One sees with right discernment as it has come to be that ‘this has come into being.’ Seeing with right discernment as it has come to be that ‘this has come into being,’ one practices for disenchantment with, for dispassion toward, for the

cessation of what has come into being. One sees with right discernment as it has come to be that ‘it has come into being from this nutriment.’ Seeing with right discernment as it has come to be that ‘it has come into being from this nutriment,’ one practices for disenchantment with, for dispassion toward, for the cessation of the nutriment by which it has come into being. One sees with right discernment as it has come to be that ‘from the cessation of this nutriment, what has come into being is subject to cessation.’ Seeing with right discernment as it has come to be that ‘from the cessation of this nutriment, what has come into being is subject to cessation,’ one practices for disenchantment with, for dispassion toward, for the cessation of what is subject to cessation. This is how one is a learner.

“And how is one a person who has fathomed the Dhamma?

“One sees with right discernment as it has come to be that ‘this has come into being.’ Seeing with right discernment as it has come to be that ‘this has come into being,’ one is—through disenchantment, dispassion, cessation, through lack of clinging/sustenance—released from what has come into being. One sees with right discernment as it has come to be that ‘it has come into being from this nutriment.’ Seeing with right discernment as it has come to be that ‘it has come into being from this nutriment,’ one is—through disenchantment, dispassion, cessation, through lack of clinging/sustenance—released from the nutriment by which it has come into being. One sees with right discernment as it has come to be that ‘from the cessation of this nutriment, what has come into being is subject to cessation.’ Seeing with right discernment as it has come to be that ‘from the cessation of this nutriment, what has come into being is subject to cessation,’ one is—through disenchantment, dispassion, cessation, through lack of clinging/sustenance—released from what is subject to cessation. This is how one is a person who has fathomed the Dhamma.

“It is in this way that the detailed meaning of the brief statement in Ajita’s Question in the Way to the Further Shore is to be understood:

Those here who have fathomed the Dhamma,
those who are learners,

those who are run-of-the-mill:
When you, dear sir, astute,
are asked this,
tell me their manner of life.”

See also: MN 149; [SN 12:64](#); Iti 49

From Ignorance as a Requisite Condition Avijjāpaccaya Sutta (SN 12:35)

In this discourse, the Buddha refuses to answer the question of whether there is anyone or anything lying behind the processes described in dependent co-arising. When his interlocutor asks, for each factor in the causal process, “Which is the x, and whose is the x?”, the Buddha equates this with the assumption that, “X is one thing, and it is the x of someone/something else.” He then equates this with the proposition, which he has rejected many times elsewhere in the discourses, that the soul is one thing and the body is something else, i.e., that there is something unseen lying behind the visible processes of life. However, the Buddha has also rejected, in as many times, the proposition that the soul is the same as the body, i.e., that there is nothing unseen lying behind the visible processes of life. Avoiding these two extremes, he simply drops the question and focuses attention on what is directly perceivable—the way one factor in dependent co-arising functions as a prerequisite for the next. To focus on what might or might not lie behind these factors would be to tie oneself up in speculations about what, by definition, can never be experienced. But by focusing on the interplay of the factors that are directly perceivable, and—by so doing—developing dispassion for them, one can overcome the craving and ignorance that keep producing stress and suffering, and in that way gain release.

* * *

Staying near Sāvatthī ... (the Blessed One said,) “From ignorance as a requisite condition come fabrications....From birth as a requisite condition, then aging-&-death, sorrow, lamentation, pain, distress, &

despair come into play. Such is the origination of this entire mass of stress & suffering.”

When this was said, a certain monk said to the Blessed One: “Which is the aging-&death, lord, and whose is the aging-&death?”

“Not a valid question,” the Blessed One said. “If one were to ask, ‘Which is the aging-&death, and whose is the aging-&death?’ and if one were to say, ‘Aging-&death are one thing, and the aging-&death are something/someone else’s,’ both of them would have the same meaning, even though their words would differ. When one is of the view that the soul is the same as the body, there is no leading the holy life. And when one is of the view that the soul is one thing and the body another, there is no leading the holy life. Avoiding these two extremes, the Tathāgata teaches the Dhamma via the middle: From birth as a requisite condition comes aging-&death.”

“Which is the birth, lord, and whose is the birth?”

“Not a valid question,” the Blessed One said.... “From becoming as a requisite condition comes birth.”

“Which is the becoming, lord, and whose is the becoming?”

“Not a valid question,” the Blessed One said.... “From clinging as a requisite condition comes becoming.”

“Which is the clinging, lord, and whose is the clinging?”

“Not a valid question,” the Blessed One said.... “From craving as a requisite condition comes clinging.”

“Which is the craving, lord, and whose is the craving?”

“Not a valid question,” the Blessed One said.... “From feeling as a requisite condition comes craving.”

“Which is the feeling, lord, and whose is the feeling?”

“Not a valid question,” the Blessed One said.... “From contact as a requisite condition comes feeling.”

“Which is the contact, lord, and whose is the contact?”

“Not a valid question,” the Blessed One said.... “From the six sense media as a requisite condition comes contact.”

“Which are the six sense media, lord, and whose are the six sense media?”

“Not a valid question,” the Blessed One said.... “From name-&-form as a requisite condition come the six sense media.”

“Which is the name-&-form, lord, and whose is the name-&-form?”

“Not a valid question,” the Blessed One said.... “From consciousness as a requisite condition comes name-&-form.”

“Which is the consciousness, lord, and whose is the consciousness?”

“Not a valid question,” the Blessed One said.... “From fabrications as a requisite condition comes consciousness.”

“Which are the fabrications, lord, and whose are the fabrications?”

“Not a valid question,” the Blessed One said. “If one were to ask, ‘Which are the fabrications, and whose are the fabrications?’ and if one were to say, ‘Fabrications are one thing, and these fabrications are something/someone else’s,’ both of them would have the same meaning, even though their words would differ. When one is of the view that the life-principle is the same as the body, there is no leading the holy life. And when one is of the view that the life-principle is one thing and the body another, there is no leading the holy life. Avoiding these two extremes, the Tathāgata teaches the Dhamma via the middle: From ignorance as a requisite condition come fabrications.

“Now from the remainderless fading & cessation of that very ignorance, every one of these writhings & wriggings & wiggings—‘Which aging-&-death, and whose aging-&-death?’ or ‘Aging-&-death are one thing, and this aging-&-death are something/someone else’s’ or ‘The life-principle is the same as the body,’ or ‘The life-principle is one thing and the body another’—are abandoned, their root destroyed, made like a palmyra stump, deprived of the conditions of development, not destined for future arising.

“From the remainderless fading & cessation of that very ignorance, every one of these writhings & wriggings & wiggings—‘Which is the birth.... Which is the becoming.... Which is the clinging.... Which is the craving.... Which is the feeling.... Which is the contact.... Which are the six sense media.... Which is the name-&-form.... Which is the

consciousness.... Which are the fabrications, and whose are the fabrications?’ or ‘Fabrications are one thing, and these fabrications are something/someone else’s’ or ‘The soul is the same as the body,’ or ‘The soul is one thing and the body another’—are abandoned, their root destroyed, made like a palmyra stump, deprived of the conditions of development, not destined for future arising.”

See also: DN 9; MN 63; MN 72; [SN 12:46](#); [SN 22:85–86](#); [SN 44:10](#); AN 4:42; AN 10:93–96; Ud 1:10; Sn 4:10; Sn 4:14–15

Intention

Cetanā Sutta (SN 12:38)

This discourse describes the link between fabrications and consciousness in dependent co-arising, and shows how intention and underlying obsessions—with ignorance of the four noble truths being the basis for all obsessions—play a role in constituting awareness of the present moment.

* * *

Staying near Sāvattthī ... (the Blessed One said,) “Monks, what one intends, what one arranges, and what one obsesses about¹: This is a support for the stationing of consciousness. There being a support, there is a landing of consciousness. When that consciousness lands and grows, there is the production of renewed becoming in the future. When there is the production of renewed becoming in the future, there is future birth, aging-&-death, sorrow, lamentation, pain, distress, & despair. Such is the origination of this entire mass of suffering & stress.

“If one doesn’t intend and doesn’t arrange, but one still obsesses (about something), this is a support for the stationing of consciousness. There being a support, there is a landing of consciousness. When that consciousness lands and grows, there is the production of renewed becoming in the future. When there is the production of renewed becoming in the future, there is future birth, aging-&-death, sorrow,

lamentation, pain, distress, & despair. Such (too) is the origination of this entire mass of suffering & stress.

“But when one doesn’t intend, arrange, or obsess (about anything), there is no support for the stationing of consciousness. There being no support, there is no landing of consciousness. When that consciousness doesn’t land & grow, there is no production of renewed becoming in the future. When there is no production of renewed becoming in the future, there is no future birth, aging-&-death, sorrow, lamentation, pain, distress, or despair. Such is the cessation of this entire mass of suffering & stress.”

NOTE

1. The seven obsessions are: the obsession of sensual passion, the obsession of resistance, the obsession of views, the obsession of uncertainty, the obsession of conceit, the obsession of passion for becoming, and the obsession of ignorance. See AN 7:12.

See also: [SN 1:1](#); [SN 12:64](#); [SN 22:53–55](#); Ud 8:1

The World

Loka Sutta (SN 12:44)

Near Sāvattthī. There the Blessed One addressed the monks: “I will teach you the origination of the world & the ending of the world.¹ Listen & pay close attention. I will speak.”

“As you say, lord,” the monks responded to the Blessed One.

The Blessed One said: “And what is the origination of the world? Dependent on the eye & forms there arises eye-consciousness. The meeting of the three is contact. From contact as a requisite condition comes feeling. From feeling as a requisite condition comes craving. From craving as a requisite condition comes clinging/sustenance. From clinging/sustenance as a requisite condition comes becoming. From becoming as a requisite condition comes birth. From birth as a requisite

condition, then aging-&-death, sorrow, lamentation, pain, distress, & despair come into play. This is the origination of the world.

“Dependent on the ear & sounds there arises ear-consciousness. The meeting of the three is contact.... Dependent on the nose & aromas there arises nose-consciousness. The meeting of the three is contact.... Dependent on the tongue & flavors there arises tongue-consciousness. The meeting of the three is contact.... Dependent on the body & tactile sensations there arises body-consciousness. The meeting of the three is contact.... Dependent on the intellect & mental qualities there arises intellect-consciousness. The meeting of the three is contact. From contact as a requisite condition comes feeling. From feeling as a requisite condition comes craving. From craving as a requisite condition comes clinging/sustenance. From clinging/sustenance as a requisite condition comes becoming. From becoming as a requisite condition comes birth. From birth as a requisite condition, then aging-&-death, sorrow, lamentation, pain, distress, & despair come into play. This is the origination of the world.

“And what is the ending of the world? Dependent on the eye & forms there arises eye-consciousness. The meeting of the three is contact. From contact as a requisite condition comes feeling. From feeling as a requisite condition comes craving. Now, from the remainderless cessation & fading away of that very craving comes the cessation of clinging/sustenance. From the cessation of clinging/sustenance comes the cessation of becoming. From the cessation of becoming comes the cessation of birth. From the cessation of birth, then aging-&-death, sorrow, lamentation, pain, distress, & despair all cease. Such is the cessation of this entire mass of stress & suffering. This is the ending of the world.

“Dependent on the ear & sounds there arises ear-consciousness. The meeting of the three is contact.... Dependent on the nose & aromas there arises nose-consciousness. The meeting of the three is contact.... Dependent on the tongue & flavors there arises tongue-consciousness. The meeting of the three is contact.... Dependent on the body & tactile sensations there arises body-consciousness. The meeting of the three is contact.... Dependent on the intellect & mental qualities there arises

intellect-consciousness. The meeting of the three is contact. From contact as a requisite condition comes feeling. From feeling as a requisite condition comes craving. Now, from the remainderless cessation & fading away of that very craving comes the cessation of clinging/sustenance. From the cessation of clinging/sustenance comes the cessation of becoming. From the cessation of becoming comes the cessation of birth. From the cessation of birth, then aging-&-death, sorrow, lamentation, pain, distress, & despair all cease. Such is the cessation of this entire mass of stress & suffering. This is the ending of the world.”

NOTE

1. For the meaning of “world,” here, see [SN 35:82](#).

See also: DN 11; AN 4:45

A Certain Brahman

Aññātara Sutta (SN 12:46)

Staying near Sāvattthī ... Then a certain brahman went to the Blessed One and, on arrival, exchanged courteous greetings with him. After an exchange of friendly greetings & courtesies, he sat to one side. As he was sitting there he said to the Blessed One: “What now, Master Gotama: Is the one who acts the same one who experiences (the results of the act)?”

[The Buddha:] “(To say,) ‘The one who acts is the same one who experiences,’ is one extreme.”

[The brahman:] “Then, Master Gotama, is the one who acts someone other than the one who experiences?”

[The Buddha:] “(To say,) ‘The one who acts is someone other than the one who experiences,’ is the second extreme. Avoiding both of these extremes, the Tathāgata teaches the Dhamma via the middle:

“From ignorance as a requisite condition come fabrications.

“From fabrications as a requisite condition comes consciousness.

“From consciousness as a requisite condition comes name-&-form.

“From name-&-form as a requisite condition come the six sense media.

“From the six sense media as a requisite condition comes contact.

“From contact as a requisite condition comes feeling.

“From feeling as a requisite condition comes craving.

“From craving as a requisite condition comes clinging/sustenance.

“From clinging/sustenance as a requisite condition comes becoming.

“From becoming as a requisite condition comes birth.

“From birth as a requisite condition, then aging-&-death, sorrow, lamentation, pain, distress, & despair come into play. Such is the origination of this entire mass of stress & suffering.

“Now from the remainderless fading & cessation of that very ignorance comes the cessation of fabrications. From the cessation of fabrications comes the cessation of consciousness. From the cessation of consciousness comes the cessation of name-&-form. From the cessation of name-&-form comes the cessation of the six sense media. From the cessation of the six sense media comes the cessation of contact. From the cessation of contact comes the cessation of feeling. From the cessation of feeling comes the cessation of craving. From the cessation of craving comes the cessation of clinging/sustenance. From the cessation of clinging/sustenance comes the cessation of becoming. From the cessation of becoming comes the cessation of birth. From the cessation of birth, then aging-&-death, sorrow, lamentation, pain, distress, & despair all cease. Such is the cessation of this entire mass of stress & suffering.”

When this was said, the brahman said to the Blessed One:

“Magnificent, Master Gotama! Magnificent! Just as if he were to place upright what was overturned, to reveal what was hidden, to show the way to one who was lost, or to carry a lamp into the dark so that those with eyes could see forms, in the same way has Master Gotama—through many lines of reasoning—made the Dhamma clear. I go to Master Gotama for refuge, to the Dhamma, & to the Saṅgha of monks.

May Master Gotama remember me as a lay follower who has gone for refuge from this day forward, for life.”

See also: [SN 12:17–18](#); [SN 12:25](#); [SN 12:67](#)

The Cosmologist

Lokāyatika Sutta (SN 12:48)

The Oneness of all being is sometimes taught as a basic Buddhist principle, but this discourse shows that the Buddha himself rejected the idea. It is simply one of the extremes that he avoided by teaching dependent co-arising.

* * *

Near Sāvattthī. Then a brahman cosmologist¹ went to the Blessed One and, on arrival, exchanged courteous greetings with him. After an exchange of friendly greetings & courtesies, he sat to one side. As he was sitting there, he said to the Blessed One, “Now, then, Master Gotama, does everything² exist?”

“‘Everything exists’ is the senior form of cosmology, brahman.”

“Then, Master Gotama, does everything not exist?”

“‘Everything does not exist’ is the second form of cosmology, brahman.”

“Then is everything a Oneness?”

“‘Everything is a Oneness’ is the third form of cosmology, brahman.”

“Then is everything a plurality?”

“‘Everything is a plurality is the fourth form of cosmology, brahman. Avoiding these two extremes, the Tathāgata teaches the Dhamma via the middle: From ignorance as a requisite condition come fabrications.

From fabrications as a requisite condition comes consciousness.

From consciousness as a requisite condition comes name-&-form.

From name-&-form as a requisite condition come the six sense media.

From the six sense media as a requisite condition comes contact.

From contact as a requisite condition comes feeling.
From feeling as a requisite condition comes craving.
From craving as a requisite condition comes clinging/sustenance.
From clinging/sustenance as a requisite condition comes becoming.
From becoming as a requisite condition comes birth.

From birth as a requisite condition, then aging-&-death, sorrow, lamentation, pain, distress, & despair come into play. Such is the origination of this entire mass of stress & suffering.

“Now from the remainderless fading & cessation of that very ignorance comes the cessation of fabrications. From the cessation of fabrications comes the cessation of consciousness. From the cessation of consciousness comes the cessation of name-&-form. From the cessation of name-&-form comes the cessation of the six sense media. From the cessation of the six sense media comes the cessation of contact. From the cessation of contact comes the cessation of feeling. From the cessation of feeling comes the cessation of craving. From the cessation of craving comes the cessation of clinging/sustenance. From the cessation of clinging/sustenance comes the cessation of becoming. From the cessation of becoming comes the cessation of birth. From the cessation of birth, then aging-&-death, sorrow, lamentation, pain, distress, & despair all cease. Such is the cessation of this entire mass of stress & suffering.”

“Magnificent, Master Gotama! Magnificent! Just as if he were to place upright what was overturned, to reveal what was hidden, to show the way to one who was lost, or to carry a lamp into the dark so that those with eyes could see forms, in the same way has Master Gotama—through many lines of reasoning—made the Dhamma clear. I go to Master Gotama for refuge, to the Dhamma, and to the Saṅgha of monks. May Master Gotama remember me as a lay follower who has gone to him for refuge, from this day forward, for life.”

NOTES

1. The cosmologist (*lokāyata*) schools of thought reasoned from what they saw as the basic principles of the physical cosmos in formulating their

teachings on how life should be lived. In modern times, they would correspond to those who base their philosophies on principles drawn from the physical sciences, such as evolutionary biology or quantum physics. Although the cosmologists of India in the Buddha’s time differed on first principles, they tended to be more unanimous in using their first principles—whatever they were—to argue for hedonism as the best approach to life.

2. On the meaning of “everything” (or “all”—*sabba*) here, see [SN 35:23](#). For more on this topic, see *The Mind Like Fire Unbound*, Chapter 1.

See also: MN 1; [SN 12:15](#); [SN 35:82](#)

Investigating Parivīmamsa Sutta (SN 12:51)

I have heard that on one occasion the Blessed One was staying near Sāvattthī in Jeta’s Grove, Anāthapiṇḍika’s monastery. There he addressed the monks: “Monks!”

“Yes, lord,” the monks responded to him.

The Blessed One said, “To what extent should a monk, when investigating, investigate for the total right ending of suffering & stress?”

“For us, lord, the teachings have the Blessed One as their root, their guide, & their arbitrator. It would be good if the Blessed One himself would elaborate on the meaning of this statement. Having heard it from the Blessed One, the monks will remember it.”

“In that case, monks, listen & pay close attention. I will speak.”

“As you say, lord,” the monks responded to the Blessed One.

The Blessed One said: “There is the case where a monk, when investigating, investigates (in this way). ‘The aging-&-death that arises in the world as many different kinds of suffering & stress: What is its cause, what is its origination, what is its source, what brings it into play? When what exists does aging-&-death exist? When what does not exist does aging-&-death not exist?’

“As he is investigating, he discerns: ‘The aging-&-death that arises in the world as many different kinds of suffering & stress has birth as its cause, birth as its origination, birth as its source, birth as what brings it into play. When birth exists, aging-&-death exists. When birth does not exist, aging-&-death doesn’t exist.’

“He discerns aging-&-death; he discerns the origination of aging-&-death; he discerns the cessation of aging-&-death. And as for the path of practice that is proper for leading to the cessation of aging-&-death, he discerns that and practices accordingly. This is called a monk who practices for the total right ending of suffering & stress, for the cessation of aging-&-death.

“Investigating further, he investigates: ‘Birth: What is its cause, what is its origination, what is its source, what brings it into play? When what exists does birth exist? When what does not exist does birth not exist?’

“As he is investigating, he discerns: ‘Birth has becoming as its cause, becoming as its origination, becoming as its source, becoming as what brings it into play. When becoming exists, birth exists. When becoming does not exist, birth doesn’t exist.’

“He discerns birth; he discerns the origination of birth; he discerns the cessation of birth. And as for the path of practice that is proper for leading to the cessation of birth, he discerns that and practices accordingly. This is called a monk who practices for the total right ending of suffering & stress, for the cessation of birth.

“Investigating further, he investigates: ‘Becoming: What is its cause? ... Clinging: What is its cause? ... Craving: What is its cause? ... Feeling: What is its cause? ... Contact: What is its cause? ... The sixfold sense-media: What is its cause? ... Name-&-form: What is its cause? ... Consciousness: What is its cause? ... Fabrications: What is their cause, what is their origination, what is their source, what brings them into play? When what exists do fabrications exist? When what does not exist do fabrications not exist?’

“As he is investigating, he discerns: ‘Fabrications have ignorance as their cause, ignorance as their origination, ignorance as their source, ignorance as what brings them into play. When ignorance exists,

fabrications exist. When ignorance does not exist, fabrications don't exist.'

"He discerns fabrications; he discerns the origination of fabrications; he discerns the cessation of fabrications. And as for the path of practice that is proper for leading to the cessation of fabrications, he discerns that and practices accordingly. This is called a monk who practices for the total right ending of suffering & stress, for the cessation of fabrications.

"A person immersed in ignorance: If he fabricates a meritorious fabrication, his consciousness goes on to merit. If he fabricates a demeritorious fabrication, his consciousness goes on to demerit. If he fabricates an imperturbable fabrication, his consciousness goes on to the imperturbable.

"When ignorance is abandoned by a monk, clear knowing arises. From the fading of ignorance and the arising of clear knowing, he neither fabricates a meritorious fabrication nor a demeritorious fabrication nor an imperturbable fabrication. Neither fabricating nor willing, he is not sustained by [does not cling to] anything in the world. Unsustained, he is not agitated. Unagitated, he is totally unbound right within. He discerns that 'Birth is ended, the holy life fulfilled, the task done. There is nothing further for this world.'

"He senses a feeling of pleasure. He discerns, 'It is fleeting.' He discerns, 'It is not grasped at.' He discerns, 'It is not relished.' He senses a feeling of pain. He discerns, 'It is fleeting.' He discerns, 'It is not grasped at.' He discerns, 'It is not relished.' He senses a feeling of neither-pleasure-nor-pain. He discerns, 'It is fleeting.' He discerns, 'It is not grasped at.' He discerns, 'It is not relished.' Sensing a feeling of pleasure, he senses it disjoined from it. Sensing a feeling of pain, he senses it disjoined from it. Sensing a feeling of neither-pleasure-nor-pain, he senses it disjoined from it. When sensing a feeling limited to the body, he discerns that 'I am sensing a feeling limited to the body.' When sensing a feeling limited to life, he discerns that 'I am sensing a feeling limited to life.' He discerns that 'With the break-up of the body, after the termination of life, all that is experienced, not being relished, will grow cold right here, while the corpse will remain.'

“Just as if a man, having removed a heated jar from a kiln, were to place it on level ground: Whatever heat in the jar would subside right there, while the fired clay would remain. In the same way, when sensing a feeling limited to the body, he discerns that ‘I am sensing a feeling limited to the body.’ When sensing a feeling limited to life, he discerns that ‘I am sensing a feeling limited to life.’ He discerns that ‘With the break-up of the body, after the termination of life, all that is experienced, not being relished, will grow cold right here, while the corpse will remain.’”

“What do you think, monks? Would a monk whose effluents were ended fabricate a meritorious or a demeritorious or an imperturbable fabrication?”

“No, lord.”

“With the total non-existence of fabrications, from the cessation of fabrications, would consciousness be discernible [manifest]?”

“No, lord.”

[And similarly down to:] “With the total non-existence of birth, from the cessation of birth, would aging-&-death be discernible?”

“No, lord.”

“Very good, monks. Very good. Just so should you suppose it. Just so should you be convinced. Just so should you believe. Do not be doubtful; do not be uncertain. This, just this, is the end of suffering & stress.”

See also: MN 38; MN 140; [SN 35:80](#); AN 6:43; Ud 8:1; Iti 44

Clinging

Upādāna Sutta (SN 12:52)

Near Sāvattthī. There the Blessed One said to the monks: “In one who keeps focusing on the allure of clingable phenomena [*or*: phenomena that offer sustenance = the five aggregates], craving develops. From craving as a requisite condition comes clinging/sustenance. From

clinging/sustenance as a requisite condition comes becoming. From becoming as a requisite condition comes birth. From birth as a requisite condition, then aging-&-death, sorrow, lamentation, pain, distress, & despair come into play. Such is the origin of this entire mass of suffering & stress.

“Just as if a great mass of fire of ten... twenty... thirty or forty cartloads of timber were burning, and into it a man would time & again throw dried grass, dried cow dung, & dried timber, so that the great mass of fire—thus nourished, thus sustained—would burn for a long, long time. In the same way, in one who keeps focusing on the allure of clingable phenomena, craving develops. From craving as a requisite condition comes clinging/sustenance. From clinging/sustenance as a requisite condition comes becoming. From becoming as a requisite condition comes birth. From birth as a requisite condition, then aging-&-death, sorrow, lamentation, pain, distress, & despair come into play. Such is the origin of this entire mass of suffering & stress.

“Now, in one who keeps focusing on the drawbacks of clingable phenomena, craving ceases. From the cessation of craving comes the cessation of clinging/sustenance. From the cessation of clinging/sustenance comes the cessation of becoming. From the cessation of becoming comes the cessation of birth. From the cessation of birth, then aging, illness & death, sorrow, lamentation, pain, distress, & despair all cease. Such is the cessation of this entire mass of suffering & stress.

“Just as if a great mass of fire of ten... twenty... thirty or forty cartloads of timber were burning, into which a man simply would *not* time & again throw dried grass, dried cow dung, or dried timber, so that the great mass of fire—its original sustenance being consumed, and no other being offered—would, without nutriment, go out. In the same way, in one who keeps focusing on the drawbacks of clingable phenomena, craving ceases. From the cessation of craving comes the cessation of clinging/sustenance. From the cessation of clinging/sustenance comes the cessation of becoming. From the cessation of becoming comes the cessation of birth. From the cessation of birth, then aging, illness & death, sorrow, lamentation, pain, distress,

& despair all cease. Such is the cessation of this entire mass of suffering & stress.”

See also: MN 44; [SN 22:60](#); [SN 22:121](#)

Uninstructed

Assutavā Sutta (SN 12:61)

I have heard that on one occasion the Blessed One was staying near Sāvattthī in Jeta’s Grove, Anāthapiṇḍika’s monastery. There he addressed the monks, “Monks, an uninstructed run-of-the-mill person might grow disenchanted with this body composed of the four great elements, might grow dispassionate toward it, might gain release from it. Why is that? Because the growth & decline, the taking up & putting down of this body composed of the four great elements are apparent. Thus the uninstructed run-of-the-mill person might grow disenchanted, might grow dispassionate, might gain release there.

“But as for what’s called ‘mind,’ ‘intellect,’ or ‘consciousness,’ the uninstructed run-of-the-mill person is unable to grow disenchanted with it, unable to grow dispassionate toward it, unable to gain release from it. Why is that? For a long time this has been relished, appropriated, and grasped by the uninstructed run-of-the-mill person as, ‘This is me, this is my self, this is what I am.’ Thus the uninstructed run-of-the-mill person is unable to grow disenchanted with it, unable to grow dispassionate toward it, unable to gain release from it.

“It would be better for the uninstructed run-of-the-mill person to hold to the body composed of the four great elements, rather than the mind, as the self. Why is that? Because this body composed of the four great elements is seen standing for a year, two years, three, four, five, ten, twenty, thirty, forty, fifty, a hundred years or more. But what’s called ‘mind,’ ‘intellect,’ or ‘consciousness’ by day and by night arises as one thing and ceases as another. Just as a monkey, swinging through a forest wilderness, grabs a branch. Letting go of that, it grabs another branch. Letting go of that, it grabs another one. Letting go of that, it grabs

another one. In the same way, what's called 'mind,' 'intellect,' or 'consciousness' by day and by night arises as one thing and ceases as another.

"The instructed disciple of the noble ones, (however,) attends carefully & appropriately right there at the dependent co-arising:

"When this is, that is.

"From the arising of this comes the arising of that.

"When this isn't, that isn't.

"From the cessation of this comes the cessation of that.

"In other words:

"From ignorance as a requisite condition come fabrications.

"From fabrications as a requisite condition comes consciousness.

"From consciousness as a requisite condition comes name-&-form.

"From name-&-form as a requisite condition come the six sense media.

"From the six sense media as a requisite condition comes contact.

"From contact as a requisite condition comes feeling.

"From feeling as a requisite condition comes craving.

"From craving as a requisite condition comes clinging/sustenance.

"From clinging/sustenance as a requisite condition comes becoming.

"From becoming as a requisite condition comes birth.

"From birth as a requisite condition, then aging-&-death, sorrow, lamentation, pain, distress, & despair come into play. Such is the origination of this entire mass of stress & suffering.

"Now from the remainderless fading & cessation of that very ignorance comes the cessation of fabrications. From the cessation of fabrications comes the cessation of consciousness. From the cessation of consciousness comes the cessation of name-&-form. From the cessation of name-&-form comes the cessation of the six sense media. From the cessation of the six sense media comes the cessation of contact. From the cessation of contact comes the cessation of feeling. From the cessation of feeling comes the cessation of craving. From the cessation of craving comes the cessation of clinging/sustenance. From the cessation of

clinging/sustenance comes the cessation of becoming. From the cessation of becoming comes the cessation of birth. From the cessation of birth, then aging-&-death, sorrow, lamentation, pain, distress, & despair all cease. Such is the cessation of this entire mass of stress & suffering.’

“Seeing thus, the instructed disciple of the noble ones grows disenchanted with form, disenchanted with feeling, disenchanted with perception, disenchanted with fabrications, disenchanted with consciousness.¹ Disenchanted, he becomes dispassionate. Through dispassion, he is released. With release, there is the knowledge, ‘Released.’ He discerns that ‘Birth is ended, the holy life fulfilled, the task done. There is nothing further for this world.’”

NOTE

1. The discussion here shifts from the framework of dependent co-arising to that of the five aggregates. It’s a useful exercise to relate the two teachings, and three good places to start this exercise are MN 28, [SN 12:2](#), and [SN 22:5](#).

See also: AN 1:48; Dhp 33–37

Uninstructed (2)

Assutavā Sutta (SN 12:62)

I have heard that on one occasion the Blessed One was staying near Sāvattthī in Jeta’s Grove, Anāthapiṇḍika’s monastery. There he addressed the monks, “Monks, an uninstructed run-of-the-mill person might grow disenchanted with this body composed of the four great elements, might grow dispassionate toward it, might gain release from it. Why is that? Because the growth & decline, the taking up & putting down of this body composed of the four great elements are apparent. Thus the uninstructed run-of-the-mill person might grow disenchanted, might grow dispassionate, might gain release there.

“But as for what’s called ‘mind,’ ‘intellect,’ or ‘consciousness,’ the uninstructed run-of-the-mill person is unable to grow disenchanted with it, unable to grow dispassionate toward it, unable to gain release from it. Why is that? For a long time this has been relished, appropriated, and grasped by the uninstructed run-of-the-mill person as, ‘This is me, this is my self, this is what I am.’ Thus the uninstructed run-of-the-mill person is unable to grow disenchanted with it, unable to grow dispassionate toward it, unable to gain release from it.

“It would be better for the uninstructed run-of-the-mill person to hold to the body composed of the four great elements, rather than the mind, as the self. Why is that? Because this body composed of the four great elements is seen standing for a year, two years, three, four, five, ten, twenty, thirty, forty, fifty, a hundred years or more. But what’s called ‘mind,’ ‘intellect,’ or ‘consciousness’ by day and by night arises as one thing and ceases as another. Just as a monkey, swinging through a forest wilderness, grabs a branch. Letting go of that, it grabs another branch. Letting go of that, it grabs another one. Letting go of that, it grabs another one. In the same way, what’s called ‘mind,’ ‘intellect,’ or ‘consciousness’ by day and by night arises as one thing and ceases as another.

“The instructed disciple of the noble ones, (however,) attends carefully & appropriately right there at the dependent co-arising: ‘When this is, that is. From the arising of this comes the arising of that. When this isn’t, that isn’t. From the cessation of this comes the cessation of that.’

“In dependence on a sensory contact that is to be felt as pleasure, monks, there arises a feeling of pleasure. When sensing a feeling of pleasure, one discerns that ‘I am sensing a feeling of pleasure.’ One discerns that ‘With the cessation of that very sensory contact that is to be felt as pleasure, the concomitant feeling—the feeling of pleasure that has arisen in dependence on the sensory contact that is to be felt as pleasure—ceases, is stilled.’ In dependence on a sensory contact that is to be felt as pain.... In dependence on a sensory contact that is to be felt as neither pleasure nor pain, there arises a feeling of neither pleasure nor pain. When sensing a feeling of neither pleasure nor pain, one discerns that ‘I

am sensing a feeling of neither pleasure nor pain.’ One discerns that ‘With the cessation of that very sensory contact that is to be felt as neither pleasure nor pain, the concomitant feeling—the feeling of neither pleasure nor pain that has arisen in dependence on the sensory contact that is to be felt as neither pleasure nor pain—ceases, is stilled.’

“The instructed disciple of the noble ones, (however,) attends carefully & appropriately right there at the dependent co-arising: ‘When this is, that is. From the arising of this comes the arising of that. When this isn’t, that isn’t. From the cessation of this comes the cessation of that.’

“Just as when, from the friction & conjunction of two fire sticks, heat is born and fire appears, and from the separation & disjunction of those very same fire sticks, the concomitant heat ceases, is stilled; in the same way, in dependence on a sensory contact that is to be felt as pleasure, there arises a feeling of pleasure.... In dependence on a sensory contact that is to be felt as pain.... In dependence on a sensory contact that is to be felt as neither pleasure nor pain, there arises a feeling of neither pleasure nor pain.... One discerns that ‘With the cessation of that very sensory contact that is to be felt as neither pleasure nor pain, the concomitant feeling... ceases, is stilled.’

“Seeing thus, the instructed disciple of the noble ones grows disenchanted with form, disenchanted with feeling, disenchanted with perception, disenchanted with fabrications, disenchanted with consciousness. Disenchanted, he becomes dispassionate. Through dispassion, he is released. With release, there is the knowledge, ‘Released.’ He discerns that ‘Birth is ended, the holy life fulfilled, the task done. There is nothing further for this world.’”

See also: MN 38; MN 140

A Son’s Flesh

Puttamamsa Sutta (SN 12:63)

Near Sāvatthī. “There are these four nutriments for the maintenance of beings who have come into being or for the support of those in search of a place to be born. Which four? Physical food, gross or refined; contact as the second, intellectual intention the third, and consciousness the fourth. These are the four nutriments for the maintenance of beings who have come into being or for the support of those in search of a place to be born.

“And how is physical food to be regarded? Suppose a couple, husband & wife, taking meager provisions, were to travel through a desert. With them would be their only baby son, dear & appealing. Then the meager provisions of the couple going through the desert would be used up & depleted while there was still a stretch of the desert yet to be crossed. The thought would occur to them, ‘Our meager provisions are used up & depleted while there is still a stretch of this desert yet to be crossed. What if we were to kill this only baby son of ours, dear & appealing, and make dried meat & jerky. That way—chewing on the flesh of our son—at least the two of us would make it through this desert. Otherwise, all three of us would perish? So they would kill their only baby son, loved & endearing, and make dried meat & jerky. Chewing on the flesh of their son, they would make it through the desert. While eating the flesh of their only son, they would beat their breasts, (crying,) ‘Where have you gone, our only baby son? Where have you gone, our only baby son?’ Now what do you think, monks? Would that couple eat that food playfully or for intoxication, or for putting on bulk, or for beatification?”

“No, lord.”

“Wouldn’t they eat that food simply for the sake of making it through that desert?”

“Yes, lord.”

“In the same way, I tell you, is the nutriment of physical food to be regarded. When physical food is comprehended, passion for the five strings of sensuality is comprehended. When passion for the five strings of sensuality is comprehended, there is no fetter bound by which a disciple of the noble ones would come back again to this world.

“And how is the nutriment of contact to be regarded? Suppose a flayed cow were to stand leaning against a wall. The creatures living in

the wall would chew on it. If it were to stand leaning against a tree, the creatures living in the tree would chew on it. If it were to stand exposed to water, the creatures living in the water would chew on it. If it were to stand exposed to the air, the creatures living in the air would chew on it. For wherever the flayed cow were to stand exposed, the creatures living there would chew on it. In the same way, I tell you, is the nutriment of contact to be regarded. When the nutriment of contact is comprehended, the three feelings [pleasure, pain, neither pleasure nor pain] are comprehended. When the three feelings are comprehended, I tell you, there is nothing further for a disciple of the noble ones to do.

“And how is the nutriment of intellectual intention to be regarded? Suppose there were a pit of glowing embers, deeper than a man’s height, full of embers that were neither flaming nor smoking, and a man were to come along—loving life, hating death, loving pleasure, abhorring pain—and two strong men, having grabbed him by the arms, were to drag him to the pit of embers. To get far away would be that man’s intention, far away would be his wish, far away would be his aspiration. Why is that? Because he would realize, ‘If I fall into this pit of glowing embers, I will meet with death from that cause, or with death-like pain.’ In the same way, I tell you, is the nutriment of intellectual intention to be regarded. When the nutriment of intellectual intention is comprehended, the three forms of craving [for sensuality, for becoming, and for non-becoming] are comprehended. When the three forms of craving are comprehended, I tell you, there is nothing further for a disciple of the noble ones to do.

“And how is the nutriment of consciousness to be regarded? Suppose that, having arrested a thief, a criminal, they were to show him to the king: ‘This is a thief, a criminal for you, your majesty. Impose on him whatever punishment you like.’ So the king would say, ‘Go, men, and stab him in the morning with a hundred spears.’ So they would stab him in the morning with a hundred spears. Then the king would say at noon, ‘Men, how is that man?’ ‘Still alive, your majesty.’ So the king would say, ‘Go, men, and stab him at noon with a hundred spears.’ So they would stab him at noon with a hundred spears. Then the king would say in the evening, ‘Men, how is that man?’ ‘Still alive, your majesty.’ So the king

would say, ‘Go, men, and stab him in the evening with a hundred spears.’ So they would stab him in the evening with a hundred spears. Now what do you think, monks? Would that man, being stabbed with three hundred spears a day, experience pain & distress from that cause?”

“Even if he were to be stabbed with only one spear, lord, he would experience pain & distress from that cause, to say nothing of three hundred spears.”

“In the same way, I tell you, monks, is the nutriment of consciousness to be regarded. When the nutriment of consciousness is comprehended, name-&-form is comprehended. When name-&-form is comprehended, I tell you, there is nothing further for a disciple of the noble ones to do.”

See also: [SN 56:35](#); Khp 4

Where There is Passion

Atthi Rāga Sutta (SN 12:64)

Near Sāvattthī. “There are these four nutriments for the maintenance of beings who have come into being or for the support of those in search of a place to be born. Which four? Physical food, gross or refined; contact as the second, intellectual intention the third, and consciousness the fourth. These are the four nutriments for the maintenance of beings who have come into being or for the support of those in search of a place to be born.

“Where there is passion, delight, & craving for the nutriment of physical food, consciousness lands there and increases. Where consciousness lands and increases, there is the alighting of name-&-form. Where there is the alighting of name-&-form, there is the growth of fabrications. Where there is the growth of fabrications, there is the production of renewed becoming in the future. Where there is the production of renewed becoming in the future, there is future birth, aging, & death, together, I tell you, with sorrow, affliction, & despair.

“Where there is passion, delight, & craving for the nutriment of contact....

“Where there is passion, delight, & craving for the nutriment of intellectual intention....

“Where there is passion, delight, & craving for the nutriment of consciousness, consciousness lands there and increases. Where consciousness lands and increases, there is the alighting of name-&-form. Where there is the alighting of name-&-form, there is the growth of fabrications. Where there is the growth of fabrications, there is the production of renewed becoming in the future. Where there is the production of renewed becoming in the future, there is future birth, aging, & death, together, I tell you, with sorrow, affliction, & despair.

“Just as—when there is dye, lac, yellow orpiment, indigo, or crimson—a dyer or painter would paint the picture of a woman or a man, complete in all its parts, on a well-polished panel or wall, or on a piece of cloth; in the same way, where there is passion, delight, & craving for the nutriment of physical food... contact... intellectual intention... consciousness, consciousness lands there and increases. Where consciousness lands and increases, there is the alighting of name-&-form. Where there is the alighting of name-&-form, there is the growth of fabrications. Where there is the growth of fabrications, there is the production of renewed becoming in the future. Where there is the production of renewed becoming in the future, there is future birth, aging, & death, together, I tell you, with sorrow, affliction, & despair.

“Where there is no passion for the nutriment of physical food, where there is no delight, no craving, then consciousness does not land there or increase. Where consciousness does not land or increase, there is no alighting of name-&-form. Where there is no alighting of name-&-form, there is no growth of fabrications. Where there is no growth of fabrications, there is no production of renewed becoming in the future. Where there is no production of renewed becoming in the future, there is no future birth, aging, & death. That, I tell you, has no sorrow, affliction, or despair.

“Where there is no passion for the nutriment of contact....

“Where there is no passion for the nutriment of intellectual intention....

“Where there is no passion for the nutriment of consciousness, where there is no delight, no craving, then consciousness does not land there or increase. Where consciousness does not land or increase, there is no alighting of name-&-form. Where there is no alighting of name-&-form, there is no growth of fabrications. Where there is no growth of fabrications, there is no production of renewed becoming in the future. Where there is no production of renewed becoming in the future, there is no future birth, aging, & death. That, I tell you, has no sorrow, affliction, or despair.

“Just as if there were a roofed house or a roofed hall having windows on the north, the south, or the east. When the sun rises, and a ray has entered by way of the window, where does it land?”

“On the western wall, lord.”

“And if there is no western wall, where does it land?”

“On the ground, lord.”

“And if there is no ground, where does it land?”

“On the water, lord.”

“And if there is no water, where does it land?”

“It does not land, lord.”

“In the same way, where there is no passion for the nutriment of physical food... contact... intellectual intention... consciousness, where there is no delight, no craving, then consciousness does not land there or increase.¹ Where consciousness does not land or increase, there is no alighting of name-&-form. Where there is no alighting of name-&-form, there is no growth of fabrications. Where there is no growth of fabrications, there is no production of renewed becoming in the future. Where there is no production of renewed becoming in the future, there is no future birth, aging, & death. That, I tell you, has no sorrow, affliction, or despair.”

NOTE

1. See the discussion in *The Paradox of Becoming*, chapter 7.

See also: DN 11; MN 49; [SN 1:1](#); [SN 12:38](#); [SN 22:53–55](#); Ud 8:1

The City

Nagara Sutta (SN 12:65)

Near Sāvattthī. “Monks, before my awakening, when I was just an unawakened bodhisatta, the realization came to me: ‘How this world has fallen on difficulty! It is born, it ages, it dies, it falls away & rearises, but it does not discern the escape from this stress, from this aging-&-death. O when will it discern the escape from this stress, from this aging-&-death?’

“Then the thought occurred to me, ‘Aging-&-death exist when what exists? From what as a requisite condition come aging-&-death?’ From my appropriate attention there came the breakthrough of discernment: ‘Aging-&-death exist when birth exists. From birth as a requisite condition comes aging-&-death.’ Then the thought occurred to me, ‘Birth exists when what exists? From what as a requisite condition comes birth?’ From my appropriate attention there came the breakthrough of discernment: ‘Birth exists when becoming exists. From becoming as a requisite condition comes birth... ‘Name-&-form exists when what exists? From what as a requisite condition is there name-&-form?’ From my appropriate attention there came the breakthrough of discernment: ‘Name-&-form exists when consciousness exists. From consciousness as a requisite condition comes name-&-form.’ Then the thought occurred to me, ‘Consciousness exists when what exists? From what as a requisite condition comes consciousness?’ From my appropriate attention there came the breakthrough of discernment: ‘Consciousness exists when name-&-form exists. From name-&-form as a requisite condition comes consciousness.’

“Then the thought occurred to me, ‘This consciousness turns back at name-&-form, and goes no farther. It is to this extent that there is birth, aging, death, falling away, & re-arising, i.e., from name-&-form as a requisite condition comes consciousness, from consciousness as a requisite condition comes name-&-form. From name-&-form as a requisite condition come the six sense media.... Thus is the origination

of this entire mass of stress. Origination, origination.' Vision arose, clear knowing arose, discernment arose, knowledge arose, illumination arose within me with regard to things never heard before.

"Then the thought occurred to me, 'Aging-&-death don't exist when what doesn't exist? From the cessation of what comes the cessation of aging-&-death?' From my appropriate attention there came the breakthrough of discernment: 'Aging-&-death don't exist when birth doesn't exist. From the cessation of birth comes the cessation of aging-&-death' 'Name-&-form doesn't exist when what doesn't exist? From the cessation of what comes the cessation of name-&-form?' From my appropriate attention there came the breakthrough of discernment: 'Name-&-form doesn't exist when consciousness doesn't exist. From the cessation of consciousness comes the cessation of name-&-form.' Then the thought occurred to me, 'Consciousness doesn't exist when what doesn't exist? From the cessation of what comes the cessation of consciousness?' From my appropriate attention there came the breakthrough of discernment: 'Consciousness doesn't exist when name-&-form doesn't exist. From the cessation of name-&-form comes the cessation of consciousness.'

"The thought occurred to me, 'I have attained this path to awakening, i.e., from the cessation of name-&-form comes the cessation of consciousness, from the cessation of consciousness comes the cessation of name-&-form. From the cessation of name-&-form comes the cessation of the six sense media. From the cessation of the six sense media comes the cessation of contact. From the cessation of contact comes the cessation of feeling. From the cessation of feeling comes the cessation of craving. From the cessation of craving comes the cessation of clinging/sustenance. From the cessation of clinging/sustenance comes the cessation of becoming. From the cessation of becoming comes the cessation of birth. From the cessation of birth, then aging-&-death, sorrow, lamentation, pain, distress, & despair all cease. Thus is the cessation of this entire mass of stress. Cessation, cessation.' Vision arose, clear knowing arose, discernment arose, knowledge arose, illumination arose within me with regard to things never heard before.

“It’s just as if a man, traveling along a wilderness track, were to see an ancient path, an ancient road, traveled by people of former times. He would follow it. Following it, he would see an ancient city, an ancient capital inhabited by people of former times, complete with parks, groves, & ponds, walled, delightful. He would go to address the king or the king’s minister, saying, ‘Sire, you should know that while traveling along a wilderness track I saw an ancient path... I followed it... I saw an ancient city, an ancient capital... complete with parks, groves, & ponds, walled, delightful. Sire, rebuild that city!’ The king or king’s minister would rebuild the city, so that at a later date the city would become powerful, rich, & well-populated, fully grown & prosperous.

“In the same way I saw an ancient path, an ancient road, traveled by the Rightly Self-awakened Ones of former times. And what is that ancient path, that ancient road, traveled by the Rightly Self-awakened Ones of former times? Just this noble eightfold path: right view, right resolve, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness, right concentration. That is the ancient path, the ancient road, traveled by the Rightly Self-awakened Ones of former times. I followed that path. Following it, I came to direct knowledge of aging-& death, direct knowledge of the origination of aging-& death, direct knowledge of the cessation of aging-& death, direct knowledge of the path leading to the cessation of aging-& death. I followed that path. Following it, I came to direct knowledge of birth... becoming... clinging... craving... feeling... contact... the six sense media... name-&-form... consciousness, direct knowledge of the origination of consciousness, direct knowledge of the cessation of consciousness, direct knowledge of the path leading to the cessation of consciousness. I followed that path.

“Following it, I came to direct knowledge of fabrications, direct knowledge of the origination of fabrications, direct knowledge of the cessation of fabrications, direct knowledge of the path leading to the cessation of fabrications. Knowing that directly, I have revealed it to monks, nuns, male lay followers & female lay followers, so that this holy life has become powerful, rich, detailed, well-populated, wide-spread, proclaimed among devas & human beings.”

See also: MN 82; [SN 12:10](#); [SN 35:82](#)

Scrutiny

Sammāsa Sutta (SN 12:66)

I have heard that on one occasion the Blessed One was staying in the Kuru country. Now there is a town of the Kurus called Kammāsadhamma. There the Blessed One addressed the monks, “Monks.”

“Lord,” the monks responded to him.

The Blessed One said: “Monks, have you conducted an inner scrutiny?”

When this was said, a certain monk said to the Blessed One, “I, lord, have conducted an inner scrutiny.”

“And how have you conducted an inner scrutiny, monk?”

Then the monk answered, but the way he answered didn’t satisfy the Blessed One.

When this was said, Ven. Ānanda said to the Blessed One, “Now is the time, Blessed One! Now is the time, One Well-Gone, for the Blessed One to describe inner scrutiny. Having heard it from the Blessed One, the monks will remember it.”

“In that case, Ānanda, listen & pay careful attention. I will speak.”

“As you say, lord,” the monks responded to the Blessed One.

The Blessed One said: “There is the case, monks, where a monk, when scrutinizing, conducts an inner scrutiny [in this way]: ‘The many-faceted, multifarious stress of aging-&-death that arises in the world has what as its cause, what as its origination, what as its source, what as that which brings it into play?’ As he scrutinizes, he understands thus: ‘This many-faceted, multifarious stress of aging-&-death that arises in the world has acquisition as its cause, acquisition as its origination, acquisition as its source, acquisition as that which brings it into play. When acquisition exists, aging-&-death exists. When acquisition doesn’t

exist, aging-&-death doesn't exist.' He discerns aging-&-death, he discerns the origination of aging-&-death, he discerns the cessation of aging-&-death, he discerns the path of practice that is fit to lead to the cessation of aging-&-death, and he is one who practices in accordance with it. This, monks, is called a monk who practices for the total right ending of stress, for the cessation of aging-&-death.

"Further, when scrutinizing, he conducts an inner scrutiny [in this way]: 'The many-faceted, multifarious stress of acquisition that arises in the world has what as its cause, what as its origination, what as its source, what as that which brings it into play?' As he scrutinizes, he understands thus: 'This many-faceted, multifarious stress of acquisition that arises in the world has craving as its cause, craving as its origination, craving as its source, craving as that which brings it into play. When craving exists, acquisition exists. When craving doesn't exist, acquisition doesn't exist.' He discerns acquisition, he discerns the origination of acquisition, he discerns the cessation of acquisition, he discerns the way of practice that is fit to lead to the cessation of acquisition, and he is one who practices in accordance with it. This, monks, is called a monk who practices for the total right ending of stress, for the cessation of acquisition.

"Further, when scrutinizing, he conducts an inner scrutiny [in this way]: 'And where does this craving, when arising, arise? And where, when settling, does it settle?' As he scrutinizes, he understands thus: 'Whatever seems endearing & alluring in terms of the world: It's here where this craving, when arising, arises. It's here where, when settling, it settles.'¹

"And what seems endearing & alluring in terms of the world? The eye seems endearing & alluring in terms of the world. It's here where this craving, when arising, arises. It's here where, when settling, it settles.

"The ear.... The nose.... The tongue.... The body....

"The intellect seems endearing & alluring in terms of the world. It's here where this craving, when arising, arises. It's here where, when settling, it settles.

“Monks, any contemplatives & brahmans in the past who saw whatever seems endearing & alluring in terms of the world as constant, as pleasant, as self, as freedom from disease, as safety: They made craving grow. Those who made craving grow made acquisition grow. Those who made acquisition grow made stress grow. Those who made stress grow were not released from birth, aging, death, sorrows, lamentations, pains, distresses, & despairs. They were not released, I tell you, from suffering & stress.

“Any contemplatives & brahmans in the future who will see whatever seems endearing & alluring in terms of the world as constant, as pleasant, as self, as freedom from disease, as safety: They will make craving grow. Those who will make craving grow will make acquisition grow. Those who will make acquisition grow will make stress grow. Those who will make stress grow will not be released from birth, aging, death, sorrows, lamentations, pains, distresses, & despairs. They will not be released, I tell you, from suffering & stress.

“Any contemplatives & brahmans in the present who see whatever seems endearing & alluring in terms of the world as constant, as pleasant, as self, as freedom from disease, as safety: They make craving grow. Those who make craving grow make acquisition grow. Those who make acquisition grow make stress grow. Those who make stress grow are not released from birth, aging, death, sorrows, lamentations, pains, distresses, & despairs. They are not released, I tell you, from suffering & stress.

“Suppose, monks, that there were a beverage in a bronze cup—consummate in its color, consummate in its smell, consummate in its flavor, but mixed with poison—and a man were to come along: scorched from the heat, oppressed by heat, exhausted, trembling, & thirsty. They would say to him, ‘Here, my good man, is a beverage for you in a bronze cup: consummate in its color, consummate in its smell, consummate in its flavor, but mixed with poison. Drink it, if you want. Having been drunk, it will please you with its color, smell, & flavor. But having drunk it, you will—from that cause—meet with death or death-like suffering.’ He would drink it quickly without reflection—he wouldn’t reject it—and from that cause he would meet with death or death-like suffering.

“In the same way, monks, any contemplatives & brahmans in the past... future... present who see whatever seems endearing & alluring in terms of the world as constant, as pleasant, as self, as freedom from disease, as safety, make craving grow. Those who make craving grow make acquisition grow. Those who make acquisition grow make stress grow. Those who make stress grow are not released from birth, aging, death, sorrows, lamentations, pains, distresses, & despairs. They are not released, I tell you, from suffering & stress.

“But, monks, any contemplatives & brahmans in the past who saw whatever seems endearing & alluring in terms of the world as inconstant, as stressful, as not-self, as a disease, as a danger: They abandoned craving. Those who abandoned craving abandoned acquisition. Those who abandoned acquisition abandoned stress. Those who abandoned stress were released from birth, aging, death, sorrows, lamentations, pains, distresses, & despairs. They were released, I tell you, from suffering & stress.

“Any contemplatives & brahmans in the future who will see whatever seems endearing & alluring in terms of the world as inconstant, as stressful, as not-self, as a disease, as a danger: They will abandon craving. Those who will abandon craving will abandon acquisition. Those who will abandon acquisition will abandon stress. Those who will abandon stress will be released from birth, aging, death, sorrows, lamentations, pains, distresses, & despairs. They will be released, I tell you, from suffering & stress.

“Any contemplatives & brahmans in the present who see whatever seems endearing & alluring in terms of the world as inconstant, as stressful, as not-self, as a disease, as a danger: They abandon craving. Those who abandon craving abandon acquisition. Those who abandon acquisition abandon stress. Those who abandon stress are released from birth, aging, death, sorrows, lamentations, pains, distresses, & despairs. They are released, I tell you, from suffering & stress.

“Suppose, monks, that there were a beverage in a bronze cup—consummate in its color, consummate in its smell, consummate in its flavor, but mixed with poison—and a man were to come along: scorched from the heat, oppressed by heat, exhausted, trembling, & thirsty. They

would say to him, ‘Here, my good man, is a beverage for you in a bronze cup: consummate in its color, consummate in its smell, consummate in its flavor, but mixed with poison. Drink it, if you want. Having been drunk, it will please you with its color, smell, & flavor. But having drunk it, you will—from that cause—meet with death or death-like suffering.’ The thought would occur to that man, ‘It’s possible to subdue this thirst of mine with water, with whey, with salted porridge, or with bean-broth. I certainly shouldn’t drink that which would be for my long-term harm & suffering.’ Having reflected on that beverage in the bronze cup, he wouldn’t drink it. He would reject it. And so from that cause he would not meet with death or death-like suffering.

“In the same way, monks, any contemplatives & brahmans in the past... future... present who see whatever seems endearing & alluring in terms of the world as inconstant, as stressful, as not-self, as a disease, as a danger: They abandon craving. Those who abandon craving abandon acquisition. Those who abandon acquisition abandon stress. Those who abandon stress are released from birth, aging, death, sorrows, lamentations, pains, distresses, & despairs. They are released, I tell you, from suffering & stress.”

NOTE

1. The wording of this passage follows the wording of the discussion of craving found under the heading of the four noble truths in DN 22. The verb “settles” here (*nivāsati*) can also be translated as “gets entrenched.”

It’s interesting to note that this sutta uses a vocabulary that is uncommon in its saṃyutta. To begin with, it provides an abbreviated version of dependent co-arising: the six sense media, craving, acquisition, aging-&-death. This skips over the steps of contact and feeling, which are usually listed between the six sense media and craving, and conflates the steps normally listed between craving and aging-&-death—clinging, becoming, and birth—into one: acquisition.

Secondly, it refers to the fourth noble truth not with its common name—the path of practice leading to the cessation of x (*x-nirodha-gāmini paṭipadā*)—but as the path of practice that is fit to lead to the cessation of x (*x-nirodha-sāruppa-gāmini paṭipadā*).

Finally, the use of the terms related to “acquisition” (*upadi*) and “entrenchment” (*nivesana*) is more typical of the Sutta Nipāta than of the Saṃyutta Nikāya. Whether this is a sign of the relatively early or late date of this sutta, or simply a sign that the Buddha was somewhat flexible in his vocabulary depending on his audience, no one knows.

The connection between acquisition and stress is also highlighted in MN 105, which in addition contains another variation of the simile of the poisoned beverage.

See also: DN 22; MN 105

Sheaves of Reeds

Naḷakalāpiyo Sutta (SN 12:67)

On one occasion Ven. Sāriputta and Ven. Mahā Koṭṭhita were staying near Vārāṇasī in the Deer Park at Isipatana. Then in the evening, emerging from his seclusion, Ven. Mahā Koṭṭhita went to Ven. Sāriputta and, on arrival, exchanged courteous greetings with him. After an exchange of friendly greetings & courtesies, he sat to one side. As he was sitting there he said to Ven. Sāriputta, “Now tell me, Sāriputta my friend: Are aging-&-death self-made or other-made or both self-made & other-made, or—without self-making or other-making—do they arise spontaneously?”

“It’s not the case, Koṭṭhita my friend, that aging-&-death are self-made, that they are other-made, that they are both self-made & other-made, or that—without self-making or other-making—they arise spontaneously. However, from birth as a requisite condition comes aging-&-death.”

“Now tell me, friend Sāriputta: Is birth.... Is becoming.... Is clinging/sustenance... Is craving.... Is feeling.... Is contact.... Are the six sense media self-made or other-made or both self-made & other-made, or—without self-making or other-making—do they arise spontaneously?”

“It’s not the case, Koṭṭhita my friend, that the six sense media are self-made, that they are other-made, that they are both self-made & other-

made, or that—without self-making or other-making—they arise spontaneously. However, from name & form as a requisite condition come the six sense media.”

“Now tell me, friend Sāriputta: Is name-&-form self-made or other-made or both self-made & other-made, or—without self-making or other-making—does it arise spontaneously?”

“It’s not the case, Koṭṭhita my friend, that name-&-form is self-made, that it is other-made, that it is both self-made & other-made, or that—without self-making or other-making—it arises spontaneously. However, from consciousness as a requisite condition comes name-&-form.”

“Now tell me, friend Sāriputta: Is consciousness self-made or other-made or both self-made & other-made, or—without self-making or other-making, does it arise spontaneously?”

“It’s not the case, Koṭṭhita my friend, that consciousness is self-made, that it is other-made, that it is both self-made & other-made, or that—without self-making or other-making—it arises spontaneously. However, from name-&-form as a requisite condition comes consciousness.”

“Just now, I understood Ven. Sāriputta’s statement as, ‘It’s not the case, Koṭṭhita my friend, that name-&-form is self-made, that it is other-made, that it is both self-made & other-made, or that—without self-making or other-making—it arises spontaneously. However, from consciousness as a requisite condition comes name-&-form’ But then I understood your statement as, ‘It’s not the case, Koṭṭhita my friend, that consciousness is self-made, that it is other-made, that it is both self-made & other-made, or that—without self-making or other-making—it arises spontaneously. However, from name-&-form as a requisite condition comes consciousness.’ Now how is the meaning of these statements to be understood?”

“Very well then, Koṭṭhita my friend, I will give you an analogy; for there are cases where it is through the use of an analogy that intelligent people can understand the meaning of what is being said. It is as if two sheaves of reeds were to stand leaning against one another. In the same way, from name-&-form as a requisite condition comes consciousness, from consciousness as a requisite condition comes name-&-form. From name & form as a requisite condition come the six sense media. From

the six sense media as a requisite condition comes contact. From contact as a requisite condition comes feeling. From feeling as a requisite condition comes craving. From craving as a requisite condition comes clinging/sustenance. From clinging/sustenance as a requisite condition comes becoming. From becoming as a requisite condition comes birth. From birth as a requisite condition, then aging-&-death, sorrow, lamentation, pain, distress, & despair come into play. Such is the origination of this entire mass of suffering & stress.

“If one were to pull away one of those sheaves of reeds, the other would fall; if one were to pull away the other, the first one would fall. In the same way, from the cessation of name-&-form comes the cessation of consciousness, from the cessation of consciousness comes the cessation of name-&-form. From the cessation of name-&-form comes the cessation of the six sense media. From the cessation of the six sense media comes the cessation of contact. From the cessation of contact comes the cessation of feeling. From the cessation of feeling comes the cessation of craving. From the cessation of craving comes the cessation of clinging/sustenance. From the cessation of clinging/sustenance comes the cessation of becoming. From the cessation of becoming comes the cessation of birth. From the cessation of birth, then aging-&-death, sorrow, lamentation, pain, distress, & despair all cease. Such is the cessation of this entire mass of suffering & stress.”

“It’s amazing, friend Sāriputta. It’s astounding, friend Sāriputta, how well that was said by Ven. Sāriputta. And I rejoice in Ven. Sāriputta’s good statements with regard to these 36 topics.¹ If a monk teaches the Dhamma for the sake of disenchantment, dispassion, & cessation with regard to aging-&-death, he deserves to be called a monk who is a speaker of Dhamma. If he practices for the sake of disenchantment, dispassion, & cessation with regard to aging-&-death, he deserves to be called a monk who practices the Dhamma in accordance with the Dhamma.² If—through disenchantment, dispassion, cessation, and lack of clinging/sustenance with regard to aging-&-death—he is released, then he deserves to be called a monk who has attained unbinding in the here & now.

“If a monk teaches the Dhamma for the sake of disenchantment, dispassion, & cessation with regard to birth, he deserves to be called a monk who is a speaker of Dhamma. If he practices for the sake of disenchantment, dispassion, & cessation with regard to birth, he deserves to be called a monk who practices the Dhamma in accordance with the Dhamma. If—through disenchantment, dispassion, cessation, and lack of clinging/sustenance with regard to birth—he is released, then he deserves to be called a monk who has attained unbinding in the here & now.

[Similarly with becoming, clinging/sustenance, craving, feeling, contact, the six sense media, name & form, and consciousness.]

“If a monk teaches the Dhamma for the sake of disenchantment, dispassion, & cessation with regard to fabrications, he deserves to be called a monk who is a speaker of Dhamma. If he practices for the sake of disenchantment, dispassion, & cessation with regard to fabrications, he deserves to be called a monk who practices the Dhamma in accordance with the Dhamma. If—through disenchantment, dispassion, cessation, and lack of clinging/sustenance with regard to fabrications—he is released, then he deserves to be called a monk who has attained unbinding in the here & now.

“If a monk teaches the Dhamma for the sake of disenchantment, dispassion, & cessation with regard to ignorance, he deserves to be called a monk who is a speaker of Dhamma. If he practices for the sake of disenchantment, dispassion, & cessation with regard to ignorance, he deserves to be called a monk who practices the Dhamma in accordance with the Dhamma. If—through disenchantment, dispassion, cessation, and lack of clinging/sustenance with regard to ignorance—he is released, then he deserves to be called a monk who has attained unbinding in the here & now.”

NOTES

1. The 36 topics are the three qualities—teaching, practice, and attainment—that Ven. Mahā Kottḥita is about to mention with regard to each factor in the twelve-factored formula for dependent co-arising.

2. DN 16 states that to practice of the Dhamma in accordance with the Dhamma is to pay true homage to the Buddha. For other descriptions of what is meant by “practicing the Dhamma in accordance with the Dhamma,” see [SN 22:39–42](#).

See also: DN 15; [SN 12:17–18](#); [SN 12:25](#); [SN 12:46](#); Iti 86

At Kosambī

Kosambī Sutta (SN 12:68)

On one occasion Ven. Musila, Ven. Pavitṭha, Ven. Nārada, and Ven. Ānanda were staying near Kosambī at Ghosita’s monastery.

Then Ven. Pavitṭha said to Ven. Musila, “Musila, my friend, putting aside conviction, putting aside preference, putting aside tradition, putting aside reasoning through analogies, putting aside an agreement through pondering views: Do you have truly personal knowledge that, ‘From birth as a requisite condition come aging-&-death?’”

“Yes, Pavitṭha my friend. Putting aside conviction... preference... tradition... reasoning through analogies... an agreement through pondering views, I do have truly personal knowledge that, ‘From birth as a requisite condition come aging-&-death.’”

[Similarly with ‘From becoming as a requisite condition comes birth’ ‘From clinging/sustenance as a requisite condition comes becoming’... ‘From craving as a requisite condition comes clinging/sustenance’... ‘From feeling as a requisite condition comes craving’... ‘From contact as a requisite condition comes feeling’... ‘From the six sense media as a requisite condition comes contact’... ‘From name-&-form as a requisite condition come the six sense media’... ‘From consciousness as a requisite condition comes name-&-form’... ‘From fabrications as a requisite condition comes consciousness.’]

“Musila, my friend, putting aside conviction, putting aside preference, putting aside tradition, putting aside reasoning through analogies, putting aside an agreement through pondering views: Do you

have truly personal knowledge that, ‘From ignorance as a requisite condition come fabrications?’”

“Yes, Pavitṭha my friend. Putting aside conviction... preference... tradition... reasoning through analogies... an agreement through pondering views, I do have truly personal knowledge that, ‘From ignorance as a requisite condition come fabrications.’”

“Musila, my friend, putting aside conviction, putting aside preference, putting aside tradition, putting aside reasoning through analogies, putting aside an agreement through pondering views: Do you have truly personal knowledge that, ‘From the cessation of birth comes the cessation of aging-&-death?’”

“Yes, Pavitṭha my friend. Putting aside conviction... preference... tradition... reasoning through analogies... an agreement through pondering views, I do have truly personal knowledge that, ‘From the cessation of birth comes the cessation of aging-&-death.’”

[Similarly with ‘From the cessation of becoming comes the cessation of birth’... ‘From the cessation of clinging/sustenance comes the cessation of becoming’... ‘From the cessation of craving comes the cessation of clinging/sustenance’... ‘From the cessation of feeling comes the cessation of craving’... ‘From the cessation of contact comes the cessation of feeling’... ‘From the cessation of the six sense media comes the cessation of contact’... ‘From the cessation of name-&-form comes the cessation of the six sense media’... ‘From the cessation of consciousness comes the cessation of name-&-form’... ‘From the cessation of fabrications comes the cessation of consciousness.’]

“Musila, my friend, putting aside conviction, putting aside preference, putting aside tradition, putting aside reasoning through analogies, putting aside an agreement through pondering views: Do you have truly personal knowledge that, ‘From the cessation of ignorance comes the cessation of fabrications?’”

“Yes, Pavitṭha my friend. Putting aside conviction... preference... tradition... reasoning through analogies... an agreement through pondering views, I do have truly personal knowledge that, ‘From the cessation of ignorance comes the cessation of fabrications.’”

“Musila, my friend, putting aside conviction, putting aside preference, putting aside tradition, putting aside reasoning through analogies, putting aside an agreement through pondering views: Do you have truly personal knowledge that, ‘The cessation of becoming is unbinding’?”

“Yes, Pavitt̥ha my friend. Putting aside conviction... preference... tradition... reasoning through analogies... an agreement through pondering views, I do have truly personal knowledge that, ‘The cessation of becoming is unbinding.’”

“Then, Ven. Musila, you are an arahant whose effluents are ended.”

When this was said, Ven. Musila was silent.¹

Then Ven. Nārada said, “Pavitt̥ha my friend, it would be good if I were to get that question. Ask me that question and I will answer it for you.”

“Then Ven. Nārada will get that question. I will ask Ven. Nārada that question, and may he answer that question for me.”

[Ven. Pavitt̥ha asks the same questions of Ven. Nārada, who gives the same answers as Ven. Musila.]

“Then, Ven. Nārada, you are an arahant whose effluents are ended.”

“My friend, although I have seen properly with right discernment, as it has come to be, that ‘The cessation of becoming is unbinding,’ still I am not an arahant whose effluents are ended.² It’s as if there were a well along a road in a desert, with neither rope nor water bucket. A man would come along overcome by heat, oppressed by the heat, exhausted, dehydrated, & thirsty. He would look into the well and would have knowledge of ‘water,’ but he would not dwell touching it with his body.³ In the same way, although I have seen properly with right discernment, as it has come to be, that ‘The cessation of becoming is unbinding,’ still I am not an arahant whose effluents are ended.”

When this was said, Ven. Ānanda said to Ven. Pavitt̥ha, “When he speaks in this way, friend Pavitt̥ha, what do you have to say about Ven. Nārada?”

“When Ven. Nārada speaks in this way, friend Ānanda, I have nothing to say about Ven. Nārada except that (he is) admirable & skillful.”

NOTES

1. According to the Commentary, Ven. Musila’s silence here is a sign of affirmation.

2. In other words, he has attained one of the preliminary levels of awakening (stream entry, once-returning, or non-returning), but not full arahantship. As Mv.I.23.5 shows, even the level of stream entry affords a vision of the deathless.

3. The image refers to two common similes for the full experience of unbinding: (a) it is refreshing & nourishing, like drinking water (see Dhp 205); and (b) some arahants experience it as if touching it with the body (see AN 9:45).

See also: [SN 22:89](#); [SN 48:44](#); [SN 55](#)

Rises

Upayanti Sutta (SN 12:69)

I have heard that on one occasion the Blessed One was staying near Sāvattthī in Jeta’s Grove, Anāthapiṇḍika’s monastery. There he addressed the monks, “Monks, the great ocean rising causes the large rivers to rise. The large rivers rising cause the little rivers to rise. The little rivers rising cause the large lakes to rise. The large lakes rising cause the little lakes to rise.

“In the same way, ignorance rising causes fabrications to rise. Fabrications rising cause consciousness to rise. Consciousness rising causes name-&-form to rise. Name-&-form rising causes the six sense media to rise. The six sense media rising cause contact to rise. Contact rising causes feeling to rise. Feeling rising causes craving to rise. Craving rising causes clinging to rise. Clinging rising causes becoming to rise. Becoming rising causes birth to rise. Birth rising causes aging-&-death to rise.

“Monks, the great ocean ebbing causes the large rivers to ebb. The large rivers ebbing cause the little rivers to ebb. The little rivers ebbing cause the large lakes to ebb. The large lakes ebbing cause the little lakes to ebb.

“In the same way, ignorance ebbing causes fabrications to ebb. Fabrications ebbing cause consciousness to ebb. Consciousness ebbing causes name-&-form to ebb. Name-&-form ebbing causes the six sense media to ebb. The six sense media ebbing cause contact to ebb. Contact ebbing causes feeling to ebb. Feeling ebbing causes craving to ebb. Craving ebbing causes clinging to ebb. Clinging ebbing causes becoming to ebb. Becoming ebbing causes birth to ebb. Birth ebbing causes aging-&-death to ebb.”

See also: [SN 12:23](#)

Susima Sutta

About Susima (SN 12:70)

This discourse is sometimes cited as proof that a meditator can attain awakening (final gnosis) without having practiced the jhānas, but a close reading shows that it does not support this assertion at all. The new arahants mentioned here do not deny that they have attained any of the four “form” jhānas that make up the definition of right concentration. Instead, they simply deny that they have acquired any psychic powers or that they remain in physical contact with the higher levels of concentration, “the formless states beyond forms.” In this, their definition of “release through discernment” is no different from that given in AN 9:44 (compare this with the definitions for “bodily witness” and “released in both ways” given in AN 9:43 and AN 9:45). Taken in the context of the Buddha’s many other teachings on right concentration (see in particular, AN 9:36), there’s every reason to believe that the new arahants mentioned in this discourse had reached at least the first jhāna before attaining awakening.

* * *

I have heard that on one occasion the Blessed One was staying near Rājagaha in the Bamboo Forest, the Squirrels' Sanctuary. Now at that time the Blessed One was worshipped, revered, honored, venerated, given homage—a recipient of robes, alms food, lodgings, & medical requisites for the sick. The Saṅgha of monks was also worshipped, revered, honored, venerated, given homage—a recipient of robes, alms food, lodgings, & medical requisites for the sick. But the wanderers of other sects were not worshipped, revered, honored, venerated, or given homage, nor were they recipients of robes, alms food, lodgings, or medical requisites for the sick.

Now at that time Susima the wanderer was living in Rājagaha with a large following of wanderers. And so Susima's following of wanderers said to him, "Come now, friend Susima. Go live the holy life under Gotama the contemplative. When you have completely mastered the Dhamma, tell it to us; when we have completely mastered it, we will teach it to householders and then we, too, will be worshipped, revered, honored, venerated, given homage; we too will become recipients of robes, alms food, lodgings, & medical requisites for the sick."

Responding, "As you say, friends," to his own following, Susima the wanderer went to Ven. Ānanda and, on arrival, exchanged courteous greetings with him. After an exchange of friendly greetings & courtesies, he sat to one side. As he was sitting there, he said to Ven. Ānanda, "Friend Ānanda, I want to live the holy life in this Dhamma & Vinaya."

Then Ven. Ānanda took Susima the wanderer to the Blessed One and, on arrival, having bowed down to the Blessed One, sat to one side. As he was sitting there he said to the Blessed One, "Lord, this wanderer, Susima, has said, 'Friend Ānanda, I want to live the holy life in this Dhamma & Vinaya.'"

"Then in that case, Ānanda, give him the Going Forth." So Susima the wanderer gained the Going Forth in the presence of the Blessed One, he gained the Acceptance (into the Saṅgha of monks).

Now at that time a large number of monks had declared final gnosis in the Blessed One's presence: "We discern that 'Birth is ended, the holy life fulfilled, the task done. There is nothing further for the sake of this world.'"

Ven. Susima heard that “A large number of monks, it seems, have declared final gnosis in the Blessed One’s presence: ‘We discern that “Birth is ended, the holy life fulfilled, the task done. There is nothing further for the sake of this world.”’” Then Ven. Susima went to those monks and, on arrival, exchanged courteous greetings with them. After an exchange of friendly greetings & courtesies, he sat to one side. As he was sitting there, he said to them, “Is it true, as they say, that you have declared final gnosis in the Blessed One’s presence: ‘We discern that “Birth is ended, the holy life fulfilled, the task done. There is nothing further for the sake of this world”’?”

“Yes, friend.”

“Then, having known thus, having seen thus, do you wield manifold supranormal powers? Having been one you become many; having been many you become one? You appear? You vanish? You go unimpeded through walls, ramparts, & mountains as if through space? You dive in & out of the earth as if it were water? You walk on water without sinking as if it were dry land? Sitting cross-legged you fly through the air like a winged bird? With your hand you touch and stroke even the sun & moon, so mighty & powerful? You exercise influence with your body even as far as the Brahmā worlds?”

“No, friend.”

“Then, having known thus, having seen thus, do you hear—by means of the divine ear-element, purified & surpassing the human—both kinds of sounds: divine & human, whether near or far?”

“No, friend.”

“Then, having known thus, having seen thus, do you know the awareness of other beings, other individuals, having encompassed it with your own awareness? Do you discern a mind with passion as a mind with passion, and a mind without passion as a mind without passion; a mind with aversion as a mind with aversion, and a mind without aversion as a mind without aversion; a mind with delusion as a mind with delusion, and a mind without delusion as a mind without delusion; a restricted mind as a restricted mind, and a scattered mind as a scattered mind; an enlarged mind as an enlarged mind, and an unenlarged mind as an unenlarged mind; an excelled mind [one that is not on the most

excellent level] as an excelled mind, and an unexcelled mind as an unexcelled mind; a concentrated mind as a concentrated mind, and an unconcentrated mind as an unconcentrated mind; a released mind as a released mind, and an unreleased mind as an unreleased mind?”

“No, friend.”

“Then, having known thus, having seen thus, do you recollect your manifold past lives [*lit*: previous homes], i.e., one birth, two births, three births, four, five, ten, twenty, thirty, forty, fifty, one hundred, one thousand, one hundred thousand births, many eons of cosmic contraction, many eons of cosmic expansion, many eons of cosmic contraction & expansion, (recollecting), ‘There I had such a name, belonged to such a clan, had such an appearance. Such was my food, such my experience of pleasure & pain, such the end of my life. Passing away from that state, I re-arose there. There too I had such a name, belonged to such a clan, had such an appearance. Such was my food, such my experience of pleasure & pain, such the end of my life. Passing away from that state, I re-arose here?’”

“No, friend.”

“Then, having known thus, having seen thus, do you see—by means of the divine eye, purified & surpassing the human—beings passing away and re-appearing, and do you discern how they are inferior & superior, beautiful & ugly, fortunate & unfortunate in accordance with their kamma: ‘These beings—who were endowed with bad conduct of body, speech, & mind, who reviled the noble ones, held wrong views and undertook actions under the influence of wrong views—with the break-up of the body, after death, have re-appeared in a plane of deprivation, a bad destination, a lower realm, hell. But these beings—who were endowed with good conduct of body, speech, & mind, who did not revile the noble ones, who held right views and undertook actions under the influence of right views—with the break-up of the body, after death, have re-appeared in a good destination, a heavenly world?’”

“No, friend.”

“Then, having known thus, having seen thus, do you dwell touching with your body the peaceful emancipations, the formless states beyond

form [the formless jhānas]?”

“No, friend.”

“So just now, friends, didn’t you make that declaration without having attained any of these Dhammas?”

“We’re released through discernment, friend Susima.”

“I don’t understand the detailed meaning of your brief statement. It would be good if you would speak in such a way that I would understand its detailed meaning.”

“Whether or not you understand, friend Susima, we are still released through discernment.”

So Ven. Susima got up from his seat and went to the Blessed One. On arrival, having bowed down to the Blessed One, he sat to one side. As he was sitting there, he told the Blessed One the entire conversation he had had with those monks.

(The Blessed One said:) “First, Susima, there is the knowledge of the regularity of the Dhamma [dependent co-arising], after which there is the knowledge of unbinding.”

“I don’t understand the detailed meaning of the Blessed One’s brief statement. It would be good if the Blessed One would speak in such a way that I would understand its detailed meaning.”

“Whether or not you understand, Susima, it is still the case that first there is the knowledge of the regularity of the Dhamma, after which there is the knowledge of unbinding.

“What do you think, Susima? Is form constant or inconstant?”—“Inconstant, lord.”—“And is that which is inconstant easeful or stressful?”—“Stressful, lord.”—“And is it fitting to regard what is inconstant, stressful, subject to change as: ‘This is mine. This is my self. This is what I am’?”

“No, lord.”

“... Is feeling constant or inconstant?”—“Inconstant, lord.” ...

“... Is perception constant or inconstant?”—“Inconstant, lord.” ...

“... Are fabrications constant or inconstant?”—“Inconstant, lord.” ...

“What do you think, Susima? Is consciousness constant or inconstant?”—“Inconstant, lord.”—“And is that which is inconstant easeful or stressful?”—“Stressful, lord.”—“And is it fitting to regard what is inconstant, stressful, subject to change as: ‘This is mine. This is my self. This is what I am?’”

“No, lord.”

“Thus, Susima, any form whatsoever that is past, future, or present; internal or external; blatant or subtle; common or sublime; far or near: Every¹ form is to be seen as it has come to be with right discernment as: ‘This is not mine. This is not my self. This is not what I am.’

“Any feeling whatsoever....

“Any perception whatsoever....

“Any fabrications whatsoever....

“Any consciousness whatsoever that is past, future, or present; internal or external; blatant or subtle, common or sublime, far or near: Every¹ consciousness is to be seen as it has come to be with right discernment as: ‘This is not mine. This is not my self. This is not what I am.’

“Seeing thus, the instructed disciple of the noble ones grows disenchanted with form, disenchanted with feeling, disenchanted with perception, disenchanted with fabrications, disenchanted with consciousness. Disenchanted, he becomes dispassionate. Through dispassion, he is released. With release, there is the knowledge, ‘Released.’ He discerns that ‘Birth is ended, the holy life fulfilled, the task done. There is nothing further for this world.’”

“Susima, do you see that from birth as a requisite condition there is aging-&-death?”

“Yes, lord.”

“Do you see that from becoming as a requisite condition there is birth?”

“Yes, lord.”

“Do you see that from clinging/sustenance as a requisite condition there is becoming?”

“Yes, lord.”

“Do you see that from craving as a requisite condition there is clinging/sustenance?”

“Yes, lord.”

“Do you see that from feeling as a requisite condition there is craving?”

“Yes, lord.”

“Do you see that from contact as a requisite condition there is feeling?”

“Yes, lord.”

“Do you see that from the six sense media as a requisite condition there is contact?”

“Yes, lord.”

“Do you see that from name-&-form as a requisite condition there are the six sense media?”

“Yes, lord.”

“Do you see that from consciousness as a requisite condition there is name-&-form?”

“Yes, lord.”

“Do you see that from fabrications as a requisite condition there is consciousness?”

“Yes, lord.”

“Do you see that from ignorance as a requisite condition there are fabrications?”

“Yes, lord.”

“Now, Susima, do you see that from the cessation of birth there is the cessation of aging-&-death?”

“Yes, lord.”

“Do you see that from the cessation of becoming there is the cessation of birth?”

“Yes, lord.”

“Do you see that from the cessation of clinging/sustenance there is the cessation of becoming?”

“Yes, lord.”

“Do you see that from the cessation of craving there is the cessation of clinging/sustenance?”

“Yes, lord.”

“Do you see that from the cessation of feeling there is the cessation of craving?”

“Yes, lord.”

“Do you see that from the cessation of contact there is the cessation of feeling?”

“Yes, lord.”

“Do you see that from the cessation of the six sense media there is the cessation of contact?”

“Yes, lord.”

“Do you see that from the cessation of name-&-form there is the cessation of the six sense media?”

“Yes, lord.”

“Do you see that from the cessation of consciousness there is the cessation of name-&-form?”

“Yes, lord.”

“Do you see that from the cessation of fabrications there is the cessation of consciousness?”

“Yes, lord.”

“Do you see that from the cessation of ignorance there is the cessation of fabrications?”

“Yes, lord.”

“Then, having known thus, having seen thus, Susima, do you wield manifold supranormal powers? Having been one you become many; having been many you become one? You appear? You vanish? You go unimpeded through walls, ramparts, & mountains as if through space? You dive in & out of the earth as if it were water? You walk on water without sinking as if it were dry land? Sitting cross-legged you fly

through the air like a winged bird? With your hand you touch and stroke even the sun & moon, so mighty & powerful? You exercise influence with your body even as far as the Brahmā worlds?”

“No, lord.”

“Then, having known thus, having seen thus, Susima, do you hear—by means of the divine ear-element, purified & surpassing the human—both kinds of sounds: divine & human, whether near or far?”

“No, lord.”

“Then, having known thus, having seen thus, Susima, do you know the awareness of other beings, other individuals, having encompassed it with your own awareness? Do you discern a mind with passion as a mind with passion, and a mind without passion as a mind without passion; a mind with aversion as a mind with aversion, and a mind without aversion as a mind without aversion; a mind with delusion as a mind with delusion, and a mind without delusion as a mind without delusion; a constricted mind as a constricted mind, and a scattered mind as a scattered mind; an enlarged mind as an enlarged mind, and an unenlarged mind as an unenlarged mind; an excelled mind [one that is not on the most excellent level] as an excelled mind, and an unexcelled mind as an unexcelled mind; a concentrated mind as a concentrated mind, and an unconcentrated mind as an unconcentrated mind; a released mind as a released mind, and an unreleased mind as an unreleased mind?”

“No, lord.”

“Then, having known thus, having seen thus, Susima, do you recollect your manifold past lives, i.e., one birth, two births, three births, four, five, ten, twenty, thirty, forty, fifty, one hundred, one thousand, one hundred thousand births, many eons of cosmic contraction, many eons of cosmic expansion, many eons of cosmic contraction & expansion, (recollecting), ‘There I had such a name, belonged to such a clan, had such an appearance. Such was my food, such my experience of pleasure & pain, such the end of my life. Passing away from that state, I re-arose there. There too I had such a name, belonged to such a clan, had such an appearance. Such was my food, such my experience of pleasure & pain, such the end of my life. Passing away from that state, I re-arose here?’”

“No, lord.”

“Then, having known thus, having seen thus, Susima, do you see—by means of the divine eye, purified & surpassing the human—beings passing away and re-appearing, and do you discern how they are inferior & superior, beautiful & ugly, fortunate & unfortunate in accordance with their kamma: ‘These beings—who were endowed with bad conduct of body, speech, & mind, who reviled the noble ones, held wrong views and undertook actions under the influence of wrong views—with the break-up of the body, after death, have re-appeared in a plane of deprivation, a bad destination, a lower realms, hell. But these beings—who were endowed with good conduct of body, speech, & mind, who did not revile the noble ones, who held right views and undertook actions under the influence of right views—with the break-up of the body, after death, have re-appeared in a good destination, a heavenly world?’”

“No, lord.”

“Then, having known thus, having seen thus, Susima, do you dwell touching with your body the peaceful emancipations, the formless states beyond form?”

“No, lord.”

“So just now, Susima, didn’t you make that declaration without having attained any of these Dhammas?”

Then, throwing himself down with his head at the Blessed One’s feet, Ven. Susima said to the Blessed One, “A transgression has overcome me, lord, in that I was so foolish, so muddle-headed, & so unskilled as to go forth as a thief of the Dhamma in this well-taught Dhamma & Vinaya! May the Blessed One please accept this confession of my transgression as such, so that I may restrain myself in the future.”

“Yes, Susima, a transgression overcame you in that you were so foolish, so muddle-headed, & so unskilled as to go forth as a thief of the Dhamma in this well-taught Dhamma & Vinaya. Suppose, Susima, that a robber, an evil-doer, having been caught, were shown to a king: ‘This, your majesty, is a robber, an evil-doer. Decree what punishment you want for him.’ And so the king would say, ‘Go and—having bound him

with a stout rope with his arms pinned tightly against his back, having shaved him bald—march him to a harsh-sounding drum from street to street, crossroads to crossroads; evict him out the south gate of the city and there, to the south of the city, cut off his head.’ Then the king’s men, having bound the man with a stout rope with his arms pinned tightly against his back, would march him from street to street, crossroads to crossroads, evict him out the south gate of the city and there, to the south of the city, cut off his head. What do you think, Susima? Wouldn’t that man, for that reason, experience pain & distress?”

“Yes, lord.”

“However much the pain & distress that man would experience for that reason, Susima, the Going Forth of a thief of the Dhamma in this well-taught Dhamma & Vinaya is still more painful in its result, more bitter in its result, in that it leads even to the lower realms. But because you see your transgression as such and make amends in accordance with the Dhamma, we accept your confession. For, Susima, it is a cause of growth in the discipline of the noble ones when, seeing a transgression as such, one makes amends in accordance with the Dhamma and exercises restraint in the future.”

NOTE

1. The word “every” here and in all parallel passages is *sabba*, which is the same as the word for “all.” On the range of meaning covered by the word “all,” see [SN 35:23](#). DN 11, DN 15, MN 49, and AN 10:81 indicate that there is a type of consciousness that lies outside the range of “all,” and so would not fall under the aggregate of consciousness. This apparently corresponds to the dimension mentioned in [SN 35:117](#) and Ud 8:1.

See also: [SN 35:204](#); AN 2:29–30; AN 4:94; AN 4:170; AN 10:71

The Tip of the Fingernail *Nakhasikhā Sutta (SN 13:1)*

I have heard that on one occasion the Blessed One was staying near Sāvattthī in Jeta’s Grove, Anāthapiṇḍika’s monastery. Then the Blessed One, picking up a little bit of dust with the tip of his fingernail, said to the monks, “What do you think, monks? Which is greater: the little bit of dust I have picked up with the tip of my fingernail, or the great earth?”

“The great earth is far greater, lord. The little bit of dust the Blessed One has picked up with the tip of his fingernail is next to nothing. It’s not a hundredth, a thousandth, a one hundred-thousandth—this little bit of dust the Blessed One has picked up with the tip of his fingernail—when compared with the great earth.”

“In the same way, monks, for a disciple of the noble ones who is consummate in view, an individual who has broken through (to stream-entry), the suffering & stress totally ended & extinguished is far greater. That which remains in the state of having at most seven remaining lifetimes is next to nothing: It’s not a hundredth, a thousandth, a one hundred-thousandth, when compared with the previous mass of suffering. That’s how great the benefit is of breaking through to the Dhamma, monks. That’s how great the benefit is of obtaining the Dhamma eye.”

See also: [SN 55](#); [SN 56:11](#)

The Pond

Pokkharani Sutta (SN 13:2)

Near Sāvattthī. “Suppose, monks, that there were a pond fifty leagues wide, fifty leagues long, & fifty leagues deep, filled to overflowing with water so that a crow could drink from it, and a man would draw some water out of it with the tip of a blade of grass. What do you think? Which would be greater: the water drawn out with the tip of the blade of grass or the water in the pond?”

“The water in the pond would be far greater, lord. The water drawn out with the tip of the blade of grass would be next to nothing. It

wouldn't be a hundredth, a thousandth, a one hundred-thousandth—the water drawn out with the tip of the blade of grass—when compared with the water in the pond.”

“In the same way, monks, for a disciple of the noble ones who is consummate in view, an individual who has broken through (to stream-entry), the suffering & stress totally ended & extinguished is far greater. That which remains in the state of having at most seven remaining lifetimes is next to nothing: It's not a hundredth, a thousandth, a one hundred-thousandth, when compared with the previous mass of suffering. That's how great the benefit is of breaking through to the Dhamma, monks. That's how great the benefit is of obtaining the Dhamma eye.”

The Ocean

Samudda Sutta (SN 13:8)

Near Sāvattthī. “Suppose, monks, that the great ocean were to go to extinction, to its total end, except for two or three drops of water. What do you think? Which would be greater: the water in the great ocean that had gone to extinction, to its total end, or the two or three remaining drops of water?”

“Lord, the water in the great ocean that had gone to extinction, to its total end, would be far greater. The two or three remaining drops of water would be next to nothing. They wouldn't be a hundredth, a thousandth, a one hundred-thousandth—the two or three remaining drops of water—when compared with the water in the great ocean that had gone to extinction, to its total end.”

“In the same way, monks, for a disciple of the noble ones who is consummate in view, an individual who has broken through (to stream-entry), the suffering & stress totally ended & extinguished is far greater. That which remains in the state of having at most seven remaining lifetimes is next to nothing: It's not a hundredth, a thousandth, a one hundred-thousandth, when compared with the previous mass of

suffering. That's how great the benefit is of breaking through to the Dhamma, monks. That's how great the benefit is of obtaining the Dhamma eye."

Seven Properties

Sattadhātu Sutta (SN 14:11)

Near Sāvatthī. "Monks, there are these seven properties. Which seven? The property of light, the property of beauty,¹ the property of the dimension of the infinitude of space, the property of the dimension of the infinitude of consciousness, the property of the dimension of nothingness, the property of the dimension of neither perception nor non-perception, the property of the cessation of feeling & perception. These are the seven properties."

When this was said, a certain monk addressed the Blessed One: "Lord, with regard to the property of light... the property of the cessation of feeling & perception: In dependence on what are these properties discerned?"

"Monk, the property of light is discerned in dependence on darkness. The property of beauty is discerned in dependence on the unattractive. The property of the dimension of the infinitude of space is discerned in dependence on form. The property of the dimension of the infinitude of consciousness is discerned in dependence on the dimension of the infinitude of space. The property of the dimension of nothingness is discerned in dependence on the dimension of the infinitude of consciousness. The property of the dimension of neither perception nor non-perception is discerned in dependence on the dimension of nothingness. The property of the cessation of feeling & perception is discerned in dependence on cessation."

"But, lord, with regard to the property of light... the property of the cessation of feeling & perception: How is the attainment of these properties to be reached?"

“Monk, the property of light, the property of beauty, the property of the dimension of the infinitude of space, the property of the dimension of the infinitude of consciousness, the property of the dimension of nothingness: These properties are to be reached as perception attainments.² The property of the dimension of neither perception nor non-perception is to be reached as a remnant-of-fabrications attainment. The property of the cessation of feeling & perception is to be reached as a cessation attainment.”³

NOTES

1. The property of beauty refers to a meditative attainment. Here it is described as a second stage in concentration practice that does not map clearly onto the four jhānas, although it may be roughly equivalent to the fourth jhāna. In DN 15 and MN 137 it is described as a third stage in concentration practice. In the words of DN 15: “Possessed of form, one sees forms. This is the first emancipation. Not percipient of form internally, one sees forms externally. This is the second emancipation. One is intent only on the beautiful. This is the third emancipation.” These two alternative maps of the stages of concentration may refer to the way concentration is experienced by meditators who follow visions of light and forms as their path to the formless attainments.

2. This means that these levels of concentration depend on holding a particular perception (mental label) in mind. On this point, see MN 121.

3. AN 9:36 comments on the stages beginning with the dimension of nothingness as follows: “Thus, as far as the perception-attainments go, that is as far as gnosis-penetration goes. As for these two dimensions — the attainment of the dimension of neither perception nor non-perception & the attainment of the cessation of feeling & perception — I tell you that they are to be rightly explained by those monks who are meditators, skilled in attaining, skilled in attaining & emerging, who have attained & emerged in dependence on them.”

Tears

Assu Sutta (SN 15:3)

Near Sāvattthī. There the Blessed One said: “From an inconceivable beginning comes the wandering-on. A beginning point is not discernible, though beings hindered by ignorance and fettered by craving are transmigrating & wandering on. What do you think, monks? Which is greater, the tears you have shed while transmigrating & wandering this long, long time—crying & weeping from being joined with what is displeasing, being separated from what is pleasing—or the water in the four great oceans?”

“As we understand the Dhamma taught to us by the Blessed One, this is the greater: the tears we have shed while transmigrating & wandering this long, long time—crying & weeping from being joined with what is displeasing, being separated from what is pleasing—not the water in the four great oceans.”

“Excellent, monks. Excellent. It is excellent that you thus understand the Dhamma taught by me.

“This is the greater: the tears you have shed while transmigrating & wandering this long, long time—crying & weeping from being joined with what is displeasing, being separated from what is pleasing—not the water in the four great oceans.

“Long have you (repeatedly) experienced the death of a mother. The tears you have shed over the death of a mother while transmigrating & wandering this long, long time—crying & weeping from being joined with what is displeasing, being separated from what is pleasing—are greater than the water in the four great oceans.

“Long have you (repeatedly) experienced the death of a father... the death of a brother... the death of a sister... the death of a son... the death of a daughter... loss with regard to relatives... loss with regard to wealth... loss with regard to disease. The tears you have shed over loss with regard to disease while transmigrating & wandering this long, long

time—crying & weeping from being joined with what is displeasing, being separated from what is pleasing—are greater than the water in the four great oceans.

“Why is that? From an inconceivable beginning comes the wandering-on. A beginning point is not discernible, though beings hindered by ignorance and fettered by craving are transmigrating & wandering on. Long have you thus experienced stress, experienced pain, experienced loss, swelling the cemeteries—enough to become disenchanted with all fabricated things, enough to become dispassionate, enough to be released.”

See also: [SN 56:35—36](#); AN 3:63; AN 10:61; Iti 24

A Mountain

Pabbata Sutta (SN 15:5)

Dwelling near Sāvattthī. Then a certain monk went to the Blessed One and, on arrival, having bowed down to him, sat to one side. As he was sitting there, the monk said to the Blessed One, “How long, lord, is an eon?”

“Long, monk, is an eon. It’s not easy to count as ‘so many years’ or ‘so many hundreds of years’ or ‘so many thousands of years’ or ‘so many hundreds of thousands of years.’”

“But is it possible to give an analogy, lord?”

“It is, monk,” said the Blessed One. “Suppose there were a great mountain of rock—a league long, a league wide, a league high, uncracked, uncavities, a single mass—and a man would come along once every hundred years and rub it once with a Kāsi cloth. More quickly would that great mountain of rock waste away and be consumed by that effort, but not the eon. That’s how long, monk, an eon is. And of eons of such length, not just one eon has been wandered-through, not just one hundred eons have been wandered-through, not just one thousand eons have been wandered-through, not just one hundred-thousand eons have been wandered-through.

“Why is that? From an inconceivable beginning comes the wandering-on. A beginning point is not discernible, though beings hindered by ignorance and fettered by craving are transmigrating & wandering on. Long have you thus experienced stress, experienced pain, experienced loss, swelling the cemeteries—enough to become disenchanted with all fabrications, enough to become dispassionate, enough to be released.”

See also: [SN 22:99](#); [SN 22:100](#); AN 4:156

Mustard Seed

Sāsapa Sutta (SN 15:6)

Dwelling near Sāvattthī. Then a certain monk went to the Blessed One and, on arrival, having bowed down to him, sat to one side. As he was sitting there, the monk said to the Blessed One, “How long, lord, is an eon?”

“Long, monk, is an eon. It’s not easy to count as ‘so many years’ or ‘so many hundreds of years’ or ‘so many thousands of years’ or ‘so many hundreds of thousands of years.’”

“But is it possible to give an analogy, lord?”

“It is, monk,” said the Blessed One. “Suppose there were an iron fortress—a league long, a league wide, a league high—full of mustard seeds packed tight, and a man would come along once every hundred years and take from it a single mustard seed. More quickly would that great heap of mustard seed waste away and be consumed by that effort, but not the eon. That’s how long, monk, an eon is. And of eons of such length, not just one eon has been wandered-through, not just one hundred eons have been wandered-through, not just one thousand eons have been wandered-through, not just one hundred-thousand eons have been wandered-through.

“Why is that? From an inconceivable beginning comes the wandering-on. A beginning point is not discernible, though beings hindered by ignorance and fettered by craving are transmigrating & wandering on. Long have you thus experienced stress, experienced pain, experienced

loss, swelling the cemeteries—enough to become disenchanted with all fabrications, enough to become dispassionate, enough to be released.”

See also: [SN 22:99](#); [SN 22:100](#); AN 4:156

The Ganges

Gangā Sutta (SN 15:8)

On one occasion the Blessed One was staying near Rājagaha, in the Bamboo Forest, the Squirrels’ Sanctuary. Then a certain brahman went to the Blessed One and, on arrival, exchanged courteous greetings with him. After an exchange of friendly greetings & courtesies, he sat to one side. As he was sitting there he said to the Blessed One, “How many eons, Master Gotama, have passed and gone by?”

“Many eons, brahman, have passed and gone by. They are not easy to count: ‘So many eons have passed and gone by’ or ‘So many hundreds of eons have passed and gone by’ or ‘So many thousands of eons have passed and gone by’ or ‘So many hundreds of thousands of eons have passed and gone by.’”

“But is it possible to give an analogy, Master Gotama?”

“It is, brahman,” the Blessed One said. “Just as, from where the River Ganges begins to where it goes to the ocean, the grains of sand in between are not easy to count as ‘so many grains of sand’ or ‘so many hundreds of grains of sand’ or ‘so many thousands of grains of sand’ or ‘so many hundreds of thousands of grains of sand.’ Even more than that are the eons that have passed and gone. They are not easy to count: ‘So many eons have passed and gone by’ or ‘So many hundreds of eons have passed and gone by’ or ‘So many thousands of eons have passed and gone by’ or ‘So many hundreds of thousands of eons have passed and gone by.’”

“Why is that? From an inconceivable beginning comes the wandering-on, brahman. A beginning point is not discernible, though beings hindered by ignorance and fettered by craving are transmigrating & wandering on. Long have you thus experienced stress, experienced pain,

experienced loss, swelling the cemeteries—enough to become disenchanted with all fabrications, enough to become dispassionate, enough to be released.”

When this was said, the brahman said to the Blessed One, “Magnificent, Master Gotama! Magnificent! Just as if he were to place upright what was overturned, to reveal what was hidden, to show the way to one who was lost, or to carry a lamp into the dark so that those with eyes could see forms, in the same way has Master Gotama—through many lines of reasoning—made the Dhamma clear. I go to Master Gotama for refuge, to the Dhamma, & to the Saṅgha of monks. May Master Gotama remember me as a lay follower who has gone for refuge from this day forward, for life.”

The Stick

Danda Sutta (SN 15:9)

Near Sāvattihī. There the Blessed One said: “From an inconceivable beginning comes the wandering-on. A beginning point is not discernible, though beings hindered by ignorance and fettered by craving are transmigrating & wandering on. Just as a stick thrown up in the air lands sometimes on its base, sometimes on its side, sometimes on its tip; in the same way, beings hindered by ignorance and fettered by craving, transmigrating & wandering on, sometimes go from this world to another world, sometimes come from another world to this.

“Why is that? From an inconceivable beginning comes the wandering-on. A beginning point is not discernible, though beings hindered by ignorance and fettered by craving are transmigrating & wandering on. Long have you thus experienced stress, experienced pain, experienced loss, swelling the cemeteries—enough to become disenchanted with all fabricated things, enough to become dispassionate, enough to be released.”

Fallen on Hard Times

Duggata Sutta (SN 15:11)

Near Sāvattthī. There the Blessed One said: “From an inconceivable beginning comes the wandering-on. A beginning point is not discernible, though beings hindered by ignorance and fettered by craving are transmigrating & wandering on. When you see someone who has fallen on hard times, overwhelmed with hard times, you should conclude: ‘We, too, have experienced just this sort of thing in the course of that long, long time.’

“Why is that? From an inconceivable beginning comes the wandering-on. A beginning point is not discernible, though beings hindered by ignorance and fettered by craving are transmigrating & wandering on. Long have you thus experienced stress, experienced pain, experienced loss, swelling the cemeteries—enough to become disenchanted with all fabricated things, enough to become dispassionate, enough to be released.”

Happy

Sukhita Sutta (SN 15:12)

Near Sāvattthī. There the Blessed One said: “From an inconceivable beginning comes the wandering-on. A beginning point is not discernible, though beings hindered by ignorance and fettered by craving are transmigrating & wandering on. When you see someone who is happy & well-provided in life, you should conclude: ‘We, too, have experienced just this sort of thing in the course of that long, long time.’

“Why is that? From an inconceivable beginning comes the wandering-on. A beginning point is not discernible, though beings hindered by ignorance and fettered by craving are transmigrating & wandering on.

Long have you thus experienced stress, experienced pain, experienced loss, swelling the cemeteries—enough to become disenchanted with all fabricated things, enough to become dispassionate, enough to be released.”

Thirty

Timsa Sutta (SN 15:13)

Now on that occasion the Blessed One was staying near Rājagaha, in the Bamboo Forest, the Squirrels’ Sanctuary. Then thirty monks from Pāva—all wilderness dwellers, all alms-goers, all cast-off rag wearers, all triple-robe wearers, all still with fetters, went to the Blessed One and, on arrival, having bowed down to him, sat to one side.

Then the thought occurred to the Blessed One, “These thirty monks from Pāva... are all still with fetters. What if I were to teach them the Dhamma in such a way that in this very sitting their minds, through lack of clinging, would be released from effluents?”

So he addressed the monks: “Monks.”

“Yes, lord,” the monks responded.

The Blessed One said, “From an inconceivable beginning comes the wandering-on. A beginning point is not discernible, though beings hindered by ignorance and fettered by craving are transmigrating & wandering on. What do you think, monks? Which is greater, the blood you have shed from having your heads cut off while transmigrating & wandering this long, long time, or the water in the four great oceans?”

“As we understand the Dhamma taught to us by the Blessed One, this is the greater: the blood we have shed from having our heads cut off while transmigrating & wandering this long, long time, not the water in the four great oceans.”

“Excellent, monks. Excellent. It is excellent that you thus understand the Dhamma taught by me.

“This is the greater: the blood you have shed from having your heads cut off while transmigrating & wandering this long, long time, not the

water in the four great oceans.

“The blood you have shed when, being cows, you had your cow-heads cut off: Long has this been greater than the water in the four great oceans.

“The blood you have shed when, being water buffaloes, you had your water buffalo-heads cut off... when, being rams, you had your ram-heads cut off... when, being goats, you had your goat-heads cut off... when, being deer, you had your deer-heads cut off... when, being chickens, you had your chicken-heads cut off... when, being pigs, you had your pig-heads cut off: Long has this been greater than the water in the four great oceans.

“The blood you have shed when, arrested as thieves plundering villages, you had your heads cut off... when, arrested as highway thieves, you had your heads cut off... when, arrested as adulterers, you had your heads cut off: Long has this been greater than the water in the four great oceans.

“Why is that? From an inconceivable beginning comes the wandering-on. A beginning point is not discernible, though beings hindered by ignorance and fettered by craving are transmigrating & wandering on. Long have you thus experienced stress, experienced pain, experienced loss, swelling the cemeteries—enough to become disenchanted with all fabrications, enough to become dispassionate, enough to be released.”

That is what the Blessed One said. Gratified, the monks delighted in the Blessed One’s words. And while this explanation was being given, the minds of the thirty monks from Pāva—through lack of clinging—were released from effluents.

Mother

Mātu Sutta (SN 15:14–19)

Near Sāvattihī. There the Blessed One said: “From an inconceivable beginning comes the wandering-on. A beginning point is not discernible, though beings hindered by ignorance and fettered by

craving are transmigrating & wandering on. A being who has not been your mother at one time in the past is not easy to find.... A being who has not been your father.... your brother.... your sister.... your son.... your daughter at one time in the past is not easy to find.

“Why is that? From an inconceivable beginning comes the wandering-on. A beginning point is not discernible, though beings hindered by ignorance and fettered by craving are transmigrating & wandering on. Long have you thus experienced stress, experienced pain, experienced loss, swelling the cemeteries—enough to become disenchanted with all fabricated things, enough to become dispassionate, enough to be released.”

Without Compunction

Anottāpī Sutta (SN 16:2)

I have heard that on one occasion Ven. Mahā Kassapa and Ven. Sāriputta were staying near Vārāṇasī in the Deer Park at Isipatana. Then Ven. Sāriputta, emerging from his seclusion in the evening, went to Ven. Mahā Kassapa and, on arrival, exchanged courteous greetings with him. After an exchange of friendly greetings & courtesies, he sat to one side. As he was sitting there, he said to Ven. Mahā Kassapa, “It is said, friend Kassapa, that a person without ardency, without compunction,¹ is incapable of self-awakening, incapable of unbinding, incapable of attaining the unexcelled security from bondage. Now, how is a person without ardency, without compunction, incapable of self-awakening, incapable of unbinding, incapable of attaining the unexcelled security from bondage? And how is a person ardent & compunctious capable of self-awakening, capable of unbinding, capable of attaining the unexcelled security from bondage?”

Ven. Mahā Kassapa: “There is the case, friend, where a monk, (thinking,) ‘Unarisen evil, unskillful qualities arising in me would lead to what is unbeneficial,’ arouses no ardency. (Thinking,) ‘Arisen evil, unskillful qualities not being abandoned in me...’ ... ‘Unarisen skillful

qualities not arising in me ...’ ... ‘Arisen skillful qualities ceasing in me would lead to what is unbeneficial,’ he arouses no ardency. This is how one is without ardency.

“And how is one a person without compunction? There is the case where a monk, (thinking,) ‘Unarisen evil, unskillful qualities arising in me would lead to what is unbeneficial,’ feels no compunction.

(Thinking,) ‘Arisen evil, unskillful qualities not being abandoned in me...’ ... ‘Unarisen skillful qualities not arising in me ...’ ... ‘Arisen skillful qualities ceasing in me would lead to what is unbeneficial,’ he feels no compunction. This is how one is without compunction.

“This is how a person without ardency, without compunction, is incapable of self-awakening, incapable of unbinding, incapable of attaining the unexcelled security from bondage.

“And how is one ardent? There is the case where a monk, (thinking,) ‘Unarisen evil, unskillful qualities arising in me would lead to what is unbeneficial,’ arouses ardency. (Thinking,) ‘Arisen evil, unskillful qualities not being abandoned in me...’ ... ‘Unarisen skillful qualities not arising in me ...’ ... ‘Arisen skillful qualities ceasing in me would lead to what is unbeneficial,’ he arouses ardency. This is how one is ardent.

“And how is one compunctious? There is the case where a monk, (thinking,) ‘Unarisen evil, unskillful qualities arising in me would lead to what is unbeneficial,’ feels compunction. (Thinking,) ‘Arisen evil, unskillful qualities not being abandoned in me...’ ... ‘Unarisen skillful qualities not arising in me ...’ ... ‘Arisen skillful qualities ceasing in me would lead to what is unbeneficial,’ he feels compunction. This is how one is compunctious.

“This is how a person ardent & compunctious is capable of self-awakening, capable of unbinding, capable of attaining the unexcelled security from bondage.”

NOTE

1. There is alliteration in the Pali here: “Without ardency” is *anātāpī*; “without compunction,” *anottāpī*. Ven. Sāriputta is apparently referring here to the teaching in Iti 34:

A person without ardency, without compunction, is incapable of self-awakening, incapable of unbinding, incapable of attaining the unexcelled security from bondage. A person ardent & compunctious is capable of self-awakening, capable of unbinding, capable of attaining the unexcelled security from bondage.

Without ardency, without compunction,
lazy, with low persistence,
full of sloth & drowsiness,
shameless, without respect:
He's incapable, a monk like this,
of touching superlative self-awakening.
But whoever is mindful, masterful,
absorbed in jhāna,
ardent, compunctious, & heedful,
cutting the fetter of birth & aging,
touches right here & now
a self-awakening unsurpassed.

Old

Jinṇa Sutta (SN 16:5)

I have heard that on one occasion the Blessed One was staying near Rājagaha in the Bamboo Forest, the Squirrels' Sanctuary. Then Ven. Mahā Kassapa went to the Blessed One and, on arrival, having bowed down to him, sat to one side. As he was sitting there the Blessed One said to him, "You are now old, Kassapa. Your robes made of cast-off hemp rags are heavy for you. So wear robes donated by householders, eat invitational meals, and live close by me."

"Lord, for a long time I have lived in the wilderness and have extolled living in the wilderness. I have been an almsgoer and have extolled being an almsgoer. I have worn cast off rags and have extolled wearing cast off rags. I have worn only one set of the triple robe and have extolled wearing only one set of the triple robe. I have been modest and have

extolled being modest. I have been content and have extolled being content. I have been reclusive and have extolled being reclusive. I have been unentangled and have extolled being unentangled. I have kept my persistence aroused and have extolled having persistence aroused.”

“But, Kassapa, what compelling reason do you see that you for a long time have lived in the wilderness and have extolled living in the wilderness... that you have kept your persistence aroused and have extolled having persistence aroused?”

“Lord, I see two compelling reasons that for a long time I have lived in the wilderness and have extolled living in the wilderness... that I have kept my persistence aroused and have extolled having persistence aroused: seeing a pleasant abiding for myself in the here & now, and feeling sympathy for later generations: ‘Perhaps later generations will take it as an example: “It seems that the disciples of the Awakened One and those who awakened after him lived for a long time in the wilderness and extolled living in the wilderness; were almsgoers and extolled being almsgoers; wore cast off rags and extolled wearing cast off rags; wore only one set of the triple robe and extolled wearing only one set of the triple robe; were modest and extolled being modest; were content and extolled being content; were reclusive and extolled being reclusive; were unentangled and extolled being unentangled; kept their persistence aroused and extolled having persistence aroused.”’”

“Good, Kassapa. Very good. It seems that you are one who practices for the benefit & happiness of many, out of sympathy for the world, for the welfare, benefit, & happiness of devas & human beings. So continue wearing your robes of cast off hemp cloth, go for alms, and live in the wilderness.”

See also: AN 5:77–80; Thag 18

A Counterfeit of the True Dhamma *Saddhammapaṭirūpaka Sutta (SN 16:13)*

On one occasion the Blessed One was staying near Sāvattthī in Jeta's Grove, Anāthapiṇḍika's monastery. Then Ven. Mahā Kassapa went to the Blessed One and on arrival, having bowed down to him, sat to one side. As he was sitting there he said to the Blessed One, "What is the cause, lord, what is the reason, why before there were fewer training rules and yet more monks established in final gnosis, whereas now there are more training rules and yet fewer monks established in final gnosis?"

"That's the way it is, Kassapa. When beings are degenerating and the true Dhamma is disappearing, there are more training rules and yet fewer monks established in final gnosis. There is no disappearance of the true Dhamma as long as a counterfeit of the true Dhamma has not arisen in the world, but there is the disappearance of the true Dhamma when a counterfeit of the true Dhamma has arisen in the world. Just as there is no disappearance of gold as long as a counterfeit of gold has not arisen in the world, but there is the disappearance of gold when a counterfeit of gold has arisen in the world, in the same way there is no disappearance of the true Dhamma as long as a counterfeit of the true Dhamma has not arisen in the world, but there is the disappearance of the true Dhamma when a counterfeit of the true Dhamma has arisen in the world.¹

"It's not the earth property that makes the true Dhamma disappear. It's not the water property... the fire property... the wind property that makes the true Dhamma disappear.² It's worthless people who arise right here [within the Saṅgha] who make the true Dhamma disappear. The true Dhamma doesn't disappear the way a ship sinks all at once.

"These five downward-leading qualities tend to the confusion and disappearance of the true Dhamma. Which five? There is the case where the monks, nuns, male lay followers, & female lay followers live without respect, without deference, for the Teacher. They live without respect, without deference, for the Dhamma... for the Saṅgha... for the training... for concentration. These are the five downward-leading qualities that tend to the confusion and disappearance of the true Dhamma.

"But these five qualities tend to the stability, the non-confusion, the non-disappearance of the true Dhamma. Which five? There is the case

where the monks, nuns, male lay followers, & female lay followers live with respect, with deference, for the Teacher. They live with respect, with deference, for the Dhamma... for the Saṅgha... for the training... for concentration. These are the five qualities that tend to the stability, the non-confusion, the non-disappearance of the true Dhamma.”

NOTES

1. Gold, of course, does not go out of existence simply because there is counterfeit gold. What happens is that it goes out of use: People find that counterfeit gold is easier to use. An added implication of this statement may be that as long as there is only genuine gold, people will not doubt its authenticity. When there is both genuine and counterfeit gold, doubts will arise as to what is genuine—all gold becomes doubtful—and people will end up using whichever is easier or more to their liking.

2. The point here is that the true Dhamma will not disappear through natural disasters, such as landslides, floods, fires, or windstorms. For an account of how people in the time of the Buddha understood natural events in terms of the four properties, see MN 28.

See also: [SN 20:7](#); AN 1:140–141; AN 5:79–80; AN 7:21; AN 7:31–34; AN 7:56; AN 8:51

The Turtle

Kumma Sutta (SN 17:3)

Staying near Sāvatthī. “Monks, gains, offerings, & fame are a cruel thing, a harsh, bitter obstacle to the attainment of the unexcelled rest from bondage.

“Once, monks, a large family of turtles had lived for a long time in a certain freshwater lake. Then one turtle said to another, ‘My dear turtle, don’t go to that area.’ But the turtle went to that area, and because of that a hunter lanced him with a harpoon. So he went back to the first turtle. The first turtle saw him coming from afar, and on seeing him said to him, ‘I hope, dear turtle, that you didn’t go to area.’

“‘I went to that area, dear turtle.’

“‘Then I hope you haven’t been wounded or hurt.’

“‘I haven’t been wounded or hurt, but there’s this cord that keeps dragging behind me.’

“‘Yes, dear turtle, you’re wounded, you’re hurt. It was because of that cord that your father & grandfather fell into misfortune & disaster. Now go, dear turtle. You are no longer one of us.’

“The hunter, monks, stands for Māra, the Evil One. The harpoon stands for gains, offerings, & fame. The cord stands for delight & passion. Any monk who relishes & revels in gains, offerings, & fame that have arisen is called a monk lanced by the harpoon, who has fallen into misfortune & disaster. The Evil One can do with him as he will. That’s how cruel gains, offerings, & fame are: a harsh, bitter obstacle to the attainment of the unexcelled rest from bondage.

“So you should train yourselves: ‘We will put aside any gains, offerings, & fame that have arisen; and we will not let any gains, offerings, & fame that have arisen keep our minds consumed.’ That’s how you should train yourselves.”

See also: AN 8:7

The Dung Beetle

Kāmsalakā Sutta (SN 17:5)

Staying near Sāvatthī. “Monks, gains, offerings, & fame are a cruel thing, a harsh, bitter obstacle to the attainment of the unexcelled rest from bondage. Suppose there were a beetle, a dung-eater, full of dung, gorged with dung, with a huge pile of dung in front of him. He, because of that, would look down on other beetles: ‘Yes, sirree! I am a dung-eater, full of dung, gorged with dung, with a huge pile of dung in front of me!’ In the same way, there is the case where a certain monk—conquered by gains, offerings, & fame, his mind consumed—adjusts his lower robe and, taking his bowl & outer robe, goes into a village or town for alms.

Having eaten there as much as he likes—full of almsfood & invited again for the next day—he goes to the monastery and, in the midst of a group of monks, boasts, ‘I have eaten as much as I like, I am full of almsfood & have been invited again for tomorrow. I am a recipient of robes, almsfood, lodgings, & medicinal requisites for curing illness. These other monks, though, have next to no merit, next to no influence. They aren’t recipients of robes, almsfood, lodgings, & medicinal requisites for curing illness.’ Conquered by gains, offerings, & fame, his mind consumed, he looks down on other well-behaved monks. That will be for this worthless man’s long-term suffering & harm. That’s how cruel gains, offerings, & fame are: a harsh, bitter obstacle to the attainment of the unexcelled rest from bondage.

“So you should train yourselves: ‘We will put aside any gains, offerings, & fame that have arisen; and we will not let any gains, offerings, & fame that have arisen keep our minds consumed.’ That’s how you should train yourselves.”

See also: Iti 81; Sn 4:14; Thag 18; Thig 5:6

The Jackal

Sigala Sutta (SN 17:8)

Staying near Sāvatthī. “Monks, gains, offerings, & fame are a cruel thing, a harsh, bitter obstacle to the attainment of the unexcelled rest from bondage.

“Have you heard the old jackal howling in the last hours of the night?”

“Yes, lord.”

“That old jackal is suffering from mange. He finds no pleasure whether he goes to a den, to the foot of a tree, or to the open air. Wherever he goes, wherever he stands, wherever he sits, wherever he lies down, he is sunk in misery.

“In the same way there is the case where a certain monk is conquered by gains, offerings, & fame, his mind consumed. He finds no pleasure whether he goes to an empty dwelling, to the foot of a tree, or to the open air. Wherever he goes, wherever he stands, wherever he sits, wherever he lies down, he is sunk in misery. That’s how cruel gains, offerings, & fame are: a harsh, bitter obstacle to the attainment of the unexcelled rest from bondage.

“Thus you should train yourselves: ‘We will put aside any gains, offerings, & fame that have arisen; and we will not let any gains, offerings, & fame that have arisen keep our minds consumed.’ That’s how you should train yourselves.”

The Tip of the Fingernail *Nakhasikhā Sutta (SN 20:2)*

Staying near Sāvattthī. Then the Blessed One, picking up a little bit of dust with the tip of his fingernail, said to the monks, “What do you think, monks? Which is greater: the little bit of dust I have picked up with the tip of my fingernail, or the great earth?”

“The great earth is far greater, lord. The little bit of dust the Blessed One has picked up with the tip of his fingernail is next to nothing. It doesn’t even count. It’s no comparison. It’s not even a fraction, this little bit of dust the Blessed One has picked up with the tip of his fingernail, when compared with the great earth.

“In the same way, monks, few are the beings reborn among human beings. Far more are those reborn elsewhere. Thus you should train yourselves: ‘We will live heedfully.’ That’s how you should train yourselves.”

See also: [*SN 56:102–113*](#); *Dhp* 174

Serving Dishes

Okkhā Sutta (SN 20:4)

Staying near Sāvatthī. “Monks, if someone were to give a gift of one hundred serving dishes (of food) in the morning, one hundred at mid-day, and one hundred in the evening; and another person were to develop a mind of good-will—even for the time it takes to pull on a cow’s udder—in the morning, again at mid-day, and again in the evening, this [the second action] would be more fruitful than that (the first).

“Thus you should train yourselves: ‘Our awareness-release through good-will will be cultivated, developed, pursued, given a means of transport, given a grounding, steadied, consolidated, & well-undertaken. That’s how you should train yourselves.”

See also: MN 21; AN 2:30; AN 3:65; AN 3:101; AN 8:70; AN 11:16; Iti 27

The Spear

Satti Sutta (SN 20:5)

Staying near Sāvatthī. “Monks, suppose there were a sharp-bladed spear, and a man were to come along saying, ‘With my hand or fist I will bend back this sharp-bladed spear, fold it in two, and roll it up.’ What do you think? Would that man be able with his hand or fist to bend back that sharp-bladed spear, fold it in two, and roll it up?”

“No, lord. Why is that? Because a sharp-bladed spear isn’t easy to bend back, fold in two, or roll up. The man would simply reap his share of trouble & vexation.”

“In the same way, monks, when a monk’s awareness-release through good-will is cultivated, developed, pursued, given a means of transport, given a grounding, steadied, consolidated, & well-undertaken, any non-

human being who would think of deranging that monk's mind would simply reap his share of trouble & vexation.

“Thus you should train yourselves: ‘Our awareness-release through good-will will be cultivated, developed, pursued, given a means of transport, given a grounding, steadied, consolidated, & well-undertaken. That’s how you should train yourselves.”

See also: MN 21; AN 3:66; AN 3:101; AN 11:16; Iti 22; Iti 27

The Archer

Dhanuggaha Sutta (SN 20:6)

Staying near Sāvattthī. “Monks, suppose there were four strong archers—well-trained, practiced, & drilled—standing in the four directions, and a man were to come along saying, ‘I will catch & bring down the arrows let fly by these four strong archers—well-trained, practiced, & drilled—before they have fallen to the ground? What do you think? Would that be enough to call him a swift man, endowed with the foremost speed?’”

“Even if he were to catch & bring down the arrows let fly by one archer—well-trained, practiced, & drilled—before they fell to the ground, lord, that would be enough to call him a swift man, endowed with the foremost speed, to say nothing of four such archers.”

“Faster than the speed of that man, monks, is the speed of the sun & moon. Faster than the speed of that man, faster than the speed of the sun & moon, is the speed of the devas who rush ahead of the sun & moon. Faster than the speed of that man, faster than the speed of the sun & moon, faster than the speed of the devas who rush ahead of the sun & moon, the force of one’s life span comes to an end. Thus you should train yourselves: ‘We will live heedfully.’ That’s how you should train yourselves.”

See also: [SN 2:19](#); AN 4:113; AN 5:78; AN 6:19–20; AN 7:70; AN 10:15; Iti 23; Sn 4:6

The Peg

Āṇi Sutta (SN 20:7)

Staying near Sāvatthī. “Monks, there once was a time when the Dasārahas had a large drum called ‘Summoner.’ Whenever Summoner was split, the Dasārahas inserted another peg in it, until the time came when Summoner’s original wooden body had disappeared and only a conglomeration of pegs remained. [The Commentary notes that the drum originally could be heard for twelve leagues, but in its final condition couldn’t be heard even from behind a curtain.]

“In the same way, in the course of the future there will be monks who won’t listen when discourses that are words of the Tathāgata—deep, deep in their meaning, transcendent, connected with emptiness—are being recited. They won’t lend ear, won’t set their hearts on knowing them, won’t regard these teachings as worth grasping or mastering. But they will listen when discourses that are literary works—the works of poets, elegant in sound, elegant in rhetoric, the work of outsiders, words of disciples—are recited. They will lend ear and set their hearts on knowing them. They will regard these teachings as worth grasping & mastering.

“In this way the disappearance of the discourses that are words of the Tathāgata—deep, deep in their meaning, transcendent, connected with emptiness—will come about.

“Thus you should train yourselves: ‘We will listen when discourses that are words of the Tathāgata—deep, deep in their meaning, transcendent, connected with emptiness—are being recited. We will lend ear, will set our hearts on knowing them, will regard these teachings as worth grasping & mastering.’ That’s how you should train yourselves.”

See also: AN 5:79

Kolita

Kolita Sutta (SN 21:1)

I have heard that on one occasion the Blessed One was staying near Sāvattthī in Jeta’s Grove, Anāthapiṇḍika’s monastery. There Ven. Mahā Moggallāna addressed the monks, “Friend monks!”

“Yes, friend,” the monks responded to him.

Ven. Mahā Moggallāna said, “Friends, once as I was withdrawn in seclusion, this train of thought arose to my awareness, “Noble silence, noble silence,” it is said. But what is noble silence?’ Then the thought occurred to me, ‘There is the case where a monk, with the stilling of directed thoughts & evaluations,¹ enters & remains in the second jhāna: rapture & pleasure born of concentration, unification of awareness free from directed thought & evaluation—internal assurance. This is called noble silence.’ So, with the stilling of directed thoughts & evaluations, I entered & remained in the second jhāna: rapture & pleasure born of concentration, unification of awareness free from directed thought & evaluation—internal assurance. While I remained in that (mental) dwelling, I was assailed by attention to perceptions dealing with directed thought.²

“Then the Blessed One, coming to me through his (psychic) power, said, ‘Moggallāna. Moggallāna. Brahman, don’t be heedless of noble silence. Establish your mind in noble silence. Make your mind unified in noble silence. Concentrate your mind in noble silence.’ So at a later time, with the stilling of directed thoughts & evaluations, I entered & remained in the second jhāna: rapture & pleasure born of concentration, unification of awareness free from directed thought & evaluation—internal assurance.

“When one, speaking rightly, would say of someone, ‘A disciple attained to greatness of direct knowledge through the assistance of the Teacher,’ it’s of me that one speaking rightly would say, ‘A disciple

attained to greatness of direct knowledge through the assistance of the Teacher.”

NOTES

1. According to MN 44, directed thought and evaluation constitute verbal fabrication, which is why the second jhāna—the level of concentration in which these fabrications are stilled—is called noble silence.

2. AN 9:34 states that, for a person in the second jhāna, any attention to perceptions dealing with directed thought are an affliction.

About Upatissa (Sāriputta) *Upatissa Sutta (SN 21:2)*

Near Sāvattthī. There Ven. Sāriputta addressed the monks: “Friends!”
“Yes, friend,” the monks responded.

Ven. Sāriputta said, “Friends, just now as I was withdrawn in seclusion, this train of thought arose to my awareness: ‘Is there anything in the world with whose change or alteration there would arise within me sorrow, lamentation, pain, distress, & despair?’ Then the thought occurred to me: ‘There is nothing in the world with whose change or alteration there would arise within me sorrow, lamentation, pain, distress, & despair.’”

When this was said, Ven. Ānanda said to Ven. Sāriputta, “Sāriputta my friend, even if there were change & alteration in the Teacher would there arise within you no sorrow, lamentation, pain, distress, or despair?”

“Even if there were change & alteration in the Teacher, my friend, there would arise within me no sorrow, lamentation, pain, distress, or despair. Still, I would have this thought: ‘What a great being, of great might, of great prowess, has disappeared! For if the Blessed One were to remain for a long time, that would be for the benefit of many people, for the happiness of many people, out of sympathy for the world; for the welfare, benefit, & happiness of human & divine beings.’”

“Surely,” (said Ven. Ānanda,) “it’s because Ven. Sāriputta’s I-making & mine-making and obsession with conceit have long been well uprooted that even if there were change & alteration in the Teacher, there would arise within him no sorrow, lamentation, pain, distress, or despair.”

See also: DN 16; [SN 47:13](#); AN 5:49

The Barrel

Ghaṭa Sutta (SN 21:3)

I have heard that on one occasion the Blessed One was staying near Sāvattthī in Jeta’s Grove, Anāthapiṇḍika’s monastery. And on that occasion Ven. Sāriputta & Ven. Mahā Moggallāna were staying near Rājagaha in a single dwelling in the Squirrels’ Sanctuary. Then Ven. Sāriputta, arising from his seclusion in the late afternoon, went to Ven. Mahā Moggallāna. On arrival, he exchanged courteous greetings with him. After an exchange of friendly greetings & courtesies, he sat to one side. As he was sitting there, he said to Ven. Mahā Moggallāna, “Bright are your faculties, friend Moggallāna; pure your complexion, and clear.¹ Could it be that Ven. Mahā Moggallāna has spent today in a peaceful abiding?”

“It was in a gross abiding, my friend, that I spent today. But I had some Dhamma talk.”

“With whom did Ven. Moggallāna have some Dhamma talk?”

“With the Blessed One, my friend.”

“But far away is the Blessed One now, in Jeta’s Grove, Anāthapiṇḍika’s monastery. Did Ven. Mahā Moggallāna go to the Blessed One through psychic power, or did the Blessed One come to Ven. Mahā Moggallāna through psychic power?”

“I didn’t go to the Blessed One through psychic power, my friend, nor did the Blessed One come to me through psychic power. Simply that the Blessed One purified his divine eye & divine ear as far as me, and I purified my divine eye & divine ear as far as the Blessed One.”

“And what kind of Dhamma talk did Ven. Mahā Moggallāna have with the Blessed One?”

“Just now, my friend, I said to the Blessed One, ‘One of aroused persistence, one of aroused persistence,’ it is said, lord. To what extent is a person one of aroused persistence?’ When this was said, the Blessed One said, ‘There is the case, Moggallāna, where a monk, (thinking,) “Gladly would I let the flesh & blood in my body dry up, leaving just the skin, tendons, & bones, but if I have not attained what can be reached through manly firmness, manly persistence, manly striving, there will be no relaxing my persistence”: That is how one is a person of aroused persistence.’ That is the Dhamma talk I had with the Blessed One, my friend.”

“Friend, like a few small pieces of gravel placed next to the Himalayas, the king of mountains, are we when placed next to Ven. Mahā Moggallāna, for Ven. Mahā Moggallāna is of such great power, great might, that if he wished he could live for an eon.”²

“Friend, like a few small grains of salt placed next to a large salt barrel are we when placed next to Ven. Sāriputta, for in many ways has Ven. Sāriputta been lauded, praised, & extolled by the Blessed One:

‘As for Sāriputta:

Any monk who has gone beyond,
at best can only equal him
in discernment, virtue, & calm.”³

In this way did each of these two great beings [*nāga*] approve of what was well-stated and well-expressed by the other.

NOTES

1. This is what Ven. Mahā Moggallāna said to Ven. Sāriputta when both were still wanderers, and Ven. Sāriputta had just attained the deathless after hearing Ven. Assaji’s verses. See Mv I.23.5.

2. One of the powers that can be gained through developing the bases of power. See DN 16 and [SN 51:14](#).

3. In MN 143, this verse is spoken by Anāthapiṇḍika after having died and become a deva. The Buddha then reports it—apparently with his

approval—to the monks.

See also: MN 70; [SN 52:9](#); Ud 4:4

Bhaddiya

Bhaddiya Sutta (SN 21:6)

I have heard that on one occasion the Blessed One was staying near Sāvattthī in Jeta’s Grove, Anāthapiṇḍika’s monastery. And on that occasion Ven. Bhaddiya the Dwarf, following behind a large number of monks, was going to the Blessed One. From afar, the Blessed One saw Ven. Bhaddiya the Dwarf coming, following behind a large number of monks: ugly, unsightly, stunted, treated with condescension¹ by most of the monks. On seeing him, the Blessed One addressed the monks, “Monks, do you see that monk coming from afar, following behind a large number of monks: ugly, unsightly, stunted, treated with condescension by most of the monks?”

“Yes, lord.”

“That, monks, is a monk of great power, great might. The attainment already attained by that monk is not of a sort easily attained. And by means of it he has entered & remains in the supreme goal of the holy life for which clansmen rightly go forth from home into homelessness, directly knowing & realizing it for himself right in the here & now.”

That is what the Blessed One said. Having said that, the One Well-Gone, the Teacher, said further:

Swans, cranes, & peacocks,
elephants & spotted antelope
all fear the lion
(though) in body there’s no comparison.
In the same way, among human beings,
even if one is small
but endowed in discernment,
one is great for that—

not the fool endowed in physique.²

NOTES

1. The Commentary notes that misbehaving monks liked to stroke his hands and catch hold of his ears.

Ud 7:5 contains the same story, but with a different verse.

See also: Ud 7:1, Ud 7:2, Ud 7:5; Thag 6:9

Tissa

Tissa Sutta (SN 21:9)

I have heard that on one occasion the Blessed One was staying near Sāvattthī in Jeta’s Grove, Anāthapiṇḍika’s monastery. Then Ven. Tissa, the Blessed One’s paternal cousin, went to the Blessed One and, having bowed down to him, sat to one side—miserable, unhappy, shedding tears. So the Blessed One said to him, “Tissa, why are you sitting to one side—miserable, unhappy, shedding tears?”

“Because, lord, monks on all sides attack me with piercing words.”

“But that, Tissa, is because you’re one who admonishes but can’t stand being admonished. It’s not proper for you—a clansman who has gone forth through conviction from the home life into homelessness—that you’re one who admonishes but can’t stand being admonished. This is what’s proper for you—a clansman who has gone forth through conviction from the home life into homelessness: that you be one who admonishes and can stand being admonished.”

That is what the Blessed One said. Having said that, the One Well-Gone, the Teacher, said further:

Why are you angry? Don’t be angry.
Non-anger, Tissa, is best for you.
It’s for the sake of subduing
anger, conceit, & contempt, Tissa,
that the holy life is lived.

See also: [SN 22:84](#); AN 5:75; AN 5:76; AN 5:139; Dhṛp 76; Sg 12

(A Monk) by the Name of Elder (On Solitude) *Theranāma Sutta (SN 21:10)*

On one occasion the Blessed One was staying near Rājagaha in the Bamboo Forest, the squirrels' sanctuary. Now at that time a certain monk by the name of Elder [Thera] was one who lived alone and extolled the virtues of living alone. Alone he entered the village for alms, alone he returned, alone he sat withdrawn (in meditation), alone he did walking meditation.

Then a large number of monks went to the Blessed One and, on arrival, having bowed down to him, sat to one side. As they were sitting there, they informed him: "Lord, there is a certain monk by the name of Elder who lives alone and extols the virtues of living alone."

Then the Blessed One told a certain monk, "Come, monk. In my name, call the monk named Elder, saying, 'The Teacher calls you, my friend.'"

"As you say, lord," the monk answered and, having gone to Ven. Elder, on arrival he said, "The Teacher calls you, my friend."

"As you say, my friend," Ven. Elder replied. Then he went to the Blessed One and, on arrival, having bowed down to him, sat to one side. As he was sitting there, the Blessed One said to him, "Is it true, Elder, that you live alone and extol the virtues of living alone?"

"Yes, lord."

"But how do you live alone and extol the virtues of living alone?"

"Lord, alone I enter the village for alms, alone I return, alone I sit withdrawn (in meditation), alone I do walking meditation. That is how I live alone and extol the virtues of living alone."

"There is that way of living alone, Elder. I don't say that there isn't. Still, listen well to how your living alone is perfected in its details, and pay close attention. I will speak."

“As you say, lord,” Ven. Elder responded.

The Blessed One said: “And how is living alone perfected in its details? There is the case where whatever is past is abandoned, whatever is future is relinquished, and any passion & desire with regard to states of being attained in the present is well subdued.¹ That is how living alone is perfected in its details.”

That is what the Blessed One said. Having said it, the One Well-Gone further said this:

“All-conquering,
all-knowing, intelligent;
with regard to all things,
 unadhering;
all-abandoning,
released in the ending of craving:
Him I call
a man who lives
 alone.”

NOTE

1. Iti 15 states that as long as one has craving as a companion, one keeps wandering on.

See also: [SN 22:3](#); [SN 35:63](#); *Dhp* 353; *Iti* 38; *Sn* 1:3

To Nakulapitar
Nakulapitar Sutta (SN 22:1)

I have heard that on one occasion the Blessed One was staying among the Bhaggas at Crocodile Haunt in the Bhesakaḷā Forest at the Deer Park. Then the householder Nakulapitar [Nakula's father] went to the Blessed One and on arrival, having bowed down to him, sat to one side. As he was sitting there he said to the Blessed One, "Lord, I am a feeble old man, aged, advanced in years, having come to the last stage of life. I am afflicted in body & ailing with every moment. And it's only rarely that I get to see the Blessed One & the monks who nourish the heart. May the Blessed One teach me, may the Blessed One instruct me, for my long-term benefit & happiness."

"So it is, householder. So it is. The body is afflicted, weak, & encumbered. For who, looking after this body, would claim even a moment of true health, except through sheer foolishness? So you should train yourself: 'Even though I may be afflicted in body, my mind will be unafflicted.' That is how you should train yourself."

Then the householder Nakulapitar, delighting in & approving of the Blessed One's words, rose from his seat and—bowing down to the Blessed One and circumambulating him, keeping him to his right—went to Ven. Sāriputta and on arrival, having bowed down to him, sat to one side. As he was sitting there, Ven. Sāriputta said to him, "Your faculties are clear & calm, householder, your complexion pure. Have you had the opportunity of listening to a Dhamma talk in the presence of the Blessed One today?"

"How could it be otherwise, venerable sir? I have just now been sprinkled by the Blessed One with the deathless ambrosia of a Dhamma talk."

“And how were you sprinkled by the Blessed One with the deathless ambrosia of a Dhamma talk?”

“Just now I went to the Blessed One and on arrival, having bowed down to him, sat to one side. As I was sitting there I said to him, ‘Lord, I am a feeble old man, aged, advanced in years, having come to the last stage of life. I am afflicted in body & ailing with every moment. And it is only rarely that I get to see the Blessed One & the monks who nourish the heart. May the Blessed One teach me, may the Blessed One instruct me, for my long-term benefit & happiness.’

“When this was said, the Blessed One said to me, ‘So it is, householder. So it is. The body is afflicted, weak, & encumbered. For who, looking after this body, would claim even a moment of true health, except through sheer foolishness? So you should train yourself: “Even though I may be afflicted in body, my mind will be unafflicted.” That is how you should train yourself. That’s how I was sprinkled by the Blessed One with the deathless ambrosia of a Dhamma talk.”

“But why didn’t it occur to you to question the Blessed One further: ‘In what way is one afflicted in body & afflicted in mind? And in what way is one afflicted in body but unafflicted in mind?’

“I would come from a long way away to hear the explication of these words in Ven. Sāriputta’s presence. It would be good if Ven. Sāriputta himself would enlighten me as to their meaning.”

“Then in that case, householder, listen & pay close attention. I will speak.”

“As you say, venerable sir,” the householder Nakulapitar responded to him.

Ven. Sāriputta said: “Now, how is one afflicted in body & afflicted in mind?

“There is the case where an uninstructed, run-of-the-mill person—who has no regard for noble ones, is not well-versed or disciplined in their Dhamma; who has no regard for people of integrity, is not well-versed or disciplined in their Dhamma—assumes form to be the self, or the self as possessing form, or form as in the self, or the self as in form. He is seized with the idea that ‘I am form’ or ‘Form is mine.’ As he is

seized with these ideas, that form changes & alters. From the change & alteration in his form, there arise in him sorrow, lamentation, pain, distress, & despair.

“He assumes feeling to be the self, or the self as possessing feeling, or feeling as in the self, or the self as in feeling. He is seized with the idea that ‘I am feeling’ or ‘Feeling is mine.’ As he is seized with these ideas, that feeling changes & alters. From the change & alteration in the feeling, there arise in him sorrow, lamentation, pain, distress, & despair.

“He assumes perception to be the self, or the self as possessing perception, or perception as in the self, or the self as in perception. He is seized with the idea that ‘I am perception’ or ‘Perception is mine.’ As he is seized with these ideas, that perception changes & alters. From the change & alteration in the perception, there arise in him sorrow, lamentation, pain, distress, & despair.

“He assumes fabrications to be the self, or the self as possessing fabrications, or fabrications as in the self, or the self as in fabrications. He is seized with the idea that ‘I am fabrications’ or ‘Fabrications are mine.’ As he is seized with these ideas, those fabrications change & alter. From the change & alteration in the fabrications, there arise in him sorrow, lamentation, pain, distress, & despair.

“He assumes consciousness to be the self, or the self as possessing consciousness, or consciousness as in the self, or the self as in consciousness. He is seized with the idea that ‘I am consciousness’ or ‘Consciousness is mine.’ As he is seized with these ideas, that consciousness changes & alters. From the change & alteration in the consciousness, there arise in him sorrow, lamentation, pain, distress, & despair.

“This, householder, is how one is afflicted in body and afflicted in mind.

“And how is one afflicted in body but unafflicted in mind? There is the case where a well-instructed disciple of the noble ones—who has regard for noble ones, is well-versed & disciplined in their Dhamma; who has regard for people of integrity, is well-versed & disciplined in their Dhamma—doesn’t assume form to be the self, or the self as possessing form, or form as in the self, or the self as in form. He is not

seized with the idea that ‘I am form’ or ‘Form is mine.’ As he is not seized with these ideas, that form changes & alters. From the change & alteration in the form, there do not arise in him sorrow, lamentation, pain, distress, & despair.

“He doesn’t assume feeling to be the self....

“He doesn’t assume perception to be the self....

“He doesn’t assume fabrications to be the self....

“He doesn’t assume consciousness to be the self, or the self as possessing consciousness, or consciousness as in the self, or the self as in consciousness. He is not seized with the idea that ‘I am consciousness’ or ‘Consciousness is mine.’ As he is not seized with these ideas, that consciousness changes & alters. From the change & alteration in the consciousness, there do not arise in him sorrow, lamentation, pain, distress, & despair.

“This, householder, is how one is afflicted in body but unafflicted in mind.”

That is what Ven. Sāriputta said. Gratified, the householder Nakulapitar delighted in Ven. Sāriputta’s words.

See also: MN 75; MN 109; [SN 36:6](#); Sn 5:16; Thig 5:8

At Devadaha

Devadaha Sutta (SN 22:2)

I have heard that on one occasion the Blessed One was staying among the Sakyans at a Sakyan town named Devadaha. Then a large number of monks headed for outlying districts went to the Blessed One and on arrival, having bowed down to him, sat to one side. As they were sitting there they said to the Blessed One, “Lord, we want to go to the countryside of the outlying districts and to take up residence there.”

“Have you informed Sāriputta?”

“No, lord, we haven’t informed Ven. Sāriputta.”

“Inform Sāriputta, monks. Sāriputta is wise, a great help to the monks who are his companions in the holy life.”

“As you say, lord,” the monks responded to the Blessed One.

At that time Ven. Sāriputta was sitting under a certain cassia tree not far from the Blessed One. Then the monks, delighting in & approving of the Blessed One’s words, rose from their seats and—bowing down to the Blessed One and circumambulating him, keeping him to their right—went to Ven. Sāriputta. On arrival, they exchanged courteous greetings with him. After an exchange of friendly greetings & courtesies, they sat to one side. As they were sitting there, they said to Ven. Sāriputta, “Friend Sāriputta, we want to go to the countryside of the outlying districts and to take up residence there. We have already informed the Teacher.”

“Friends, in foreign lands there are wise nobles & brahmans, householders & contemplatives—for the people there are wise & discriminating—who will question a monk: ‘What is your teacher’s doctrine? What does he teach?’ Have you listened well to the teachings—grasped them well, attended to them well, considered them well, penetrated them well by means of discernment—so that in answering you will speak in line with what the Blessed One has said, will not misrepresent the Blessed One with what is unfactual, will answer in line with the Dhamma, and no one whose thinking is in line with the Dhamma will have grounds for criticizing you?”

“We would come from a long way away to hear the explication of these words in Ven. Sāriputta’s presence. It would be good if Ven. Sāriputta himself would enlighten us as to their meaning.”

“Then in that case, friends, listen & pay close attention. I will speak.”

“As you say, friend,” the monks responded to him.

Ven. Sāriputta said: “Friends, in foreign lands there are wise nobles & brahmans, householders & contemplatives—for the people there are wise & discriminating—who will question a monk: ‘What is your teacher’s doctrine? What does he teach?’

“Thus asked, you should answer, ‘Our teacher teaches the subduing of passion & desire.’

“Having thus been answered, there may be wise nobles & brahmins, householders & contemplatives... who will question you further, ‘And your teacher teaches the subduing of passion & desire for what?’

“Thus asked, you should answer, ‘Our teacher teaches the subduing of passion & desire for form... for feeling... for perception... for fabrications. Our teacher teaches the subduing of passion & desire for consciousness.’

“Having thus been answered, there may be wise nobles & brahmins, householders & contemplatives... who will question you further, ‘And seeing what danger does your teacher teach the subduing of passion & desire for form... for feeling... for perception... for fabrications. Seeing what danger does your teacher teach the subduing of passion & desire for consciousness?’

“Thus asked, you should answer, ‘When one is not free from passion, desire, love, thirst, fever, & craving for form, then from any change & alteration in that form, there arises sorrow, lamentation, pain, grief, & despair. When one is not free from passion... for feeling... for perception... for fabrications... When one is not free from passion, desire, love, thirst, fever, & craving for consciousness, then from any change & alteration in that consciousness, there arise sorrow, lamentation, pain, grief, & despair. Seeing this danger, our teacher teaches the subduing of passion & desire for form... for feeling... for perception... for fabrications. Seeing this danger our teacher teaches the subduing of passion & desire for consciousness.’

“Having thus been answered, there may be wise nobles & brahmins, householders & contemplatives... who will question you further, ‘And seeing what benefit does your teacher teach the subduing of passion & desire for form... for feeling... for perception... for fabrications. Seeing what benefit does your teacher teach the subduing of passion & desire for consciousness?’

“Thus asked, you should answer, ‘When one is free from passion, desire, love, thirst, fever, & craving for form, then with any change & alteration in that form, there does not arise any sorrow, lamentation, pain, grief, or despair. When one is free from passion... for feeling... for perception... for fabrications... When one is free from passion, desire,

love, thirst, fever, & craving for consciousness, then with any change & alteration in that consciousness, there does not arise any sorrow, lamentation, pain, grief, or despair. Seeing this benefit, our teacher teaches the subduing of passion & desire for form... for feeling... for perception... for fabrications. Seeing this benefit our teacher teaches the subduing of passion & desire for consciousness.

“Friends, if one who entered & remained in unskillful mental qualities were to have a pleasant abiding in the here & now—unthreatened, undespairing, unfeverish—and on the break-up of the body, after death, could expect a good destination, then the Blessed One would not advocate the abandoning of unskillful mental qualities. But because one who enters & remains in unskillful mental qualities has a stressful abiding in the here & now—threatened, despairing, & feverish—and on the break-up of the body, after death, can expect a bad destination, that is why the Blessed One advocates the abandoning of unskillful mental qualities.

“If one who entered & remained in skillful mental qualities were to have a stressful abiding in the here & now—threatened, despairing, & feverish—and on the break-up of the body, after death, could expect a bad destination, then the Blessed One would not advocate entering into skillful mental qualities. But because one who enters & remains in skillful mental qualities has a pleasant abiding in the here & now—unthreatened, undespairing, unfeverish—and on the break-up of the body, after death, can expect a good destination, that is why the Blessed One advocates entering into skillful mental qualities.”

That is what Ven. Sāriputta said. Gratified, the monks delighted in Ven. Sāriputta’s words.

See also: DN 9; AN 2:19

To Haliddikāni

Haliddikāni Sutta (SN 22:3)

I have heard that on one occasion Ven. Mahā Kaccāna was staying in Avanti at Osprey’s Haunt, on Sheer-face Peak. Then Haliddikāni the householder went to him and, on arrival, having bowed down to him, sat to one side. As he was sitting there he said to Ven. Mahā Kaccāna: “Venerable sir, this was said by the Blessed One in Māgaṇḍiya’s Questions in the Aṭṭhaka Vagga:

‘Having abandoned home,
living free from society,
the sage
in villages
creates no intimacies.
Rid of sensuality, not
preferring,
he wouldn’t engage with people
in quarrelsome debate.’

“How is the detailed meaning of this, the Blessed One’s brief statement, to be understood?”

[Ven. Mahā Kaccāna:] “The property of form, householder, is the home of consciousness. When consciousness is in bondage through passion to the property of form, it is said to be living at home. The property of feeling... perception... fabrication is the home of consciousness. When consciousness is in bondage through passion to the property of fabrication, it is said to be dwelling at home.

“And how does one not live at home? Any desire, passion, delight, craving, any attachments, clingings, fixations of awareness, biases, or obsessions with regard to the property of form: These the Tathāgata has abandoned, their root destroyed, made like a palmyra stump, deprived of the conditions of development, not destined for future arising. Therefore the Tathāgata is said to be not dwelling at home.

“Any desire, passion, delight, craving, any attachments, clingings, fixations of awareness, biases or obsessions with regard to the property of feeling... perception... fabrication...

“Any desire, passion, delight, craving, any attachments, clingings, fixations of awareness, biases or obsessions with regard to the property of

consciousness: These the Tathāgata has abandoned, their root destroyed, made like a palmyra stump, deprived of the conditions of development, not destined for future arising. Therefore the Tathāgata is said to be not dwelling at home.

“And how does one live with society? One who is in bondage to the distraction of the society of form-impressions is said to be living in society. One who is in bondage to the distraction of the society of sound-impressions... aroma-impressions... flavor-impressions... tactile-sensation-impressions... idea-impressions is said to be living in society. This is how one lives with society.

“And how does one live free from society? The Tathāgata has abandoned bondage to the distraction of the society of form-impressions, its root destroyed, made like a palmyra stump, deprived of the conditions of development, not destined for future arising. Therefore the Tathāgata is said to be living free from society.

“The Tathāgata has abandoned bondage to the distraction of the society of sound-impressions... aroma-impressions... flavor-impressions... tactile-sensation-impressions... idea-impressions, its root destroyed, made like a palmyra stump, deprived of the conditions of development, not destined for future arising. Therefore the Tathāgata is said to be living free from society.

“And how is one intimate in villages? There is the case where a certain person lives entangled with householders. Delighting together with them, sorrowing together with them, happy when they are happy, pained when they are pained, he takes on any of their arisen business affairs as his own duty. This is how one is intimate in villages.

“And how is one not intimate in villages? There is the case where a monk lives unentangled with householders. Not delighting together with them, not sorrowing together with them, not happy when they are happy, not pained when they are pained, he does not take on any of their arisen business affairs as his own duty. This is how one is not intimate in villages.

“And how is one not rid of sensuality? There is the case where a certain person is not free of passion for sensuality, not free of desire, not

free of love, not free of thirst, not free of fever, not free of craving for sensuality. This is how one is not rid of sensuality.

“And how is one rid of sensuality? There is the case where a certain person is free of passion for sensuality, free of desire, free of love, free of thirst, free of fever, free of craving for sensuality. This is how one is rid of sensuality.

“And how does one have preferences? There is the case where a certain person thinks, ‘May form be like this in the future. May feeling.... May perception.... May fabrication.... May consciousness be like this in the future.’ This is how one has preferences.

“And how is one free from preferences? There is the case where a certain person does not think, ‘May form be like this in the future. May feeling.... May perception.... May fabrication.... May consciousness be like this in the future.’ This is how one is free from preferences.

“And how does one engage with people in quarrelsome debate? There is the case where a certain person is a fomenter of this kind of debate: ‘*You* understand this doctrine & discipline? *I’m* the one who understands this doctrine & discipline. How could you understand this doctrine & discipline? You’re practicing wrongly. I’m practicing rightly. What should be said first you said last. What should be said last you said first. I’m being consistent. You’re not. What you took so long to think out has been refuted. Your doctrine has been overthrown. You’re defeated. Go and try to salvage your doctrine, or extricate yourself if you can!’ This is how one engages with people in quarrelsome debate.

“And how does one not engage with people in quarrelsome debate? There is the case where a certain person is not a fomenter of this kind of debate: ‘*You* understand this doctrine & discipline? *I’m* the one who understands this doctrine & discipline. How could you understand this doctrine & discipline? You’re practicing wrongly. I’m practicing rightly. What should be said first you said last. What should be said last you said first. I’m being consistent. You’re not. What you took so long to think out has been refuted. Your doctrine has been overthrown. You’re defeated. Go and try to salvage your doctrine, or extricate yourself if you can!’ This is how one does not engage with people in quarrelsome debate.

“So, householder, what was said by the Blessed One in Māgaṇḍiya’s Questions in the Aṭṭhaka Vagga:

‘Having abandoned home,
living free from society,
the sage
in villages
creates no intimacies.
Rid of sensuality, not
preferring,
he wouldn’t engage with people
in quarrelsome debate.’

“This is how the detailed meaning of this, the Blessed One’s brief statement, is to be understood.”

See also: MN 131; [SN 21:10](#); [SN 35:63](#); AN 3:68; AN 8:30; Iti 80

Concentration

Samādhī Sutta (SN 22:5)

I have heard that on one occasion the Blessed One was staying near Sāvattṥī in Jeta’s Grove, Anāthapiṇḍika’s monastery. There he addressed the monks: “Monks!”

“Yes, lord,” the monks responded to him.

The Blessed One said: “Develop concentration, monks. A concentrated monk discerns in line with what has come into being. And what does he discern in line with what has come into being? The origination¹ & disappearance of form. The origination & disappearance of feeling... perception... fabrications. The origination & disappearance of consciousness.

“And what is the origination of form... feeling... perception... fabrications? What is the origination of consciousness?

“There is the case where one enjoys, welcomes, & remains fastened. And what does one enjoy & welcome, to what does one remain fastened? One enjoys, welcomes, & remains fastened to form. As one enjoys, welcomes, & remains fastened to form, there arises delight. Any delight in form is clinging. From clinging/sustenance as a requisite condition comes becoming. From becoming as a requisite condition comes birth. From birth as a requisite condition, then aging & death, sorrow, lamentation, pain, distress, & despair come into play. Such is the origination of this entire mass of stress & suffering.

“One enjoys, welcomes, & remains fastened to feeling... perception... fabrications...

“One enjoys, welcomes, & remains fastened to consciousness. As one enjoys, welcomes, & remains fastened to consciousness, there arises delight. Any delight in consciousness is clinging. From clinging/sustenance as a requisite condition comes becoming. From becoming as a requisite condition comes birth. From birth as a requisite condition, then aging & death, sorrow, lamentation, pain, distress, & despair come into play. Such is the origination of this entire mass of stress & suffering.

“This, monks, is the origination of form. This, the origination of feeling... perception... fabrications. This, the origination of consciousness.”

“And what is the disappearance of form... feeling... perception... fabrications? What is the disappearance of consciousness?”

“There is the case where one doesn’t enjoy, welcome, or remain fastened. And what does one not enjoy or welcome, to what does one not remain fastened? One doesn’t enjoy, welcome, or remain fastened to form. As one doesn’t enjoy, welcome, or remain fastened to form, any delight in form ceases. From the cessation of delight comes the cessation of clinging. From the cessation of clinging/sustenance, the cessation of becoming. From the cessation of becoming, the cessation of birth. From the cessation of birth, then aging & death, sorrow, lamentation, pain, distress, & despair all cease. Such is the cessation of this entire mass of stress & suffering.

“One doesn’t enjoy, welcome, or remain fastened to feeling... perception... fabrications...

“One doesn’t enjoy, welcome, or remain fastened to consciousness. As one doesn’t enjoy, welcome, or remain fastened to consciousness, any delight in consciousness ceases. From the cessation of delight comes the cessation of clinging. From the cessation of clinging/sustenance, the cessation of becoming. From the cessation of becoming, the cessation of birth. From the cessation of birth, then aging & death, sorrow, lamentation, pain, distress, & despair all cease. Such is the cessation of this entire mass of stress & suffering.

“This, monks, is the disappearance of form. This, the disappearance of feeling... perception... fabrications. This, the disappearance of consciousness.”

NOTE

1. As the following discussion shows, “origination” means, not the simple arising of phenomena, but the cause of their arising. This point has important implications for the establishing of mindfulness. See DN 22. For an alternative description of the origination of the aggregates, see [SN 22:56–57](#) and [SN 22:131–132](#).

See also: MN 14; MN 28; [SN 12:2](#); [SN 12:15](#); [SN 12:61](#); [SN 35:99](#); [SN 47:42](#)

The Burden

Bhāra Sutta (SN 22:22)

Near Sāvattthī. “Monks, I will teach you the burden, the carrier of the burden, the taking up of the burden, and the casting off of the burden.¹ Listen & pay close attention. I will speak.”

“As you say, lord,” the monks responded to him.

The Blessed One said, “And which is the burden? ‘The five clinging-aggregates,’ it should be said. Which five? The form clinging-aggregate, the feeling clinging-aggregate, the perception clinging-aggregate, the

fabrications clinging-aggregate, the consciousness clinging-aggregate: This, monks, is called the burden.

“And which is the carrier of the burden? ‘The person,’ it should be said. This venerable one with such a name, such a clan-name: This is called the carrier of the burden.

“And which is the taking up of the burden? The craving that makes for further becoming—accompanied by passion & delight, relishing now here & now there—i.e., craving for sensuality, craving for becoming, craving for non-becoming: This is called the taking up of the burden.

“And which is the casting off of the burden? The remainderless fading & cessation, renunciation, relinquishment, release, & letting go of that very craving: This is called the casting off of the burden.”

That is what the Blessed One said. Having said that, the One Well-Gone, the Teacher, said further:

A burden indeed
are the five aggregates,
and the carrier of the burden
is the person.
Taking up the burden in the world
is stressful.
Casting off the burden
is bliss.
Having cast off the heavy burden
and not taking on another,
pulling up craving,
along with its root,
one is free from hunger,
totally unbound.

NOTE

1. This discourse parallels the teaching on the four noble truths, but with a twist. The “burden” is defined in the same terms as the first noble truth, the truth of suffering & stress. The taking on of the burden is defined in the

same terms as the second noble truth, the origination of stress; and the casting off of the burden, in the same terms as the third noble truth, the cessation of stress. The fourth factor, however—the carrier of the burden—has no parallel in the four noble truths, and has proven to be one of the most controversial terms in the history of Buddhist philosophy. When defining this factor as the person (or individual, *puggala*), the Buddha drops the abstract form of the other factors, and uses the ordinary, everyday language of narrative: the person with such-and-such a name. And how would this person translate into more abstract factors? He doesn't say. After his passing away, however, Buddhist scholastics attempted to provide an answer for him, and divided into two major camps over the issue. One camp refused to rank the concept of person as a truth on the ultimate level. This group inspired what eventually became the classic Theravada position on this issue: that the "person" was simply a conventional designation for the five aggregates. However, the other camp—who developed into the Pudgalavādin (Personalist) school—said that the person was neither a ultimate truth nor a mere conventional designation, neither identical with nor totally separate from the five aggregates. This special meaning of person, they said, was required to account for three things: the cohesion of a person's identity in this lifetime (one person's memories, for instance, cannot become another person's memories); the unitary nature of rebirth (one person cannot be reborn in several places at once); and the fact that, with the cessation of the khandhas at the death of an arahant, he/she is said to attain the Further Shore. However, after that moment, they said, nothing further could be said about the person, for that was as far as the concept's descriptive powers could go.

As might be imagined, the first group accused the second group of denying the concept of anattā, or not-self; whereas the second group accused the first of being unable to account for the truths that they said their concept of person explained. Both groups, however, found that their positions entangled them in philosophical difficulties that have never been successfully resolved.

Perhaps the most useful lesson to draw from the history of this controversy is the one that accords with the Buddha's statements in MN 72, where he refuses to get involved in questions of whether a person has a live essence separate from or identical to his/her body, or of whether after death

there is something of an arahant that exists or not. In other words, the questions aren't worth asking. Nothing is accomplished by assuming or denying an ultimate reality behind what we think of as a person. Instead, the strategy of the practice is to comprehend the burden that we each are carrying and to throw it off. As [SN 22:36](#) points out, when one stops trying to define oneself in any way, one is free from all limitations, and that settles all questions.

Comprehension

Pariñña Sutta (SN 22:23)

Near Sāvatthī. “Monks, I will teach you the phenomena to be comprehended, as well as comprehension. Listen & pay close attention. I will speak.”

“As you say, lord,” the monks responded to him.

The Blessed One said, “And which are the phenomena to be comprehended? Form is a phenomenon to be comprehended. Feeling... Perception... Fabrications... Consciousness is a phenomenon to be comprehended. These are called phenomena to be comprehended.

“And which is comprehension? Any ending of passion, ending of aversion, ending of delusion:¹ This is called comprehension.”

NOTE

1. Comprehension here means the arahant's full-knowing (see MN 117). As [SN 56:11](#) shows, the first noble truth of suffering and stress is to be comprehended. As [SN 56:30](#) further implies, when the first noble truth has been comprehended, the tasks with regard to all the other noble truths have been completed as well.

See also: MN 149; [SN 22:122](#); [SN 38:14](#); [SN 47:38](#)

The Monk

Bhikkhu Sutta (SN 22:36)

Some people have said that the Buddha's teachings on the aggregates constitute his analysis of what we truly are; and that because the aggregates are impermanent and interdependent, we have an impermanent, interdependent self. This sutta, however, shows that we can be analyzed into the aggregates only if we feel obsession or attachment for them. If we don't feel these things, there's no way we can be measured, classified, or defined.

* * *

Near Sāvattthī. Then a certain monk went to the Blessed One and, on arrival, having bowed down to him, sat to one side. As he was sitting there, he said to the Blessed One: “It would be good, venerable sir, if the Blessed One would teach me the Dhamma in brief such that, having heard the Dhamma from the Blessed One, I might dwell alone, secluded, heedful, ardent, & resolute.”

“Monk, whatever one stays obsessed with,¹ that's what one is measured by. Whatever one is measured by, that's how one is classified. Whatever one doesn't stay obsessed with, that's not what one is measured by. Whatever one isn't measured by, that's not how one is classified.”

“I understand, O Blessed One! I understand, O One Well-Gone!”

“And how, monk, do you understand the detailed meaning of what I have said in brief?”

“If one stays obsessed with form, lord, that's what one is measured by. Whatever one is measured by, that's how one is classified.

“If one stays obsessed with feeling....

“If one stays obsessed with perception....

“If one stays obsessed with fabrications....

“If one stays obsessed with consciousness, that’s what one is measured by. Whatever one is measured by, that’s how one is classified.²

“But if one doesn’t stay obsessed with form, lord, that’s not what one is measured by. Whatever one isn’t measured by, that’s not how one is classified.

“If one doesn’t stay obsessed with feeling....

“If one doesn’t stay obsessed with perception....

“If one doesn’t stay obsessed with fabrications....

“If one doesn’t stay obsessed with consciousness, that’s not what one is measured by. Whatever one isn’t measured by, that’s not how one is classified.³

“Lord, this is how I understand the detailed meaning of what you have said in brief.”

“Good, monk. Very good. It’s good that this is how you understand the detailed meaning of what I have said in brief.

“If one stays obsessed with form, monk, that’s what one is measured by. Whatever one is measured by, that’s how one is classified.

“If one stays obsessed with feeling....

“If one stays obsessed with perception....

“If one stays obsessed with fabrications....

“If one stays obsessed with consciousness, that’s what one is measured by. Whatever one is measured by, that’s how one is classified.

“But if one doesn’t stay obsessed with form, monk, that’s not what one is measured by. Whatever one isn’t measured by, that’s not how one is classified.

“If one doesn’t stay obsessed with feeling....

“If one doesn’t stay obsessed with perception....

“If one doesn’t stay obsessed with fabrications....

“If one doesn’t stay obsessed with consciousness, that’s not what one is measured by. Whatever one isn’t measured by, that’s not how one is classified.

“This is how the detailed meaning of what I have said in brief should be seen.”

Then the monk, delighting in and approving of the Blessed One’s words, got up from his seat and bowed down to the Blessed One, circled around him, keeping the Blessed One to his right, and departed. Then, dwelling alone, secluded, heedful, ardent, & resolute, he in no long time entered & remained in the supreme goal of the holy life for which clansmen rightly go forth from home into homelessness, directly knowing & realizing it for himself in the here & now. He knew: “Birth is ended, the holy life fulfilled, the task done. There is nothing further for the sake of this world.” And thus he became another one of the arahants.

NOTES

1. The obsessions are: the obsession of sensual passion, the obsession of resistance, the obsession of views, the obsession of uncertainty, the obsession of conceit, the obsession of passion for becoming, and the obsession of ignorance. See AN 7:12.

2. See [SN 23:2](#)

3. See MN 72

In Accordance with the Dhamma (1) *Anudhamma Sutta (SN 22:39)*

Toward the end of his life (see DN 16), the Buddha stated that the proper way to pay homage to him was to practice the Dhamma in accordance with the Dhamma. This short sutta and the following three define what that means.

* * *

Near Sāvattthī. “For a monk practicing the Dhamma in accordance with the Dhamma, what accords with the Dhamma is this: that he keep cultivating disenchantment with regard to form, that he keep cultivating disenchantment with regard to feeling, that he keep cultivating

disenchantment with regard to perception, that he keep cultivating disenchantment with regard to fabrications, that he keep cultivating disenchantment with regard to consciousness. As he keeps cultivating disenchantment with regard to form... feeling... perception... fabrications... consciousness, he comprehends form... feeling... perception... fabrications... consciousness. As he comprehends form... feeling... perception... fabrications... consciousness, he is totally released from form... feeling... perception... fabrications... consciousness. He is totally released from sorrows, lamentations, pains, distresses, & despairs. He is totally released, I tell you, from suffering & stress.”

In Accordance with the Dhamma (2)

Anudhamma Sutta (SN 22:40)

Near Sāvattthī. “For a monk practicing the Dhamma in accordance with the Dhamma, what accords with the Dhamma is this: that he keep focused on inconstancy with regard to form, that he keep focused on inconstancy with regard to feeling, that he keep focused on inconstancy with regard to perception, that he keep focused on inconstancy with regard to fabrications, that he keep focused on inconstancy with regard to consciousness. As he keeps focusing on inconstancy with regard to form... feeling... perception... fabrications... consciousness, he comprehends form... feeling... perception... fabrications... consciousness. As he comprehends form... feeling... perception... fabrications... consciousness, he is totally released from form... feeling... perception... fabrications... consciousness. He is totally released from sorrows, lamentations, pains, distresses, & despairs. He is totally released, I tell you, from suffering & stress.”

In Accordance with the Dhamma (3)

Anudhamma Sutta (SN 22:41)

Near Sāvattthī. “For a monk practicing the Dhamma in accordance with the Dhamma, what accords with the Dhamma is this: that he keep focused on stress with regard to form, that he keep focused on stress with regard to feeling, that he keep focused on stress with regard to perception, that he keep focused on stress with regard to fabrications, that he keep focused on stress with regard to consciousness. As he keeps focusing on stress with regard to form... feeling... perception... fabrications... consciousness, he comprehends form... feeling... perception... fabrications... consciousness. As he comprehends form... feeling... perception... fabrications... consciousness, he is totally released from form... feeling... perception... fabrications... consciousness. He is totally released from sorrows, lamentations, pains, distresses, & despairs. He is totally released, I tell you, from suffering & stress.”

In Accordance with the Dhamma (4)

Anudhamma Sutta (SN 22:42)

Near Sāvattthī. “For a monk practicing the Dhamma in accordance with the Dhamma, what accords with the Dhamma is this: that he keep focused on not-self with regard to form, that he keep focused on not-self with regard to feeling, that he keep focused on not-self with regard to perception, that he keep focused on not-self with regard to fabrications, that he keep focused on not-self with regard to consciousness. As he keeps focusing on not-self with regard to form... feeling... perception... fabrications... consciousness, he comprehends form... feeling... perception... fabrications... consciousness. As he comprehends form... feeling... perception... fabrications... consciousness, he is totally released from form... feeling... perception... fabrications... consciousness. He is totally released from sorrows, lamentations, pains, distresses, & despairs. He is totally released, I tell you, from suffering & stress.”

See also: [SN 12:67](#)

Assumptions

Samanupassanā Sutta (SN 22:47)

Near Sāvatthī. There the Blessed One said, “Monks, whatever contemplatives or brahmans who assume in various ways when assuming a self, all assume the five clinging-aggregates, or a certain one of them. Which five? There is the case where an uninstructed, run-of-the-mill person—who has no regard for noble ones, is not well-versed or disciplined in their Dhamma; who has no regard for people of integrity, is not well-versed or disciplined in their Dhamma—assumes form to be the self, or the self as possessing form, or form as in the self, or the self as in form.

“He assumes feeling to be the self, or the self as possessing feeling, or feeling as in the self, or the self as in feeling.

“He assumes perception to be the self, or the self as possessing perception, or perception as in the self, or the self as in perception.

“He assumes fabrications to be the self, or the self as possessing fabrications, or fabrications as in the self, or the self as in fabrications.

“He assumes consciousness to be the self, or the self as possessing consciousness, or consciousness as in the self, or the self as in consciousness.

“Thus, both this assumption & the understanding, ‘I am,’ occur to him. And so it is with reference to the understanding ‘I am’ that there is the appearance of the five faculties—eye, ear, nose, tongue, & body [the senses of vision, hearing, smell, taste, & touch].

“Now, there is the intellect, there are ideas [mental qualities], there is the property of ignorance. To an uninstructed run-of-the-mill person, touched by experience born of the contact of ignorance, there occur (the thoughts): ‘I am,’ ‘I am thus,’ ‘I shall be,’ ‘I shall not be,’ ‘I shall be possessed of form,’ ‘I shall be formless,’ ‘I shall be percipient [conscious],’ ‘I shall be non-percipient,’ or ‘I shall be neither percipient nor non-percipient.’

“The five faculties, monks, continue as they were. And with regard to them the well-instructed disciple of the noble ones abandons ignorance and gives rise to clear knowing. Owing to the fading of ignorance and the arising of clear knowing, (the thoughts)—‘I am,’ ‘I am this,’ ‘I shall be,’ ‘I shall not be,’ ‘I shall be possessed of form,’ ‘I shall be formless,’ ‘I shall be percipient,’ ‘I shall be non-percipient,’ and ‘I shall be neither percipient nor non-percipient’—do not occur to him.”

See also: [SN 12:15](#); [SN 12:20](#); AN 4:199–200; Sn 4:14

Aggregates

Khandha Sutta (SN 22:48)

Near Sāvattthī. There the Blessed One said, “Monks, I will teach you the five aggregates & the five clinging-aggregates. Listen & pay close attention. I will speak.”

“As you say, lord,” the monks responded to him.

The Blessed One said, “Now what, monks, are the five aggregates?”

“Any form whatsoever that is past, future, or present; internal or external; blatant or subtle; common or sublime; far or near: That is called the form aggregate.

“Any feeling whatsoever that is past, future, or present; internal or external; blatant or subtle; common or sublime; far or near: That is called the feeling aggregate.

“Any perception whatsoever that is past, future, or present; internal or external; blatant or subtle; common or sublime; far or near: That is called the perception aggregate.

“Any fabrications whatsoever that are past, future, or present; internal or external; blatant or subtle; common or sublime; far or near: Those are called the fabrication aggregate.

“Any consciousness whatsoever that is past, future, or present; internal or external; blatant or subtle; common or sublime; far or near: That is called the consciousness aggregate.

“These are called the five aggregates.

“And what are the five clinging-aggregates?

“Any form whatsoever—past, future, or present; internal or external; blatant or subtle; common or sublime; far or near—that is clingable, offers sustenance, and is accompanied with effluents: That is called the form clinging-aggregate.

“Any feeling whatsoever—past, future, or present; internal or external; blatant or subtle; common or sublime; far or near—that is clingable, offers sustenance, and is accompanied with effluents: That is called the feeling clinging-aggregate.

“Any perception whatsoever—past, future, or present; internal or external; blatant or subtle; common or sublime; far or near—that is clingable, offers sustenance, and is accompanied with effluents: That is called the perception clinging-aggregate.

“Any fabrications whatsoever—past, future, or present; internal or external; blatant or subtle; common or sublime; far or near—that are clingable, offer sustenance, and are accompanied with effluents: Those are called the fabrication clinging-aggregate.

“Any consciousness whatsoever—past, future, or present; internal or external; blatant or subtle; common or sublime; far or near—that is clingable, offers sustenance, and is accompanied with effluents: That is called the consciousness clinging-aggregate.

“These are called the five clinging-aggregates.”

See also: MN 44; MN 109; [SN 22:121](#); [SN 35:191](#)

Attached

Upaya Sutta (SN 22:53)

Near Sāvatthī. There the Blessed One said, “One attached is unreleased; one unattached is released. Should consciousness, when standing, stand attached to (a physical) form, supported by form (as its

object), landing on form, watered with delight, it would exhibit growth, increase, & proliferation.

“Should consciousness, when standing, stand attached to feeling, supported by feeling (as its object), landing on feeling, watered with delight, it would exhibit growth, increase, & proliferation.

“Should consciousness, when standing, stand attached to perception, supported by perception (as its object), landing on perception, watered with delight, it would exhibit growth, increase, & proliferation.

“Should consciousness, when standing, stand attached to fabrications, supported by fabrications (as its object), landing on fabrications, watered with delight, it would exhibit growth, increase, & proliferation.

“Were someone to say, ‘I will describe a coming, a going, a passing away, an arising, a growth, an increase, or a proliferation of consciousness apart from form, from feeling, from perception, from fabrications,’ that would be impossible.

“If a monk abandons passion for the property of form....

“If a monk abandons passion for the property of feeling....

“If a monk abandons passion for the property of perception....

“If a monk abandons passion for the property of fabrications....

“If a monk abandons passion for the property of consciousness, then owing to the abandonment of passion, the support is cut off, and there is no landing of consciousness. Consciousness, thus not having landed, not increasing, not concocting, is released. Owing to its release, it is steady. Owing to its steadiness, it is contented. Owing to its contentment, it is not agitated. Not agitated, he (the monk) is totally unbound right within. He discerns that ‘Birth is ended, the holy life fulfilled, the task done. There is nothing further for this world.’”

See also: [SN 12:38](#); [SN 12:64](#); Ud 8:1; Sn 5:4; Sn 5:13

Means of Propagation

Bīja Sutta (SN 22:54)

Near Sāvattthī. There the Blessed One addressed the monks: “Monks.”

“Yes, lord,” the monks responded to him.

The Blessed One said: “Monks, there are these five means of propagation. Which five? Root-propagation, stem-propagation, joint-propagation, cutting-propagation, & seed-propagation as the fifth. And if these five means of propagation are not broken, not rotten, not damaged by wind & sun, mature, and well-buried, but there is no earth and no water, would they exhibit growth, increase, & proliferation?”

“No, lord.”

“And if these five means of propagation are broken, rotten, damaged by wind & sun, immature, and poorly-buried, but there is earth & water, would they exhibit growth, increase, & proliferation?”

“No, lord.”

“And if these five means of propagation are not broken, not rotten, not damaged by wind & sun, mature, and well-buried, and there is earth & water, would they exhibit growth, increase, & proliferation?”

“Yes, lord.”

“Like the earth property, monks, is how the four standing-spots for consciousness should be seen. Like the liquid property is how delight & passion should be seen. Like the five means of propagation is how consciousness together with its nutriment should be seen.

“Should consciousness, when standing, stand attached to (a physical) form, supported by form (as its object), landing on form, watered with delight, it would exhibit growth, increase, & proliferation.

“Should consciousness, when standing, stand attached to feeling, supported by feeling (as its object), landing on feeling, watered with delight, it would exhibit growth, increase, & proliferation.

“Should consciousness, when standing, stand attached to perception, supported by perception (as its object), landing on perception, watered with delight, it would exhibit growth, increase, & proliferation.

“Should consciousness, when standing, stand attached to fabrications, supported by fabrications (as its object), landing on fabrications, watered with delight, it would exhibit growth, increase, & proliferation.

“Were someone to say, ‘I will describe a coming, a going, a passing away, an arising, a growth, an increase, or a proliferation of consciousness apart from form, from feeling, from perception, from fabrications,’ that would be impossible.

“If a monk abandons passion for the property of form....

“If a monk abandons passion for the property of feeling....

“If a monk abandons passion for the property of perception....

“If a monk abandons passion for the property of fabrications....

“If a monk abandons passion for the property of consciousness, then owing to the abandonment of passion, the support is cut off, and there is no landing of consciousness. Consciousness, thus not having landed, not increasing, not concocting, is released. Owing to its release, it is steady. Owing to its steadiness, it is contented. Owing to its contentment, it is not agitated. Not agitated, he (the monk) is totally unbound right within. He discerns that ‘Birth is ended, the holy life fulfilled, the task done. There is nothing further for this world.’”

See also: AN 3:34; AN 3:77; [SN 12:64](#)

Exclamation

Udāna Sutta (SN 22:55)

Near Sāvattthī. There the Blessed One exclaimed this exclamation: “‘It should not be, it should not occur to me [should not be mine]; it will not be, it will not occur to me [will not be mine]’: A monk set on this would break the (five) lower fetters.”

When this was said, a certain monk said to the Blessed One, “In what way would a monk set on this—‘It should not be, it should not occur to me; it will not be, it will not occur to me’—break the (five) lower fetters?”

“There is the case, monk, where an uninstructed, run-of-the-mill person—who has no regard for noble ones, is not well-versed or disciplined in their Dhamma; who has no regard for people of integrity,

is not well-versed or disciplined in their Dhamma—assumes form to be the self, or the self as possessing form, or form as in the self, or the self as in form.

“He assumes feeling to be the self, or the self as possessing feeling, or feeling as in the self, or the self as in feeling. He assumes perception to be the self, or the self as possessing perception, or perception as in the self, or the self as in perception. He assumes fabrications to be the self, or the self as possessing fabrications, or fabrications as in the self, or the self as in fabrications. He assumes consciousness to be the self, or the self as possessing consciousness, or consciousness as in the self, or the self as in consciousness.

“He doesn’t discern, as it has come to be, inconstant form as ‘inconstant form.’ He doesn’t discern, as it has come to be, inconstant feeling as ‘inconstant feeling’ ... inconstant perception as ‘inconstant perception’ ... inconstant fabrications as ‘inconstant fabrications’ ... inconstant consciousness as ‘inconstant consciousness.’

“He doesn’t discern, as it has come to be, stressful form as ‘stressful form’ ... stressful feeling as ‘stressful feeling’ ... stressful perception as ‘stressful perception’ ... stressful fabrications as ‘stressful fabrications’ ... stressful consciousness as ‘stressful consciousness.’

“He doesn’t discern, as it has come to be, not-self form as ‘not-self form’ ... not-self feeling as ‘not-self feeling’ ... not-self perception as ‘not-self perception’ ... not-self fabrications as ‘not-self fabrications’ ... not-self consciousness as ‘not-self consciousness.’

“He doesn’t discern, as it has come to be, fabricated form as ‘fabricated form’ ... fabricated feeling as ‘fabricated feeling’ ... fabricated perception as ‘fabricated perception’ ... fabricated fabrications as ‘fabricated fabrications’ ... fabricated consciousness as ‘fabricated consciousness.’

“He doesn’t discern, as it has come to be, that ‘form will not become’ ... ‘feeling will not become’ ... ‘perception will not become’ ... ‘fabrications will not become’ ... ‘consciousness will not become.’

“Now, a well-instructed disciple of the noble ones—who has regard for noble ones, is well-versed & disciplined in their Dhamma; who has

regard for people of integrity, is well-versed & disciplined in their Dhamma—doesn't assume form to be the self, or the self as possessing form, or form as in the self, or the self as in form. He doesn't assume feeling to be the self.... doesn't assume perception to be the self.... doesn't assume fabrications to be the self.... He doesn't assume consciousness to be the self, or the self as possessing consciousness, or consciousness as in the self, or the self as in consciousness.

“He discerns, as it has come to be, inconstant form as ‘inconstant form’ ... inconstant feeling as ‘inconstant feeling’ ... inconstant perception as ‘inconstant perception’ ... inconstant fabrications as ‘inconstant fabrications’ ... inconstant consciousness as ‘inconstant consciousness.’

“He discerns, as it has come to be, stressful form as ‘stressful form’ ... stressful feeling as ‘stressful feeling’ ... stressful perception as ‘stressful perception’ ... stressful fabrications as ‘stressful fabrications’ ... stressful consciousness as ‘stressful consciousness.’

“He discerns, as it has come to be, not-self form as ‘not-self form’ ... not-self feeling as ‘not-self feeling’ ... not-self perception as ‘not-self perception’ ... not-self fabrications as ‘not-self fabrications’ ... not-self consciousness as ‘not-self consciousness.’

“He discerns, as it has come to be, fabricated form as ‘fabricated form’ ... fabricated feeling as ‘fabricated feeling’ ... fabricated perception as ‘fabricated perception’ ... fabricated fabrications as ‘fabricated fabrications’ ... fabricated consciousness as ‘fabricated consciousness.’

“He discerns, as it has come to be, that ‘form will not become’ ... ‘feeling will not become’ ... ‘perception will not become’ ... ‘fabrications will not become’ ... ‘consciousness will not become.’

“From the non-becoming of form, from the non-becoming of feeling... of perception... of fabrications... of consciousness, a monk set on this—‘It should not be, it should not occur to me; it will not be, it will not occur to me’—would break the (five) lower fetters.”

“Lord, a monk set on this would break the (five) lower fetters. But for one knowing in what way, seeing in what way, is there the immediate ending of effluents?”

“There is the case where an uninstructed run-of-the-mill person... falls into fear over what is not grounds for fear. There is fear for an uninstructed run-of-the-mill person (who thinks), ‘It should not be, it should not occur to me; it will not be, it will not occur to me.’ But an instructed disciple of the noble ones does not fall into fear over what is not grounds for fear. There is no fear for an instructed disciple of the noble ones (who thinks), ‘It should not be, it should not occur to me; it will not be, it will not occur to me.’

“Should consciousness, when standing, stand attached to form, supported by form (as its object), landing on form, watered with delight, it would exhibit growth, increase, & proliferation.

“Should consciousness, when standing, stand attached to feeling, supported by feeling (as its object), landing on feeling, watered with delight, it would exhibit growth, increase, & proliferation.

“Should consciousness, when standing, stand attached to perception, supported by perception (as its object), landing on perception, watered with delight, it would exhibit growth, increase, & proliferation.

“Should consciousness, when standing, stand attached to fabrications, supported by fabrications (as its object), landing on fabrications, watered with delight, it would exhibit growth, increase, & proliferation.

“Were someone to say, ‘I will describe a coming, a going, a passing away, an arising, a growth, an increase, or a proliferation of consciousness apart from form, from feeling, from perception, from fabrications,’ that would be impossible.

“If a monk abandons passion for the property of form....

“If a monk abandons passion for the property of feeling....

“If a monk abandons passion for the property of perception....

“If a monk abandons passion for the property of fabrications....

“If a monk abandons passion for the property of consciousness, then owing to the abandonment of passion, the support is cut off, and there is no landing of consciousness. Consciousness, thus not having landed, not increasing, not concocting, is released. Owing to release, it is steady. Owing to steadiness, it is contented. Owing to contentment, it is not agitated. Not agitated, he (the monk) is totally unbound right within.

He discerns that ‘Birth is ended, the holy life fulfilled, the task done.
There is nothing further for this world’

“For one knowing in this way, seeing in this way, monk, there is the immediate ending of effluents.”

See also: MN 106; AN 9:36; AN 10:13; Ud 3:10; Iti 49; Sn 5:14

The (Fourfold) Round *Parivaṭṭa Sutta (SN 22:56)*

Near Sāvattthī. There the Blessed One said, “Monks, there are these five clinging-aggregates. Which five? The form clinging-aggregate, the feeling clinging-aggregate, the perception clinging-aggregate, the fabrications clinging-aggregate, the consciousness clinging-aggregate.

“Now, as long as I did not have direct knowledge of the fourfold round with regard to these five clinging-aggregates as they have come to be, I did not claim to have directly awakened to the unexcelled right self-awakening in this cosmos with its devas, Māras, & Brahmās, in this generation with its contemplatives & brahmans, its royalty & common folk. But when I did have direct knowledge of the fourfold round with regard to these five clinging-aggregates as they have come to be, then I did claim to have directly awakened to the unexcelled right self-awakening in this cosmos with its devas, Māras, & Brahmās, in this generation with its contemplatives & brahmans, its royalty & common folk.

“The fourfold round in what way? I had direct knowledge of form... of the origination of form... of the cessation of form... of the path of practice leading to the cessation of form.

“I had direct knowledge of feeling....

“I had direct knowledge of perception....

“I had direct knowledge of fabrications....

“I had direct knowledge of consciousness... of the origination of consciousness... of the cessation of consciousness... of the path of

practice leading to the cessation of consciousness.

“And what is form? The four great existents [the earth property, the liquid property, the fire property, & the wind property] and the form derived from them: This is called form. From the origination of nutriment comes the origination of form.¹ From the cessation of nutriment comes the cessation of form. And just this noble eightfold path is the path of practice leading to the cessation of form, i.e., right view, right resolve, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness, right concentration.

“For any contemplatives or brahmans who by directly knowing form in this way, directly knowing the origination of form in this way, directly knowing the cessation of form in this way, directly knowing the path of practice leading to the cessation of form in this way, are practicing for disenchantment—dispassion—cessation with regard to form, they are practicing rightly. Those who are practicing rightly are firmly based in this Dhamma & Vinaya. And any contemplatives or brahmans who by directly knowing form in this way, directly knowing the origination of form in this way, directly knowing the cessation of form in this way, directly knowing the path of practice leading to the cessation of form in this way, are—from disenchantment, dispassion, cessation, lack of clinging/sustenance with regard to form—released, they are well released. Those who are well released are fully accomplished. And with those who are fully accomplished, there is no cycle for the sake of describing them.

“And what is feeling? These six bodies of feeling—feeling born of eye-contact, feeling born of ear-contact, feeling born of nose-contact, feeling born of tongue-contact, feeling born of body-contact, feeling born of intellect-contact: This is called feeling. From the origination of contact comes the origination of feeling. From the cessation of contact comes the cessation of feeling. And just this noble eightfold path is the path of practice leading to the cessation of feeling....

“And what is perception? These six bodies of perception—perception of form, perception of sound, perception of smell, perception of taste, perception of tactile sensation, perception of ideas: This is called perception. From the origination of contact comes the origination of

perception. From the cessation of contact comes the cessation of perception. And just this noble eightfold path is the path of practice leading to the cessation of perception....

“And what are fabrications? These six bodies of intention—intention with regard to form, intention with regard to sound, intention with regard to smell, intention with regard to taste, intention with regard to tactile sensation, intention with regard to ideas: These are called fabrications. From the origination of contact comes the origination of fabrications. From the cessation of contact comes the cessation of fabrications. And just this noble eightfold path is the path of practice leading to the cessation of fabrications....

“And what is consciousness? These six bodies of consciousness—eye-consciousness, ear-consciousness, nose-consciousness, tongue-consciousness, body-consciousness, intellect-consciousness: This is called consciousness. From the origination of name-&-form comes the origination of consciousness. From the cessation of name-&-form comes the cessation of consciousness. And just this noble eightfold path is the path of practice leading to the cessation of consciousness, i.e., right view, right resolve, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness, right concentration.

“For any contemplatives or brahmans who by directly knowing consciousness in this way, directly knowing the origination of consciousness in this way, directly knowing the cessation of consciousness in this way, directly knowing the path of practice leading to the cessation of consciousness in this way, are practicing for disenchantment—dispassion—cessation with regard to consciousness, they are practicing rightly. Those who are practicing rightly are firmly based in this Dhamma & Vinaya. And any contemplatives or brahmans who by directly knowing consciousness in this way, directly knowing the origination of consciousness in this way, directly knowing the cessation of consciousness in this way, directly knowing the path of practice leading to the cessation of consciousness in this way, are—from disenchantment, dispassion, cessation, lack of clinging/sustenance with regard to consciousness—released, they are well released. Those who are

well released are fully accomplished. And with those who are fully accomplished, there is no cycle for the sake of describing them.”

NOTE

1. For an alternative description of the origination of this and the other aggregates, see [SN 22:5](#) and [SN 22:131–132](#).

See also: DN 15; MN 148

Seven Bases

Sattatṭhāna Sutta (SN 22:57)

The term “seven bases” here can also mean the seven notes of the musical scale; and it is possible that the phrase “three modes of investigation” may also be borrowed from musical theory: It may refer to three ways of testing a musical scale once it has been tuned. Thus in this discourse the Buddha seems to be borrowing terms commonly used to describe a consummate musician and applying them to his description of a consummate meditator.

The Commentary singles out this discourse as one that entices a serious meditator to practice.

* * *

I have heard that on one occasion the Blessed One was staying near Sāvattṭhī, in Jeta’s Grove, Anāthapiṇḍika’s Monastery. There he addressed the monks, “Monks!”

“Yes, lord,” the monks responded to him.

The Blessed One said: “Monks, a monk who is skilled in seven bases and has three modes of investigation is fulfilled & fully accomplished in this Dhamma & Vinaya—the ultimate person.

“And how is a monk skilled in seven bases? There is the case where a monk discerns form, the origination of form, the cessation of form, the path of practice leading to the cessation of form. He discerns the allure of form, the drawback of form, and the escape from form.

“He discerns feeling.... He discerns perception.... He discerns fabrications....

“He discerns consciousness, the origination of consciousness, the cessation of consciousness, the path of practice leading to the cessation of consciousness. He discerns the allure of consciousness, the drawback of consciousness, and the escape from consciousness.

“And what is form? The four great existents [the earth property, the liquid property, the fire property, & the wind property] and the form derived from them: this is called form. From the origination of nutriment comes the origination of form.¹ From the cessation of nutriment comes the cessation of form. And just this noble eightfold path is the path of practice leading to the cessation of form, i.e., right view, right resolve, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness, right concentration. The fact that pleasure & happiness arise in dependence on form: That is the allure of form. The fact that form is inconstant, stressful, subject to change: That is the drawback of form. The subduing of desire-passion for form, the abandoning of desire-passion for form: That is the escape from form.

“For any contemplatives or brahmans who by directly knowing form in this way, directly knowing the origination of form in this way, directly knowing the cessation of form in this way, directly knowing the path of practice leading to the cessation of form in this way, directly knowing the allure of form in this way, directly knowing the drawback of form in this way, directly knowing the escape from form in this way, are practicing for disenchantment—dispassion—cessation with regard to form, they are practicing rightly. Those who are practicing rightly are firmly based in this Dhamma & Vinaya. And any contemplatives or brahmans who by directly knowing form in this way, directly knowing the origination of form in this way, directly knowing the cessation of form in this way, directly knowing the path of practice leading to the cessation of form in this way, directly knowing the allure of form in this way, directly knowing the drawback of form in this way, directly knowing the escape from form in this way, are—from disenchantment, dispassion, cessation, lack of clinging/sustenance with regard to form—released, they are well released. Those who are well released are fully

accomplished. And with those who are fully accomplished, there is no cycle for the sake of describing them.

“And what is feeling? These six bodies of feeling—feeling born of eye-contact, feeling born of ear-contact, feeling born of nose-contact, feeling born of tongue-contact, feeling born of body-contact, feeling born of intellect-contact: This is called feeling. From the origination of contact comes the origination of feeling. From the cessation of contact comes the cessation of feeling. And just this noble eightfold path is the path of practice leading to the cessation of feeling.... The fact that pleasure & happiness arise in dependence on feeling: That is the allure of feeling. The fact that feeling is inconstant, stressful, subject to change: That is the drawback of feeling. The subduing of desire-passion for feeling, the abandoning of desire-passion for feeling: That is the escape from feeling....

“And what is perception? These six bodies of perception—perception of form, perception of sound, perception of smell, perception of taste, perception of tactile sensation, perception of ideas: This is called perception. From the origination of contact comes the origination of perception. From the cessation of contact comes the cessation of perception. And just this noble eightfold path is the path of practice leading to the cessation of perception.... The fact that pleasure & happiness arise in dependence on perception: That is the allure of perception. The fact that perception is inconstant, stressful, subject to change: That is the drawback of perception. The subduing of desire-passion for perception, the abandoning of desire-passion for perception: That is the escape from perception....

“And what are fabrications? These six bodies of intention—intention with regard to form, intention with regard to sound, intention with regard to smell, intention with regard to taste, intention with regard to tactile sensation, intention with regard to ideas: These are called fabrications. From the origination of contact comes the origination of fabrications. From the cessation of contact comes the cessation of fabrications. And just this noble eightfold path is the path of practice leading to the cessation of fabrications.... The fact that pleasure & happiness arise in dependence on fabrications: That is the allure of

fabrications. The fact that fabrications are inconstant, stressful, subject to change: That is the drawback of fabrications. The subduing of desire-passion for fabrications, the abandoning of desire-passion for fabrications: That is the escape from fabrications....

“And what is consciousness? These six bodies of consciousness: eye-consciousness, ear-consciousness, nose-consciousness, tongue-consciousness, body-consciousness, intellect-consciousness. This is called consciousness. From the origination of name-&-form comes the origination of consciousness. From the cessation of name-&-form comes the cessation of consciousness. And just this noble eightfold path is the path of practice leading to the cessation of consciousness, i.e., right view, right resolve, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness, right concentration. The fact that pleasure & happiness arise in dependence on consciousness: That is the allure of consciousness. The fact that consciousness is inconstant, stressful, subject to change: That is the drawback of consciousness. The subduing of desire-passion for consciousness, the abandoning of desire-passion for consciousness: That is the escape from consciousness.

“For any contemplatives or brahmans who by directly knowing consciousness in this way, directly knowing the origination of consciousness in this way, directly knowing the cessation of consciousness in this way, directly knowing the path of practice leading to the cessation of consciousness in this way, directly knowing the allure of consciousness in this way, directly knowing the drawback of consciousness in this way, directly knowing the escape from consciousness in this way, are practicing for disenchantment—dispassion—cessation with regard to consciousness, they are practicing rightly. Those who are practicing rightly are firmly based in this Dhamma & Vinaya. And any contemplatives or brahmans who by directly knowing consciousness in this way, directly knowing the origination of consciousness in this way, directly knowing the cessation of consciousness in this way, directly knowing the path of practice leading to the cessation of consciousness in this way, directly knowing the allure of consciousness in this way, directly knowing the drawback of consciousness in this way, directly knowing the escape from

consciousness in this way, are—from disenchantment, dispassion, cessation, lack of clinging/sustenance with regard to consciousness—released, they are well released. Those who are well released are fully accomplished. And with those who are fully accomplished, there is no cycle for the sake of describing them.

“This is how a monk is skilled in seven bases.

“And how does a monk have three modes of investigation? There is the case where a monk investigates in terms of properties, investigates in terms of sense media, investigates in terms of dependent co-arising. This is how a monk has three modes of investigation.

“A monk who is skilled in seven bases and has three modes of investigation is fulfilled and fully accomplished in this Dhamma & Vinaya—the ultimate person.”

NOTE

1. For an alternative description of the origination of this and the other aggregates, see [SN 22:5](#).

See also: AN 4:94; AN 6:55

Awakened Buddha Sutta (SN 22:58)

Some schools of Buddhism teach that there is a qualitative difference between the liberation of a Buddha and that of an arahant disciple. This sutta, however, shows that the Buddha saw the distinction in different terms.

* * *

Near Sāvattthī... “Monks, the Tathāgata—the worthy one, the rightly self-awakened one, who from disenchantment with form, from dispassion, from cessation, from lack of clinging (for form) is released—is termed ‘rightly self-awakened.’ And a discernment-released monk—who from disenchantment with form, from dispassion, from cessation,

from lack of clinging (for form) is released—is termed ‘discernment-released.’

“The Tathāgata—the worthy one, the rightly self-awakened one, who from disenchantment with feeling... perception... fabrication, from dispassion, from cessation, from lack of clinging (for feeling... perception... fabrication) is released—is termed ‘rightly self-awakened.’ And a discernment-released monk—who from disenchantment with feeling... perception... fabrication, from dispassion, from cessation, from lack of clinging (for feeling... perception... fabrication) is released—is termed ‘discernment-released.’

“The Tathāgata—the worthy one, the rightly self-awakened one, who from disenchantment with consciousness, from dispassion, from cessation, from lack of clinging (for consciousness) is released—is termed ‘rightly self-awakened.’ And a discernment-released monk—who from disenchantment with consciousness, from dispassion, from cessation, from lack of clinging (for consciousness) is released—is termed ‘discernment-released.’

“So what difference, what distinction, what distinguishing factor is there between one rightly self-awakened and a monk discernment-released?”

“For us, lord, the teachings have the Blessed One as their root, their guide, & their arbitrator. It would be good if the Blessed One himself would elaborate on the meaning of this statement. Having heard it from the Blessed One, the monks will remember it.”

“In that case, monks, listen & pay close attention. I will speak.”

“As you say, lord,” the monks responded to him.

The Blessed One said, “The Tathāgata—the worthy one, the rightly self-awakened one—is the one who gives rise to the path (previously) unarisen, who engenders the path (previously) unengendered, who points out the path (previously) not pointed out. He knows the path, is expert in the path, is adept at the path. And his disciples now keep following the path and afterward become endowed with the path.

“This is the difference, this the distinction, this the distinguishing factor between one rightly self-awakened and a monk discernment-

released.”

See also: Iti 112

The Five (Brethren) *Pañca Sutta (SN 22:59)*

This discourse is also known as the Anatta-lakkhaṇa Sutta, the Discourse on the Not-self Characteristic. According to Mv I, this was the first of the Buddha’s discourses during which his listeners became arahants.

* * *

I have heard that on one occasion the Blessed One was staying near Vārāṇasī in the Deer Park at Isipatana. There he addressed the group of five monks:

“Form, monks, is not self. If form were the self, this form would not lend itself to dis-ease. It would be possible (to say) with regard to form, ‘Let my form be thus. Let my form not be thus.’ But precisely because form is not self, this form lends itself to dis-ease. And it is not possible (to say) with regard to form, ‘Let my form be thus. Let my form not be thus.’

“Feeling is not self....

“Perception is not self....

“Fabrications are not self....

“Consciousness is not self. If consciousness were the self, this consciousness would not lend itself to dis-ease. It would be possible (to say) with regard to consciousness, ‘Let my consciousness be thus. Let my consciousness not be thus.’ But precisely because consciousness is not self, consciousness lends itself to dis-ease. And it is not possible (to say) with regard to consciousness, ‘Let my consciousness be thus. Let my consciousness not be thus.’

“What do you think, monks? Is form constant or inconstant?”

“Inconstant, lord.”

“And is that which is inconstant easeful or stressful?”

“Stressful, lord.”

“And is it fitting to regard what is inconstant, stressful, subject to change as: ‘This is mine. This is my self. This is what I am?’”

“No, lord.”

“... Is feeling constant or inconstant?” — “Inconstant, lord.” ...

“... Is perception constant or inconstant?” — “Inconstant, lord.” ...

“... Are fabrications constant or inconstant?” — “Inconstant, lord.” ...

“What do you think, monks? Is consciousness constant or inconstant?”

“Inconstant, lord.”

“And is that which is inconstant easeful or stressful?”

“Stressful, lord.”

“And is it fitting to regard what is inconstant, stressful, subject to change as: ‘This is mine. This is my self. This is what I am?’”

“No, lord.”

“Thus, monks, any form whatsoever that is past, future, or present; internal or external; blatant or subtle; common or sublime; far or near: Every¹ form is to be seen with right discernment as it has come to be: ‘This is not mine. This is not my self. This is not what I am.’

“Any feeling whatsoever....

“Any perception whatsoever....

“Any fabrications whatsoever....

“Any consciousness whatsoever that is past, future, or present; internal or external; blatant or subtle; common or sublime; far or near: Every¹ consciousness is to be seen with right discernment as it has come to be: ‘This is not mine. This is not my self. This is not what I am.’

“Seeing thus, the instructed disciple of the noble ones grows disenchanted with form, disenchanted with feeling, disenchanted with perception, disenchanted with fabrications, disenchanted with consciousness. Disenchanted, he becomes dispassionate. Through dispassion, he is released. With release, there is the knowledge,

‘Released.’ He discerns that ‘Birth is ended, the holy life fulfilled, the task done. There is nothing further for this world.’”

That is what the Blessed One said. Gratified, the group of five monks delighted in the Blessed One’s words. And while this explanation was being given, the minds of the group of five monks, through lack of clinging/sustenance, were released from effluents.

NOTE

1. The word “every” here and in all parallel passages is *sabba*, which is the same as the word for “all.” On the range of meaning covered by the word “all,” see [SN 35:23](#). DN 11, DN 15, MN 49, and AN 10:81 indicate that there is a type of consciousness that lies outside the range of “all,” and so would not fall under the aggregate of consciousness. This apparently corresponds to the dimension mentioned in [SN 35:117](#) and Ud 8:1.

See also: [SN 35:101](#); [SN 44:10](#); [SN 46:11](#)

To Mahāli

Mahāli Sutta (SN 22:60)

Sometimes it is said that people are attached to things because they believe those things to have an inherent essence or existence. Here, however, the Buddha points out that people are attached to things because they pay attention to the pleasure offered by those things, and ignore the stress they cause. If, however, you turn your attention to the stress, you can gain release.

* * *

I have heard that on one occasion the Blessed One was staying near Vesāli at the Gabled Hall in the Great Forest. Then Mahāli the Licchavi went to the Blessed One and, on arrival, having bowed down to him, sat to one side. As he was sitting there he said to the Blessed One, “Pūraṇa Kassapa says this: ‘There is no cause, no requisite condition, for the defilement of beings. Beings are defiled without cause, without requisite condition. There is no cause, no requisite condition, for the purification

of beings. Beings are purified without cause, without requisite condition.¹ What does the Blessed One say about this?”

“Mahāli, there is cause, there is requisite condition, for the defilement of beings. Beings are defiled with cause, with requisite condition. There is cause, this is requisite condition, for the purification of beings. Beings are purified with cause, with requisite condition.”

“And what, lord, is the cause, what the requisite condition, for the defilement of beings? How are beings defiled with cause, with requisite condition?”

“Mahāli, if form were exclusively stressful—followed by stress, infused with stress and not infused with pleasure—beings would not be infatuated with form. But because form is also pleasurable—followed by pleasure, infused with pleasure and not infused with stress—beings are infatuated with form. Through infatuation, they are captivated. Through captivation, they are defiled. This is the cause, this the requisite condition, for the defilement of beings. And this is how beings are defiled with cause, with requisite condition.

“If feeling were exclusively stressful....

“If perception were exclusively stressful....

“If fabrications were exclusively stressful....

“If consciousness were exclusively stressful—followed by stress, infused with stress and not infused with pleasure—beings would not be infatuated with consciousness. But because consciousness is also pleasurable—followed by pleasure, infused with pleasure and not infused with stress—beings are infatuated with consciousness. Through infatuation, they are captivated. Through captivation, they are defiled. This is the cause, this the requisite condition, for the defilement of beings. And this is how beings are defiled with cause, with requisite condition.”

“And what, lord, is the cause, what the requisite condition, for the purification of beings? How are beings purified with cause, with requisite condition?”

“Mahāli, if form were exclusively pleasurable—followed by pleasure, infused with pleasure and not infused with stress—beings would not be

disenchanted with form. But because form is also stressful—followed by stress, infused with stress and not infused with pleasure—beings are disenchanted with form. Disenchanted, they become dispassionate. Through dispassion, they are purified. This is the cause, this the requisite condition, for the purification of beings. And this is how beings are purified with cause, with requisite condition.

“If feeling were exclusively pleasurable....

“If perception were exclusively pleasurable....

“If fabrications were exclusively pleasurable....

“If consciousness were exclusively pleasurable—followed by pleasure, infused with pleasure and not infused with stress—beings would not be disenchanted with consciousness. But because consciousness is also stressful—followed by stress, infused with stress and not infused with pleasure—beings are disenchanted with consciousness. Disenchanted, they become dispassionate. Through dispassion, they are purified. This is the cause, this the requisite condition, for the purification of beings. And this is how beings are purified with cause, with requisite condition.”

NOTE

1. DN 2 ascribes this view to Makkhali Gosāla, and the view of non-action to Pūraṇa Kassapa.

See also: MN 136; [SN 12:52](#)

Chewed Up

Khajjanīya Sutta (SN 22:79)

Near Sāvatthī. “Monks, any contemplatives or brahmans who recollect their manifold past lives all recollect the five clinging-aggregates, or one among them. Which five? When recollecting, ‘I was one with such a form in the past,’ one is recollecting just form. Or when recollecting, ‘I was one with such a feeling in the past,’ one is recollecting just feeling. Or when recollecting, ‘I was one with such a perception in the past,’ one is recollecting just perception. Or when recollecting, ‘I was

one with such fabrications in the past,' one is recollecting just fabrications. Or when recollecting, 'I was one with such a consciousness in the past,' one is recollecting just consciousness.

"And why do you call it 'form' [*rūpa*]? 'It is afflicted [*ruppati*],' thus it is called 'form.' Afflicted with what? With cold & heat & hunger & thirst, with the touch of flies, mosquitoes, wind, sun, & reptiles. 'It is afflicted,' thus it is called 'form.'

"And why do you call it 'feeling'? 'It feels,' thus it is called 'feeling.' What does it feel? It feels pleasure, it feels pain, it feels neither-pleasure-nor-pain. 'It feels,' thus it is called 'feeling.'

"And why do you call it 'perception'? 'It perceives,' thus it is called 'perception.' What does it perceive? It perceives blue, it perceives yellow, it perceives red, & it perceives white. 'It perceives,' thus it is called 'perception.'

"And why do you call them 'fabrications'? 'They fabricate the fabricated,' thus they are called 'fabrications.' And what is the fabricated that they fabricate? For the sake of form-ness, they fabricate fabricated form. For the sake of feeling-ness, they fabricate fabricated feeling. For the sake of perception-hood... For the sake of fabrication-hood... For the sake of consciousness-hood, they fabricate fabricated consciousness. 'They fabricate the fabricated,' thus they are called 'fabrications.'¹

"And why do you call it 'consciousness'? 'It cognizes,' thus it is called 'consciousness.' What does it cognize? It cognizes sour, it cognizes bitter, it cognizes pungent, it cognizes sweet, it cognizes alkaline, it cognizes non-alkaline, it cognizes salty, & it cognizes unsalty. 'It cognizes,' thus it is called 'consciousness.'

"Thus an instructed disciple of the noble ones reflects in this way: 'I am now being chewed up by form. But in the past I was also chewed up by form in the same way I am now being chewed up by present form. And if I delight in future form, then in the future I will be chewed up by form in the same way I am now being chewed up by present form.' Having reflected in this way, he becomes indifferent to past form, does not delight in future form, and is practicing for the sake of disenchantment, dispassion, and cessation with regard to present form.

“(He reflects:) ‘I am now being chewed up by feeling... perception... fabrications... consciousness. But in the past I was also chewed up by consciousness in the same way I am now being chewed up by present consciousness. And if I delight in future consciousness, then in the future I will be chewed up by consciousness in the same way I am now being chewed up by present consciousness.’ Having reflected in this way, he becomes indifferent to past consciousness, does not delight in future consciousness, and is practicing for the sake of disenchantment, dispassion, and cessation with regard to present consciousness.

“What do you think, monks? Is form constant or inconstant?”
“Inconstant, lord.” “And is that which is inconstant easeful or stressful?”
“Stressful, lord.” “And is it fitting to regard what is inconstant, stressful, subject to change as: ‘This is mine. This is my self. This is what I am?’”

“No, lord.”

“... Is feeling constant or inconstant?”—“Inconstant, lord.” ...

“... Is perception constant or inconstant?”—“Inconstant, lord.” ...

“... Are fabrications constant or inconstant?”—“Inconstant, lord.” ...

“What do you think, monks? Is consciousness constant or inconstant?” “Inconstant, lord.” “And is that which is inconstant easeful or stressful?” “Stressful, lord.” “And is it fitting to regard what is inconstant, stressful, subject to change as: ‘This is mine. This is my self. This is what I am?’”

“No, lord.”

“Thus, monks, any form whatsoever that is past, future, or present; internal or external; blatant or subtle; common or sublime; far or near: Every form is to be seen as it has come to be with right discernment as: ‘This is not mine. This is not my self. This is not what I am.’

“Any feeling whatsoever....

“Any perception whatsoever....

“Any fabrications whatsoever....

“Any consciousness whatsoever that is past, future, or present; internal or external; blatant or subtle; common or sublime; far or near: Every consciousness is to be seen as it has come to be with right

discernment as: ‘This is not mine. This is not my self. This is not what I am.’

“This, monks, is called a disciple of the noble ones who tears down and does not build up; who abandons and does not cling; who discards and does not pull in; who scatters and does not pile up.

“And what does he tear down and not build up? He tears down form and does not build it up. He tears down feeling... perception... fabrications... consciousness and does not build it up.

“And what does he abandon and not cling to? He abandons form and does not cling to it. He abandons feeling... perception... fabrications... consciousness and does not cling to it.

“And what does he discard and not pull in? He discards form and does not pull it in. He discards feeling... perception... fabrications... consciousness and does not pull it in.

“And what does he scatter and not pile up? He scatters form and does not pile it up. He scatters feeling... perception... fabrications... consciousness and does not pile it up.

“Seeing thus, the instructed disciple of the noble ones grows disenchanted with form, disenchanted with feeling, disenchanted with perception, disenchanted with fabrications, disenchanted with consciousness. Disenchanted, he becomes dispassionate. Through dispassion, he is released. With release, there is the knowledge, ‘Released.’ He discerns that ‘Birth is ended, the holy life fulfilled, the task done. There is nothing further for this world.’

“This, monks, is called a disciple of the noble ones who neither builds up nor tears down, but who stands having torn down; who neither clings nor abandons, but who stands having abandoned; who neither pulls in nor discards, but who stands having discarded; who neither piles up nor scatters, but who stands having scattered.

“And what is it that he neither builds up nor tears down, but stands having torn it down? He neither builds up nor tears down form, but stands having torn it down. He neither builds up nor tears down feeling... perception... fabrications... consciousness, but stands having torn it down.

“And what is it that he neither clings to nor abandons, but stands having abandoned it? He neither clings to nor abandons form, but stands having abandoned it. He neither clings to nor abandons feeling... perception... fabrications... consciousness, but stands having abandoned it.

“And what is it that he neither pulls in nor discards, but stands having discarded it? He neither pulls in nor discards form, but stands having discarded it. He neither pulls in nor discards feeling... perception... fabrications... consciousness, but stands having discarded it.

“And what is it that he neither piles up nor scatters, but stands having scattered it? He neither piles up nor scatters form, but stands having scattered it. He neither piles up nor scatters feeling... perception... fabrications... consciousness, but stands having scattered it.

“And to the monk whose mind is thus released, the devas, together with Indra, the Brahmās, & Pajāpatīs, pay homage even from afar:

‘Homage to you, O thoroughbred man.
Homage to you, O superlative man—
you of whom we don’t know even what
dependent on which
you’re absorbed.’”

NOTE

1. This passage suggests that the intentional process of fabrication is needed before the potential for the experience of an aggregate can be turned into a discernible aggregate. This parallels the teaching that present kamma is needed for past kamma to be experienced. See MN 109, note 2, and [SN 35:145](#).

See also: [SN 35:145](#); AN 10:6–7; AN 11:10

Almsgoers
Piṇḍolya Sutta (SN 22:80)

On one occasion the Blessed One was staying among the Sakyans at Kapilavatthu in the Banyan Park. Then, after having dismissed the Saṅgha of monks over a particular incident, he early in the morning adjusted his lower robes and, taking his bowl & outer robe, went into Kapilavatthu for alms. After having gone for alms in Kapilavatthu, after his meal, returning from his almsround, he went to the Great Forest for the day's abiding. Plunging into the Great Forest, he sat down at the root of a veḷuva sapling as his day's abiding.

Then, as he was alone in seclusion, this line of thought arose in his awareness: "I have turned away the Saṅgha of monks. But here there are monks who are new—not long gone forth, only recently come to this Dhamma & Vinaya. If they do not see me, there may be alteration in them, there may be change. Just as when a young calf does not see its mother, there may be alteration in it, there may be change; in the same way, there are monks who are new—not long gone forth, only recently come to this Dhamma & Vinaya. If they do not see me, there may be alteration in them, there may be change. Just as when young seedlings don't get water, there may be alteration in them, there may be change; in the same way, there are monks who are new—not long gone forth, only recently come to this Dhamma & Vinaya. If they do not see me, there may be alteration in them, there may be change. What if I were to aid the Saṅgha of monks as I did before?"

Then Brahmā Sahampati—having known with his own awareness the line of thinking in the Blessed One's awareness—just as a strong man might extend his flexed arm or flex his extended arm, disappeared from the Brahmā world and reappeared in front of the Blessed One.

Arranging his upper robe over one shoulder, he knelt down with his right knee on the ground, saluted the Blessed One with his hands before his heart, and said to him: "So it is, O Blessed One! So it is, O One Well-Gone! The Blessed One has turned away the Saṅgha of monks. But here there are monks who are new—not long gone forth, only recently come to this Dhamma & Vinaya. If they do not see the Blessed One, there may be alteration in them, there may be change. Just as when a young calf does not see its mother... Just as when young seedlings don't get water... in the same way, there are monks who are new—not long gone forth,

only recently come to this Dhamma & Vinaya. If they do not see the Blessed One, there may be alteration in them, there may be change. Let the Blessed One delight in the Saṅgha of monks! Let the Blessed One welcome the Saṅgha of monks! Let the Blessed One aid the Saṅgha of monks as he did before!”

The Blessed One acquiesced with silence.

Then Brahmā Sahampati, sensing the Blessed One’s acquiescence, bowed down to the Blessed One and, after circumambulating him, keeping him to his right, disappeared right there.

Then the Blessed One, emerging from his seclusion in the evening, went to the Banyan Park. On arrival he sat down on a seat made ready. After he had sat down he worked a psychic feat such that the monks went to him contritely, in ones and twos. On arrival, they bowed down to him and sat to one side. As they were sitting there the Blessed One said to them, “Monks, this is the lowliest form of livelihood, that of an almsgoer. A term of abuse in the world is, ‘You go about as an almsgoer with a bowl in your hand!’ And yet sons of good family take up (this livelihood) with compelling reason, in dependence on a compelling reason—not coerced by kings nor coerced by thieves nor from debt nor from fear nor to earn a livelihood, but (with the thought): ‘I am oppressed with birth, aging, & death, with sorrows, lamentations pains, distresses, & despairs. I am oppressed with stress, overcome with stress. Perhaps an ending of this entire mass of suffering & stress might be found!’

“And although this son of a good family has gone forth in this way, he is covetous, with strong passion for sensual desires, with a mind of ill will, of corrupt resolves, his mindfulness muddled, unalert, unconcentrated, his mind distracted, loose in his sense faculties. Just as a log from a funeral pyre, burning at both ends, smeared with excrement in the middle, fills no use as timber either in the village or in the wilderness: I speak of this person with this comparison. He has missed out on the enjoyments of the householder, and yet does not fulfill the goal of the contemplative life.

“Monks, there are these three types of unskillful thinking: thinking of sensuality, thinking of ill will, thinking of harm. These three types of

sensual thinking cease without remainder in one who dwells with his mind well established in the four establishing of mindfulness or who develops the themeless concentration.¹ This is reason enough, monks, to develop the themeless concentration. The themeless concentration, when developed & pursued, is of great fruit, great benefit.

“Monks, there are these two views: the view of becoming and the view of non-becoming. There the instructed disciple of the noble ones considers thus: ‘Is there anything in the world to which I could cling without being blameworthy?’ He discerns: ‘There is nothing in the world to which I could cling without being blameworthy.’ He discerns: ‘In clinging, I would be clinging just to form. In clinging, I would be clinging just to feeling... perception... fabrications. In clinging, I would be clinging just to consciousness. From that clinging of mine as a requisite condition would come becoming. From becoming as a requisite condition, birth. From birth as a requisite condition, then aging, illness, & death, sorrow, lamentation pain, distress, & despair would come into play. Thus would be the origination of this entire mass of suffering & stress.’

“What do you think, monks? Is form constant or inconstant?”

“Inconstant, lord.”

“And is that which is inconstant easeful or stressful?”

“Stressful, lord.”

“And is it fitting to regard what is inconstant, stressful, subject to change as: ‘This is mine. This is my self. This is what I am?’”

“No, lord.”

“... Is feeling constant or inconstant?”—“Inconstant, lord.” ...

“... Is perception constant or inconstant?”—“Inconstant, lord.” ...

“... Are fabrications constant or inconstant?”—“Inconstant, lord.” ...

“What do you think, monks? Is consciousness constant or inconstant?”

“Inconstant, lord.”

“And is that which is inconstant easeful or stressful?”

“Stressful, lord.”

“And is it fitting to regard what is inconstant, stressful, subject to change as: ‘This is mine. This is my self. This is what I am?’”

“No, lord.”

“Thus, monks, any form whatsoever that is past, future, or present; internal or external; blatant or subtle; common or sublime; far or near: Every form is to be seen as it has come to be with right discernment as: ‘This is not mine. This is not my self. This is not what I am.’

“Any feeling whatsoever....

“Any perception whatsoever....

“Any fabrications whatsoever....

“Any consciousness whatsoever that is past, future, or present; internal or external; blatant or subtle; common or sublime; far or near: Every consciousness is to be seen as it has come to be with right discernment as: ‘This is not mine. This is not my self. This is not what I am.’

“Seeing thus, the instructed disciple of the noble ones grows disenchanted with form, disenchanted with feeling, disenchanted with perception, disenchanted with fabrications, disenchanted with consciousness. Disenchanted, he becomes dispassionate. Through dispassion, he is released. With release, there is the knowledge, ‘Released.’ He discerns that ‘Birth is ended, the holy life fulfilled, the task done. There is nothing further for this world.’”

NOTE

1. See MN 121 and [SN 47:10](#).

See also: MN 60; AN 4:95; Ud 3:3; Iti 49

At Pālileyyaka

Pālileyyaka Sutta (SN 22:81)

I have heard that on one occasion the Blessed One was staying near Kosambī at Ghosita’s monastery. Then in the early morning, having

adjusted his lower robes and taking his bowl & outer robe, he went into Kosambī for alms. Having gone for alms in Kosambī, after the meal, returning from his alms round, he set his own lodging in order and—without calling his attendant or informing the Saṅgha of monks—set out wandering, alone & without a companion.

Then, not long after the Blessed One had left, a certain monk went to Ven. Ānanda and on arrival said to him, “Just now, my friend Ānanda, the Blessed One set his own lodging in order and—without calling his attendant or informing the Saṅgha of monks—set out wandering, alone & without a companion.”

“Whenever the Blessed One sets his own lodging in order and—without calling his attendant or informing the Saṅgha of monks—sets out wandering, alone & without a companion, he wants to live alone. He is not to be followed by anyone at such times.”

Then, after wandering by stages, the Blessed One came to Pālileyyaka. There he stayed at the root of the Auspicious Sal Tree.

Then a large number of monks went to Ven. Ānanda and on arrival exchanged courteous greetings. After an exchange of friendly courtesies & greetings they sat to one side. As they were sitting there, they said to Ven. Ānanda, “It has been a long time since we heard a Dhamma talk in the Blessed One’s presence. We want to hear a Dhamma talk in the Blessed One’s presence.”

Then Ven. Ānanda went with those monks to where the Blessed One was staying in Pālileyyaka, at the root of the Auspicious Sal Tree, and on arrival, after bowing down to him, sat to one side. As they were sitting there, the Blessed One instructed, urged, roused, & encouraged them with a talk on Dhamma.

Now, on that occasion this train of thought appeared in the awareness of one of the monks: “Now I wonder—knowing in what way, seeing in what way, does one without delay put an end to effluents?”

The Blessed One, perceiving with his awareness the train of thought in the monk’s awareness, said to the monks, “I have analyzed & taught you the Dhamma, monks. I have analyzed & taught you the four establishings of mindfulness, the four right exertions, the four bases of

power, the five faculties, the five strengths, the seven factors for awakening, & the noble eightfold path. And yet, even though I have analyzed & taught you the Dhamma, still there appears this train of thought in the awareness of one of the monks: ‘Now I wonder—knowing in what way, seeing in what way, does one without delay put an end to effluents?’

“Well then—knowing in what way, seeing in what way, *does* one without delay put an end to effluents? There is the case where an uninstructed, run-of-the-mill person—who has no regard for noble ones, is not well-versed or disciplined in their Dhamma; who has no regard for people of integrity, is not well-versed or disciplined in their Dhamma—assumes form to be the self. That assumption is a fabrication. Now what is the cause, what is the origination, what is the birth, what is the coming-into-existence of that fabrication? To an uninstructed, run-of-the-mill person, touched by that which is felt born of contact with ignorance, craving arises. That fabrication is born of that. And that fabrication is inconstant, fabricated, dependently co-arisen. That craving... That feeling... That contact... That ignorance is inconstant, fabricated, dependently co-arisen. It is by knowing & seeing in this way that one without delay puts an end to effluents.

“Or he doesn’t assume form to be the self, but he assumes the self as possessing form... form as in the self... self as in form... or feeling to be the self... the self as possessing feeling... feeling as in the self... self as in feeling... or perception to be the self... the self as possessing perception... perception as in the self... self as in perception... or fabrications to be the self... the self as possessing fabrications... fabrications as in the self... self as in fabrications... or consciousness to be the self... the self as possessing consciousness... consciousness as in the self... self as in consciousness.

“Now that assumption is a fabrication. What is the cause, what is the origination, what is the birth, what is the coming-into-existence of that fabrication? To an uninstructed, run-of-the-mill person, touched by the feeling born of contact with ignorance, craving arises. That fabrication is born of that. And that fabrication is inconstant, fabricated, dependently co-arisen. That craving... That feeling... That contact... That ignorance

is inconstant, fabricated, dependently co-arisen. It is by knowing & seeing in this way that one without delay puts an end to effluents.

“Or he doesn’t assume form to be the self... but he may have a view such as this: ‘This self is the same as the cosmos. This I will be after death, constant, lasting, eternal, not subject to change.’ This eternalist view is a fabrication.... Or... he may have a view such as this: ‘I would not be, neither would there be what is mine. I will not be, neither will there be what is mine.’ This annihilationist view is a fabrication.... Or... he may be doubtful & uncertain, having come to no conclusion with regard to the true Dhamma. That doubt, uncertainty, & coming-to-no-conclusion is a fabrication.

“What is the cause, what is the origination, what is the birth, what is the coming-into-existence of that fabrication? To an uninstructed, run-of-the-mill person, touched by what is felt born of contact with ignorance, craving arises. That fabrication is born of that. And that fabrication is inconstant, fabricated, dependently co-arisen. That craving... That feeling... That contact... That ignorance is inconstant, fabricated, dependently co-arisen. It is by knowing & seeing in this way that one without delay puts an end to effluents.”

See also: AN 10:92

Ānanda

Ānanda Sutta (SN 22:83)

Near Sāvattthī. There Ven. Ānanda addressed the monks, “Friend monks!”

“Yes, friend,” the monks responded to him.

Ven. Ānanda said, “Friends, Ven. Puṇṇa Mantāniputta was very helpful to us when we were newly ordained. He exhorted us with this exhortation:

“It’s with possessiveness, friend Ānanda, that there is “I am,” not without possessiveness. And through possessiveness of what is there “I

am,” not without possessiveness? Through possessiveness of form there is “I am,” not without possessiveness. Through possessiveness of feeling... perception... fabrications... Through possessiveness of consciousness there is “I am,” not without possessiveness.

“Just as if a young woman—or a man—youthful, fond of adornment, contemplating the image of her face in a mirror, pure & bright, or in a bowl of clear water, would look with possessiveness, not without possessiveness. In the same way, through possessiveness of form there is “I am,” not without possessiveness. Through possessiveness of feeling... perception... fabrications... Through possessiveness of consciousness there is “I am,” not without possessiveness.

“What do you think, friend Ānanda? Is form constant or inconstant?”

“Inconstant, friend?”

“And is that which is inconstant easeful or stressful?”

“Stressful, friend?”

“And is it fitting to regard what is inconstant, stressful, subject to change as: “This is mine. This is my self. This is what I am”?”

“No, friend?”

“... Is feeling constant or inconstant?”—“Inconstant, friend? ...

“... Is perception constant or inconstant?”—“Inconstant, friend? ...

“... Are fabrications constant or inconstant?”—“Inconstant, friend? ...

“What do you think, friend Ānanda? Is consciousness constant or inconstant?”

“Inconstant, friend?”

“And is that which is inconstant easeful or stressful?”

“Stressful, friend?”

“And is it fitting to regard what is inconstant, stressful, subject to change as: “This is mine. This is my self. This is what I am”?”

“No, friend?”

“Thus, friend Ānanda, any form whatsoever that is past, future, or present; internal or external; blatant or subtle; common or sublime; far or near: Every form is to be seen as it has come to be with right

discernment as: “This is not mine. This is not my self. This is not what I am.”

“Any feeling whatsoever....

“Any perception whatsoever....

“Any fabrications whatsoever....

“Any consciousness whatsoever that is past, future, or present; internal or external; blatant or subtle; common or sublime; far or near: Every consciousness is to be seen as it has come to be with right discernment as: “This is not mine. This is not my self. This is not what I am.”

“Seeing thus, the instructed disciple of the noble ones grows disenchanted with form, disenchanted with feeling, disenchanted with perception, disenchanted with fabrications, disenchanted with consciousness. Disenchanted, he becomes dispassionate. Through dispassion, he is released. With release, there is the knowledge, “Released.” He discerns that “Birth is ended, the holy life fulfilled, the task done. There is nothing further for this world.”

“Friends, Ven. Puṇṇa Maṇṭāniputta was very helpful to us when we were newly ordained. He exhorted us with this exhortation. And when I had heard this Dhamma-explanation from Ven. Puṇṇa Maṇṭāniputta, I broke through to the Dhamma.”

Tissa

Tissa Sutta (SN 22:84)

Near Sāvattthī. On that occasion Ven. Tissa, the Blessed One’s paternal cousin, told a large number of monks, “Friends, it’s as if my body is drugged. I’ve lost my bearings. Things aren’t clear to me. My mind keeps being overwhelmed with sloth & torpor. I lead the holy life dissatisfied. I have uncertainty about the teachings.”

Then a large number of monks went to the Blessed One and, on arrival, having bowed down to him, sat to one side. As they were sitting there, they told him: “Lord, Ven. Tissa, the Blessed One’s paternal

cousin, has told a large number of monks, ‘Friends, it’s as if my body is drugged. I’ve lost my bearings. Things aren’t clear to me. My mind keeps being overwhelmed with sloth & torpor. I lead the holy life dissatisfied. I have uncertainty about the teachings.’”

Then the Blessed One told a certain monk, “Come, monk. In my name, call Tissa, saying, ‘The Teacher calls you, my friend.’”

“As you say, lord,” the monk answered and, having gone to Ven. Tissa, on arrival he said, “The Teacher calls you, my friend.”

“As you say, my friend,” Ven. Tissa replied. Then he went to the Blessed One and, on arrival, having bowed down to him, sat to one side. As he was sitting there, the Blessed One said to him, “Is it true, Tissa, that you have told a large number of monks, ‘Friends, it’s as if my body is drugged. I’ve lost my bearings. Things aren’t clear to me. My mind keeps being overwhelmed with sloth & torpor. I lead the holy life dissatisfied. I have uncertainty about the teachings?’”

“Yes, lord.”

“What do you think, Tissa? In one who is not without passion, desire, love, thirst, fever, & craving for form, does there arise sorrow, lamentation, pain, distress, & despair from change & alteration in his form?”

“Yes, lord.”

“Good, Tissa, good. That’s how it is for one who is not without passion for form.

“What do you think, Tissa? In one who is not without passion, desire, love, thirst, fever, & craving for feeling... perception... fabrications, does there arise sorrow, lamentation, pain, distress, & despair from change & alteration in his fabrications?”

“Yes, lord.”

“Good, Tissa, good. That’s how it is for one who is not without passion for fabrications.

“What do you think, Tissa? In one who is not without passion, desire, love, thirst, fever, & craving for consciousness, does there arise sorrow, lamentation, pain, distress, & despair from change & alteration in his consciousness?”

“Yes, lord.”

“Good, Tissa, good. That’s how it is for one who is not without passion for consciousness.

“Now what do you think, Tissa? In one who is without passion, desire, love, thirst, fever, & craving for form, does there arise sorrow, lamentation, pain, distress, & despair from change & alteration in his form?”

“No, lord.”

“Good, Tissa, good. That’s how it is for one who is without passion for form.

“What do you think, Tissa? In one who is without passion, desire, love, thirst, fever, & craving for feeling... perception... fabrications, does there arise sorrow, lamentation, pain, distress, & despair from change & alteration in his fabrications?”

“No, lord.”

“Good, Tissa, good. That’s how it is for one who is without passion for fabrications.

“What do you think, Tissa? In one who is without passion, desire, love, thirst, fever, & craving for consciousness, does there arise sorrow, lamentation, pain, distress, & despair from change & alteration in his consciousness?”

“No, lord.”

“Good, Tissa, good. That’s how it is for one who is without passion for consciousness.

“What do you think, Tissa? Is form constant or inconstant?”

“Inconstant, lord.”

“And is that which is inconstant easeful or stressful?”

“Stressful, lord.”

“And is it fitting to regard what is inconstant, stressful, subject to change as: ‘This is mine. This is my self. This is what I am?’”

“No, lord.”

“... Is feeling constant or inconstant?”—“Inconstant, lord.” ...

“... Is perception constant or inconstant?”—“Inconstant, lord.” ...

“... Are fabrications constant or inconstant?”—“Inconstant, lord.” ...

“What do you think, Tissa? Is consciousness constant or inconstant?”

“Inconstant, lord.”

“And is that which is inconstant easeful or stressful?”

“Stressful, lord.”

“And is it fitting to regard what is inconstant, stressful, subject to change as: ‘This is mine. This is my self. This is what I am?’”

“No, lord.”

“Thus, Tissa, any form whatsoever that is past, future, or present; internal or external; blatant or subtle; common or sublime; far or near: Every form is to be seen as it has come to be with right discernment as: ‘This is not mine. This is not my self. This is not what I am.’

“Any feeling whatsoever....

“Any perception whatsoever....

“Any fabrications whatsoever....

“Any consciousness whatsoever that is past, future, or present; internal or external; blatant or subtle; common or sublime; far or near: Every consciousness is to be seen as it has come to be with right discernment as: ‘This is not mine. This is not my self. This is not what I am.’

“Seeing thus, the instructed disciple of the noble ones grows disenchanted with form, disenchanted with feeling, disenchanted with perception, disenchanted with fabrications, disenchanted with consciousness. Disenchanted, he becomes dispassionate. Through dispassion, he is released. With release, there is the knowledge, ‘Released.’ He discerns that ‘Birth is ended, the holy life fulfilled, the task done. There is nothing further for this world.’

“Tissa, it’s as if there were two men, one not skilled in the path, the other skilled in the path. In that case the man not skilled in the path would ask the man skilled in the path about the path. The second man would say, ‘Come, my good man, this is the path. Go along it a little further and you will see a fork in the road. Avoiding the left fork, take the right. Go along a little further and you will see an intense forest

grove. Go along a little further and you will see a large marshy swamp. Go along a little further and you will see a deep drop-off. Go along a little further and you will see a delightful stretch of level ground.

“I have made this comparison, Tissa, to convey a meaning. The meaning is this: The man unskilled in the path stands for a run-of-the-mill person. The man skilled in the path stands for the Tathāgata, worthy & rightly self-awakened. The fork in the road stands for uncertainty. The left fork stands for the eightfold wrong path—i.e., wrong view, wrong resolve, wrong speech, wrong action, wrong livelihood, wrong effort, wrong mindfulness, wrong concentration. The right fork stands for the noble eightfold path—i.e., right view, right resolve, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness, right concentration. The intense forest grove stands for ignorance. The large marshy swamp stands for sensual desires. The deep drop-off stands for anger & despair. The delightful stretch of level ground stands for unbinding.

“Rejoice, Tissa! Rejoice! I am here to exhort you, I am here to aid you, I am here to instruct you!”

That is what the Blessed One said. Gratified, Ven. Tissa delighted in the Blessed One’s words.

See also: MN 4; MN 107; MN 126; [SN 42:11](#); [SN 47:13](#)

To Yamaka

Yamaka Sutta (SN 22:85)

I have heard that on one occasion Ven. Sāriputta was staying near Sāvattthī in Jeta’s Grove, Anāthapiṇḍika’s monastery. Now, at that time this evil viewpoint [*diṭṭhigata*] had arisen to Ven. Yamaka: “As I understand the Teaching explained by the Blessed One, a monk with no more effluents, on the break-up of the body, is annihilated, perishes, & does not exist after death.” A large number of monks heard, “They say that this evil viewpoint has arisen to Ven. Yamaka: ‘As I understand the Teaching explained by the Blessed One, a monk with no more effluents,

on the break-up of the body, is annihilated, perishes, & does not exist after death.” So they went to Ven. Yamaka and on arrival exchanged courteous greetings. After an exchange of friendly greetings & courtesies, they sat to one side. As they were sitting there, they said to Ven. Yamaka, “Is it true, friend Yamaka, that this evil viewpoint has arisen to you: ‘As I understand the Teaching explained by the Blessed One, a monk with no more effluents, on the break-up of the body, is annihilated, perishes, & does not exist after death.’

“Yes, friends. As I understand the Teaching explained by the Blessed One, a monk with no more effluents, on the break-up of the body, is annihilated, perishes, & does not exist after death.”

“Don’t say that, friend Yamaka. Don’t misrepresent the Blessed One. It’s not good to misrepresent the Blessed One, for the Blessed One would not say, ‘A monk with no more effluents, on the break-up of the body, is annihilated, perishes, & does not exist after death.’”

But even though Ven. Yamaka was thus rebuked by those monks, he—from stubbornness & attachment—maintained his adherence to that evil viewpoint: ‘As I understand the Teaching explained by the Blessed One, a monk with no more effluents, on the break-up of the body, is annihilated, perishes, & does not exist after death.’

When those monks could not pry Ven. Yamaka loose from his evil viewpoint, they got up from their seats and went to Ven. Sāriputta. On arrival they said to him: “Friend Sāriputta, this evil viewpoint has arisen to Ven. Yamaka: ‘As I understand the Teaching explained by the Blessed One, a monk with no more effluents, on the break-up of the body, is annihilated, perishes, & does not exist after death.’ It would be good if you would go to Ven. Yamaka out of sympathy for his sake.”

Ven. Sāriputta consented by remaining silent.

Then, having left his seclusion in the late afternoon, Ven. Sāriputta went to Ven. Yamaka and, on arrival, exchanged courteous greetings with him. After an exchange of friendly greetings & courtesies, he sat to one side. As he was sitting there, he said to Ven. Yamaka, “Is it true, friend Yamaka, that this evil viewpoint has arisen to you: ‘As I understand the Teaching explained by the Blessed One, a monk with no

more effluents, on the break-up of the body, is annihilated, perishes, & does not exist after death?

“Yes, friend Sāriputta. As I understand the Teaching explained by the Blessed One, a monk with no more effluents, on the break-up of the body, is annihilated, perishes, & does not exist after death.”

“What do you think, friend Yamaka? Is form constant or inconstant?”

“Inconstant, my friend.”

“And is that which is inconstant easeful or stressful?”

“Stressful, my friend.”

“And is it proper to regard what is inconstant, stressful, subject to change as: ‘This is mine. This is my self. This is what I am?’”

“No, my friend.”

“... Is feeling constant or inconstant?”—“Inconstant, my friend.” ...

“... Is perception constant or inconstant?”—“Inconstant, my friend.”

...

“... Are fabrications constant or inconstant?”—“Inconstant, my friend.” ...

“Is consciousness constant or inconstant?”

“Inconstant, my friend.”

“And is that which is inconstant easeful or stressful?”

“Stressful, my friend.”

“And is it proper to regard what is inconstant, stressful, subject to change as: ‘This is mine. This is my self. This is what I am?’”

“No, my friend.”

“Thus, friend Yamaka, any form whatsoever that is past, future, or present; internal or external; blatant or subtle; common or sublime; far or near: Every form is to be seen as it has come to be with right discernment as: ‘This is not mine. This is not my self. This is not what I am.’

“Any feeling whatsoever....

“Any perception whatsoever....

“Any fabrications whatsoever....

“Any consciousness whatsoever that is past, future, or present; internal or external; blatant or subtle; common or sublime; far or near: Every consciousness is to be seen as it has come to be with right discernment as: ‘This is not mine. This is not my self. This is not what I am.’

“Seeing thus, friend Yamaka, the instructed disciple of the noble ones grows disenchanted with form, disenchanted with feeling, disenchanted with perception, disenchanted with fabrications, disenchanted with consciousness. Disenchanted, he becomes dispassionate. Through dispassion, he is released. With release, there is the knowledge, ‘Released.’ He discerns that ‘Birth is ended, the holy life fulfilled, the task done. There is nothing further for this world.’

“What do you think, friend Yamaka? Do you regard form as the Tathāgata?”

“No, my friend.”

“Do you regard feeling as the Tathāgata?”

“No, my friend.”

“Do you regard perception as the Tathāgata?”

“No, my friend.”

“Do you regard fabrications as the Tathāgata?”

“No, my friend.”

“Do you regard consciousness as the Tathāgata?”

“No, my friend.”

“What do you think? Do you regard the Tathāgata as being in form? ... Elsewhere than form? ... In feeling? ... Elsewhere than feeling? ... In perception? ... Elsewhere than perception? ... In fabrications? ... Elsewhere than fabrications? ... In consciousness? ... Elsewhere than consciousness?”

“No, my friend.”

“What do you think? Do you regard the Tathāgata as form-feeling-perception-fabrications-consciousness?”

“No, my friend.”

“Do you regard the Tathāgata as that which is without form, without feeling, without perception, without fabrications, without consciousness?”

“No, my friend.”

“And so, friend Yamaka—when you can’t pin down the Tathāgata as a truth or reality even in the present life—is it proper for you to declare, ‘As I understand the Teaching explained by the Blessed One, a monk with no more effluents, on the break-up of the body, is annihilated, perishes, & does not exist after death?’”

“Previously, friend Sāriputta, I did foolishly hold that evil viewpoint. But now, having heard your explanation of the Dhamma, I have abandoned that evil viewpoint and have broken through to the Dhamma.”

“Then, friend Yamaka, how would you answer if you are thus asked: ‘A monk, a worthy one, with no more effluents: What is he on the break-up of the body, after death?’”

“Thus asked, I would answer, ‘Form is inconstant... Feeling... Perception... Fabrications... Consciousness is inconstant. That which is inconstant is stressful. That which is stressful has ceased and gone to its end.’”

“Very good, friend Yamaka. Very good. In that case I will give you an analogy for the sake of making your understanding of this point even greater. Suppose there were a householder or householder’s son—rich, wealthy, with many possessions—who was thoroughly well-guarded. Then suppose there came along a certain man, desiring what was not his benefit, desiring what was not his welfare, desiring his loss of security, desiring to kill him. The thought would occur to this man: ‘It would not be easy to kill this person by force. What if I were to sneak in and then kill him?’

“So he would go to the householder or householder’s son and say, ‘May you take me on as a servant, lord.’ With that, the householder or householder’s son would take the man on as a servant.

“Having been taken on as a servant, the man would rise in the morning before his master, go to bed in the evening only after his

master, doing whatever his master ordered, always acting to please him, speaking politely to him. Then the householder or householder's son would come to regard him as a friend & companion, and would fall into his trust. When the man realizes, 'This householder or householder's son trusts me,' then encountering him in a solitary place, he would kill him with a sharp knife.

"Now what do you think, friend Yamaka? When that man went to the householder or householder's son and said, 'May you take me on as a servant, lord': wasn't he even then a murderer? And yet although he was a murderer, the householder or householder's son did not know him as 'my murderer.' And when, taken on as a servant, he would rise in the morning before his master, go to bed in the evening only after his master, doing whatever his master ordered, always acting to please him, speaking politely to him: wasn't he even then a murderer? And yet although he was a murderer, the householder or householder's son did not know him as 'my murderer.' And when he encountered him in a solitary place and killed him with a sharp knife: wasn't he even then a murderer? And yet although he was a murderer, the householder or householder's son did not know him as 'my murderer.'"

"Yes, my friend."

"In the same way, an uninstructed, run-of-the-mill person—who has no regard for noble ones, is not well-versed or disciplined in their Dhamma; who has no regard for people of integrity, is not well-versed or disciplined in their Dhamma—assumes form to be the self, or the self as possessing form, or form as in the self, or the self as in form.

"He assumes feeling to be the self....

"He assumes perception to be the self....

"He assumes fabrications to be the self....

"He assumes consciousness to be the self, or the self as possessing consciousness, or consciousness as in the self, or the self as in consciousness.

"He does not discern inconstant form, as it has come to be, as 'inconstant form.' He does not discern inconstant feeling, as it has come to be, as 'inconstant feeling.' He does not discern inconstant

perception.... He does not discern inconstant fabrications.... He does not discern inconstant consciousness, as it has come to be, as ‘inconstant consciousness.’

“He does not discern stressful form, as it has come to be, as ‘stressful form.’ He does not discern stressful feeling.... He does not discern stressful perception.... He does not discern stressful fabrications.... He does not discern stressful consciousness, as it has come to be, as ‘stressful consciousness.’

“He does not discern not-self form, as it has come to be, as ‘not-self form.’ He does not discern not-self feeling.... He does not discern not-self perception.... He does not discern not-self fabrications.... He does not discern not-self consciousness, as it has come to be, as ‘not-self consciousness.’

“He does not discern fabricated form, as it has come to be, as ‘fabricated form.’ He does not discern fabricated feeling.... He does not discern fabricated perception.... He does not discern fabricated fabrications.... He does not discern fabricated consciousness, as it has come to be, as ‘fabricated consciousness.’

“He does not discern murderous form, as it has come to be, as ‘murderous form.’ He does not discern murderous feeling.... He does not discern murderous perception.... He does not discern murderous fabrications.... He does not discern murderous consciousness, as it has come to be, as ‘murderous consciousness.’

“He gets attached to form, clings to form, & determines it to be ‘my self.’ He gets attached to feeling.... He gets attached to perception.... He gets attached to fabrications.... He gets attached to consciousness, clings to consciousness, & determines it to be ‘my self.’ These five clinging-aggregates—attached to, clung to—lead to his long-term loss & suffering.

“Now, the well-instructed disciple of the noble ones—who has regard for noble ones, is well-versed & disciplined in their Dhamma; who has regard for people of integrity, is well-versed & disciplined in their Dhamma—doesn’t assume form to be the self, or the self as possessing form, or form as in the self, or the self as in form.

“He doesn’t assume feeling to be the self....

“He doesn’t assume perception to be the self....

“He doesn’t assume fabrications to be the self....

“He doesn’t assume consciousness to be the self, or the self as possessing consciousness, or consciousness as in the self, or the self as in consciousness.

“He discerns inconstant form, as it has come to be, as ‘inconstant form.’ He discerns inconstant feeling.... He discerns inconstant perception.... He discerns inconstant fabrications.... He discerns inconstant consciousness, as it has come to be, as ‘inconstant consciousness.’

“He discerns stressful form, as it has come to be, as ‘stressful form.’ He discerns stressful feeling.... He discerns stressful perception.... He discerns stressful fabrications.... He discerns stressful consciousness, as it has come to be, as ‘stressful consciousness.’

“He discerns not-self form, as it has come to be, as ‘not-self form.’ He discerns not-self feeling.... He discerns not-self perception.... He discerns not-self fabrications.... He discerns not-self consciousness, as it has come to be, as ‘not-self consciousness.’

“He discerns fabricated form, as it has come to be, as ‘fabricated form.’ He discerns fabricated feeling.... He discerns fabricated perception.... He discerns fabricated fabrications.... He discerns fabricated consciousness, as it has come to be, as ‘fabricated consciousness.’

“He discerns murderous form, as it has come to be, as ‘murderous form.’ He discerns murderous feeling.... He discerns murderous perception.... He discerns murderous fabrications.... He discerns murderous consciousness, as it has come to be, as ‘murderous consciousness.’

“He does not get attached to form, does not cling to form, does not determine it to be ‘my self.’ He does not get attached to feeling.... He does not get attached to perception.... He does not get attached to fabrications.... He does not get attached to consciousness, does not cling to consciousness, does not determine it to be ‘my self.’ These five

clinging-aggregates—not attached to, not clung to—lead to his long-term happiness & well-being.”

“Even so, friend Sāriputta, are those who have people like you as their companions in the holy life, teaching them, admonishing them out of sympathy, desiring their welfare. For now that I have heard this explanation of the Dhamma from you, my mind—through lack of clinging/sustenance—has been released from effluents.”

See also: MN 63; MN 72; MN 109; AN 4:24; AN 6:103; AN 10:81; Ud 8:9; Iti 112; Sn 4:10; Sn 5:6

To Anurādha

Anurādha Sutta (SN 22:86)

I have heard that on one occasion the Blessed One was staying near Vesāli, in the Great Forest, at the Hall of the Gabled Pavilion. At that time Ven. Anurādha was staying not far from the Blessed One in a wilderness hut.

Then a large number of wandering sectarians went to Ven. Anurādha and on arrival exchanged courteous greetings with him. After an exchange of friendly greetings & courtesies, they sat to one side. As they were sitting there, they said to Ven. Anurādha, “Friend Anurādha, the Tathāgata—the supreme man, the superlative man, attainer of the superlative attainment—being described, is described with (one of) these four positions: The Tathāgata exists after death, does not exist after death, both does & does not exist after death, neither exists nor does not exist after death.”

When this was said, Ven. Anurādha said to the wandering sectarians, “Friends, the Tathāgata—the supreme man, the superlative man, attainer of the superlative attainment—being described, is described otherwise than with these four positions: The Tathāgata exists after death, does not exist after death, both does & does not exist after death, neither exists nor does not exist after death.”

When this was said, the wandering sectarians said to Ven. Anurādha, “This monk is either a newcomer, not long gone forth, or else an elder who is foolish & inexperienced.” So the wandering sectarians, addressing Ven. Anurādha as they would a newcomer or a fool, got up from their seats and left.

Then not long after the wandering sectarians had left, this thought occurred to Ven. Anurādha: “If I am questioned again by those wandering sectarians, how will I answer in such a way that will I speak in line with what the Blessed One has said, will not misrepresent the Blessed One with what is unfactual, will answer in line with the Dhamma, so that no one whose thinking is in line with the Dhamma will have grounds for criticizing me?”

Then Ven. Anurādha went to the Blessed One and on arrival, having bowed down to the Blessed One, sat to one side. As he was sitting there he said to the Blessed One: “Just now I was staying not far from the Blessed One in a wilderness hut. Then a large number of wandering sectarians came and.... said to me, ‘Friend Anurādha, the Tathāgata—the supreme man, the superlative man, attainer of the superlative attainment—being described, is described with (one of) these four positions: The Tathāgata exists after death, does not exist after death, both does & does not exist after death, neither exists nor does not exist after death.’

“When this was said, I said to them, ‘Friends, the Tathāgata—the supreme man, the superlative man, attainer of the superlative attainment—being described, is described otherwise than with these four positions: The Tathāgata exists after death, does not exist after death, both does & does not exist after death, neither exists nor does not exist after death.’

“When this was said, the wandering sectarians said to me, ‘This monk is either a newcomer, not long gone forth, or else an elder who is foolish & inexperienced.’ So, addressing me as they would a newcomer or a fool, they got up from their seats and left.

“Then not long after the wandering sectarians had left, this thought occurred to me: ‘If I am questioned again by those wandering sectarians, how will I answer in such a way that will I speak in line with what the Blessed One has said, will not misrepresent the Blessed One with what is unfactual, will answer in line with the Dhamma, and no one whose

thinking is in line with the Dhamma will have grounds for criticizing me?”

“What do you think, Anurādhā? Is form constant or inconstant?”

“Inconstant, lord.”

“And is that which is inconstant easeful or stressful?”

“Stressful, lord.”

“And is it proper to regard what is inconstant, stressful, subject to change as: ‘This is mine. This is my self. This is what I am?’”

“No, lord.”

“... Is feeling constant or inconstant?”—“Inconstant, lord.” ...

“... Is perception constant or inconstant?”—“Inconstant, lord.” ...

“... Are fabrications constant or inconstant?”—“Inconstant, lord.” ...

“Is consciousness constant or inconstant?”

“Inconstant, lord.”

“And is that which is inconstant easeful or stressful?”

“Stressful, lord.”

“And is it proper to regard what is inconstant, stressful, subject to change as: ‘This is mine. This is my self. This is what I am?’”

“No, lord.”

“Thus, Anurādhā, any form whatsoever that is past, future, or present; internal or external; blatant or subtle; common or sublime; far or near: Every form is to be seen as it has come to be with right discernment as: ‘This is not mine. This is not my self. This is not what I am.’

“Any feeling whatsoever....

“Any perception whatsoever....

“Any fabrications whatsoever....

“Any consciousness whatsoever that is past, future, or present; internal or external; blatant or subtle; common or sublime; far or near: Every consciousness is to be seen as it has come to be with right discernment as: ‘This is not mine. This is not my self. This is not what I am.’

“Seeing thus, Anurādhā, the instructed disciple of the noble ones grows disenchanted with form, disenchanted with feeling, disenchanted with perception, disenchanted with fabrications, disenchanted with consciousness. Disenchanted, he becomes dispassionate. Through dispassion, he is released. With release, there is the knowledge, ‘Released.’ He discerns that ‘Birth is ended, the holy life fulfilled, the task done. There is nothing further for this world.’

“What do you think, Anurādhā? Do you regard form as the Tathāgata?”

“No, lord.”

“Do you regard feeling as the Tathāgata?”

“No, lord.”

“Do you regard perception as the Tathāgata?”

“No, lord.”

“Do you regard fabrications as the Tathāgata?”

“No, lord.”

“Do you regard consciousness as the Tathāgata?”

“No, lord.”

“What do you think, Anurādhā? Do you regard the Tathāgata as being in form? ... Elsewhere than form? ... In feeling? ... Elsewhere than feeling? ... In perception? ... Elsewhere than perception? ... In fabrications? ... Elsewhere than fabrications? ... In consciousness? ... Elsewhere than consciousness?”

“No, lord.”

“What do you think, Anurādhā? Do you regard the Tathāgata as form-feeling-perception-fabrications-consciousness?”

“No, lord.”

“Do you regard the Tathāgata as that which is without form, without feeling, without perception, without fabrications, without consciousness?”

“No, lord.”

“And so, Anurādhā—when you can’t pin down the Tathāgata as a truth or reality even in the present life—is it proper for you to declare,

‘Friends, the Tathāgata—the supreme man, the superlative man, attainer of the superlative attainment—being described, is described otherwise than with these four positions: The Tathāgata exists after death, does not exist after death, both does & does not exist after death, neither exists nor does not exist after death?’”

“No, lord.”

“Very good, Anurādha. Very good. Both formerly & now, it is only stress that I describe, and the cessation of stress.”

To Assaji

Assaji Sutta (SN 22:88)

I have heard that on one occasion the Blessed One was staying near Rājagaha, at the Squirrels’ Feeding Ground. And on that occasion Ven. Assaji was staying at Kassapaka’s Park, diseased, in pain, severely ill. Then Ven. Assaji said to his attendants, “Come, friends. Go to the Blessed One and, on arrival, pay homage to his feet with your head in my name and say, ‘Lord, the monk Assaji is diseased, in pain, severely ill. He pays homage with his head to the Blessed One’s feet.’ And then say: ‘It would be good, lord, if the Blessed One would visit the monk Assaji, out of sympathy for him.’”

Responding, “As you say, friend,” to Ven. Assaji, the monks went to the Blessed One and, on arrival, bowed down to him and sat to one side. As they were sitting there they said, “Lord, the monk Assaji is diseased, in pain, severely ill. He pays homage with his head to the Blessed One’s feet. And he says, ‘It would be good, lord, if the Blessed One would visit the monk Assaji, out of sympathy for him.’” The Blessed One acquiesced through silence.

Then the Blessed One, emerging from his seclusion in the evening,¹ went to Ven. Assaji. Ven. Assaji saw the Blessed One coming from afar and, on seeing him, stirred from his bed. So the Blessed One said to him, “Enough, Assaji. Don’t stir from your bed. There are these seats already arranged. I will sit there.”

The Blessed One sat down on an arranged seat. When he had sat down, he said to Ven. Assaji, “I hope you are getting better, Assaji. I hope you are comfortable. I hope that your pains are lessening and not increasing. I hope that there are signs of their lessening, and not of their increasing.”

“I am not getting better, lord. I am not comfortable. My extreme pains are increasing, not lessening. There are signs of their increasing, and not of their lessening.”

“I hope, Assaji, that you have no anxiety, no remorse.”

“Actually, lord, I have not just a little anxiety, not just a little remorse.”

“But I hope, Assaji, that you can’t fault yourself with regard to your virtue.”

“No, lord, I can’t fault myself with regard to my virtue.”

“But if you can’t fault yourself with regard to your virtue, then what is your anxiety? What is your remorse?”

“Lord, before when I was sick I dwelled calming bodily fabrications.² But now I don’t gain that concentration. On not gaining that concentration, the thought occurs to me, ‘May I not decline!’”

“Assaji, those contemplatives & brāhmans for whom concentration is the essence, for whom concentration is the contemplative life³: When they don’t gain concentration, the thought occurs to them, ‘May we not decline!’

“What do you think, Assaji? Is form constant or inconstant?”

“Inconstant, lord.”

“And is that which is inconstant easeful or stressful?”

“Stressful, lord.”

“And is it proper to regard what is inconstant, stressful, subject to change as: ‘This is mine. This is my self. This is what I am?’”

“No, lord.”

“... Is feeling constant or inconstant?”—“Inconstant, lord.” ...

“... Is perception constant or inconstant?”—“Inconstant, lord.” ...

“... Are fabrications constant or inconstant?”—“Inconstant, lord.” ...

“Is consciousness constant or inconstant?”

“Inconstant, lord.”

“And is that which is inconstant easeful or stressful?”

“Stressful, lord.”

“And is it proper to regard what is inconstant, stressful, subject to change as: ‘This is mine. This is my self. This is what I am?’”

“No, lord.”

“Seeing thus, Assaji, the instructed disciple of the noble ones grows disenchanted with form, disenchanted with feeling, disenchanted with perception, disenchanted with fabrications, disenchanted with consciousness. Disenchanted, he becomes dispassionate. Through dispassion, he is released. With release, there is the knowledge, ‘Released.’ He discerns that ‘Birth is ended, the holy life fulfilled, the task done. There is nothing further for this world.’

“If sensing a feeling of pleasure, he discerns it as ‘inconstant.’ He discerns it as ‘not grasped at.’ He discerns it as ‘not relished.’ If sensing a feeling of pain, he discerns it as ‘inconstant.’ He discerns it as ‘not grasped at.’ He discerns it as ‘not relished.’ If sensing a feeling of neither pleasure nor pain, he discerns it as ‘inconstant.’ He discerns it as ‘not grasped at.’ He discerns it as ‘not relished.’

“If sensing a feeling of pleasure, he senses it disjoined from it. If sensing a feeling of pain, he senses it disjoined from it. If sensing a feeling of neither pleasure nor pain, he senses it disjoined from it. [He discerns it as ‘inconstant.’ He discerns it as ‘not grasped at.’ He discerns it as ‘not relished.’]⁴ If sensing a feeling limited to the body, he discerns, ‘I am sensing a feeling limited to the body.’ If sensing a feeling limited to life, he discerns, ‘I am sensing a feeling limited to life.’ He discerns, ‘With the break-up of the body, after the termination of life, all that is experienced, not being relished, will grow cold right here.’

“Just as an oil lamp would burn in dependence on oil & wick and, from the termination of the oil & wick, it would go out unnourished; in the same way, if sensing a feeling limited to the body, he discerns, ‘I am sensing a feeling limited to the body.’ If sensing a feeling limited to life, he discerns, ‘I am sensing a feeling limited to life.’ He discerns, ‘With the

break-up of the body, after the termination of life, all that is experienced, not being relished, will grow cold right here.”

NOTES

1. CDB mistakenly indicates that the Buddha visited Ven. Assaji early in the morning.
2. The in-and-out breath. See MN 44, MN 118, and [SN 36:11](#).
3. *Samādhi-sāmañña*. On the meaning of *sāmañña*, see MN 61, note 2. On the essence of the holy life, see MN 29–30.
4. The passage in brackets is not found in the parallel passages at MN 140 and [SN 54:8](#) in the Thai edition of the Canon, and is also not found in the Burmese edition of this discourse.

See also: MN 143; [SN 46:14](#); [SN 52:10](#); [SN 55:21](#); [SN 55:54](#); AN 10:48

About Khemaka

Khemaka Sutta (SN 22:89)

On one occasion many elder monks were staying near Kosambī at Ghosita’s monastery. And at that time Ven. Khemaka was staying at the Jujube Tree Park, diseased, in pain, severely ill. Then in the evening the elder monks left their seclusion and addressed Ven. Dāsaka, (saying,) “Come, friend Dāsaka. Go to the monk Khemaka and on arrival say to him, ‘The elders, friend Khemaka, say to you, “We hope you are getting better, friend. We hope you are comfortable. We hope that your pains are lessening and not increasing. We hope that there are signs of their lessening, and not of their increasing.”’”

Replying, “As you say, friends,” to the elder monks, Ven. Dāsaka went to Ven. Khemaka and on arrival said to him: “The elders, friend Khemaka, say to you, ‘We hope you are getting better, friend. We hope you are comfortable. We hope that your pains are lessening and not increasing. We hope that there are signs of their lessening, and not of their increasing.’”

“I am not getting better, my friend. I am not comfortable. My extreme pains are increasing, not lessening. There are signs of their increasing, and not of their lessening.”

Then Ven. Dāsaka went to the elder monks and, on arrival, said to them, “The monk Khemaka has said to me, ‘I am not getting better, my friend. I am not comfortable. My extreme pains are increasing, not lessening. There are signs of their increasing, and not of their lessening.’”

“Come, friend Dāsaka. Go to the monk Khemaka and on arrival say to him, ‘The elders, friend Khemaka, say to you, “Concerning these five clinging-aggregates described by the Blessed One—i.e., the form clinging-aggregate, the feeling clinging-aggregate, the perception clinging-aggregate, the fabrications clinging-aggregate, the consciousness clinging-aggregate: Do you assume anything with regard to these five clinging-aggregates to be self or belonging to self?”’”

Replying, “As you say, friends,” to the elder monks, Ven. Dāsaka went to Ven. Khemaka and on arrival said to him, “The elders, friend Khemaka, say to you, ‘Concerning these five clinging-aggregates described by the Blessed One—i.e., the form clinging-aggregate, the feeling clinging-aggregate, the perception clinging-aggregate, the fabrications clinging-aggregate, the consciousness clinging-aggregate: Do you assume anything with regard to these five clinging-aggregates to be self or belonging to self?’”

“Friend, concerning these five clinging-aggregates described by the Blessed One—i.e., the form clinging-aggregate, the feeling clinging-aggregate, the perception clinging-aggregate, the fabrications clinging-aggregate, the consciousness clinging-aggregate: With regard to these five clinging-aggregates, there is nothing I assume to be self or belonging to self.”

Then Ven. Dāsaka went to the elder monks and, on arrival, said to them, “The monk Khemaka has said to me, ‘Friend, concerning these five clinging-aggregates described by the Blessed One—i.e., the form clinging-aggregate, the feeling clinging-aggregate, the perception clinging-aggregate, the fabrications clinging-aggregate, the consciousness clinging-aggregate: With regard to these five clinging-aggregates, there is nothing I assume to be self or belonging to self.’”

“Come, friend Dāsaka. Go to the monk Khemaka and on arrival say to him, ‘The elders, friend Khemaka, say to you, “Concerning these five clinging-aggregates described by the Blessed One—i.e., the form clinging-aggregate, the feeling clinging-aggregate, the perception clinging-aggregate, the fabrications clinging-aggregate, the consciousness clinging-aggregate: If, with regard to these five clinging-aggregates, Ven. Khemaka assumes nothing to be self or belonging to self, then Ven. Khemaka is an arahant, devoid of effluents.”’”

Replying, “As you say, friends,” to the elder monks, Ven. Dāsaka went to Ven. Khemaka and on arrival said to him, “The elders, friend Khemaka, say to you, ‘Concerning these five clinging-aggregates described by the Blessed One—i.e., the form clinging-aggregate, the feeling clinging-aggregate, the perception clinging-aggregate, the fabrications clinging-aggregate, the consciousness clinging-aggregate: If, with regard to these five clinging-aggregates, Ven. Khemaka assumes nothing to be self or belonging to self, then Ven. Khemaka is an arahant, devoid of effluents.’”

“Friend, concerning these five clinging-aggregates described by the Blessed One—i.e., the form clinging-aggregate, the feeling clinging-aggregate, the perception clinging-aggregate, the fabrications clinging-aggregate, the consciousness clinging-aggregate: With regard to these five clinging-aggregates, there *is* nothing I assume to be self or belonging to self, and yet I am not an arahant. With regard to these five clinging-aggregates, ‘I am’ has not been overcome, although I don’t assume that ‘I am this.’”

Then Ven. Dāsaka went to the elder monks and, on arrival, said to them, “The monk Khemaka has said to me, ‘Friend, concerning these five clinging-aggregates described by the Blessed One—i.e., the form clinging-aggregate, the feeling clinging-aggregate, the perception clinging-aggregate, the fabrications clinging-aggregate, the consciousness clinging-aggregate: With regard to these five clinging-aggregates, there *is* nothing I assume to be self or belonging to self, and yet I am not an arahant. With regard to these five clinging-aggregates, “I am” has not been overcome, although I don’t assume that “I am this.”’”

“Come, friend Dāsaka. Go to the monk Khemaka and on arrival say to him, ‘The elders, friend Khemaka, say to you, “Friend Khemaka, this ‘I am’ of which you speak: what do you say ‘I am’? Do you say, ‘I am form,’ or do you say, ‘I am something other than form’? Do you say, ‘I am feeling... perception... fabrications... consciousness,’ or do you say, ‘I am something other than consciousness’? This ‘I am’ of which you speak: what do you say ‘I am’?’””

Replying, “As you say, friends,” to the elder monks, Ven. Dāsaka went to Ven. Khemaka and on arrival said to him, “The elders, friend Khemaka, say to you, ‘Friend Khemaka, this “I am” of which you speak: what do you say “I am”? Do you say, “I am form,” or do you say, “I am something other than form”? Do you say, “I am feeling... perception... fabrications... consciousness,” or do you say, “I am something other than consciousness” ’? This “I am” of which you speak: what do you say “I am”?’”

“Enough, friend Dāsaka. What is accomplished by this running back & forth? Fetch me my staff. I will go to the elder monks myself.”

Then Ven. Khemaka, leaning on his staff, went to the elder monks and, on arrival, exchanged courteous greetings with them. After an exchange of friendly greetings & courtesies, he sat to one side. As he was sitting there, the elder monks said to him, “Friend Khemaka, this ‘I am’ of which you speak: what do you say ‘I am’? Do you say, ‘I am form,’ or do you say, ‘I am something other than form’? Do you say, ‘I am feeling... perception... fabrications... consciousness,’ or do you say, ‘I am something other than consciousness’”? This ‘I am’ of which you speak: what do you say ‘I am’?”

“Friends, it’s not that I say ‘I am form,’ nor do I say ‘I am something other than form.’ It’s not that I say, ‘I am feeling... perception... fabrications... consciousness,’ nor do I say, ‘I am something other than consciousness.’ With regard to these five clinging-aggregates, ‘I am’ has not been overcome, although I don’t assume that ‘I am this.’

“It’s just like the scent of a blue, red, or white lotus: If someone were to call it the scent of a petal or the scent of the color or the scent of a filament, would he be speaking correctly?”

“No, friend.”

“Then how would he describe it if he were describing it correctly?”

“As the scent of the flower: That’s how he would describe it if he were describing it correctly.”

“In the same way, friends, it’s not that I say ‘I am form,’ nor do I say ‘I am other than form.’ It’s not that I say, ‘I am feeling... perception... fabrications... consciousness,’ nor do I say, ‘I am something other than consciousness.’ With regard to these five clinging-aggregates, ‘I am’ has not been overcome, although I don’t assume that ‘I am this.’

“Friends, even though a noble disciple has abandoned the five lower fetters, he still has with regard to the five clinging-aggregates a lingering residual ‘I am’ conceit, an ‘I am’ desire, an ‘I am’ obsession. But at a later time he keeps focusing on the phenomena of arising & passing away with regard to the five clinging-aggregates: ‘Such is form, such its origination, such its disappearance. Such is feeling.... Such is perception.... Such are fabrications.... Such is consciousness, such its origination, such its disappearance.’ As he keeps focusing on the arising & passing away of these five clinging-aggregates, the lingering residual ‘I am’ conceit, ‘I am’ desire, ‘I am’ obsession is fully obliterated.

“Just like a cloth, dirty & stained: Its owners give it over to a washerman, who scrubs it with salt earth or lye or cow-dung and then rinses it in clear water. Now even though the cloth is clean & spotless, it still has a lingering residual scent of salt earth or lye or cow-dung. The washerman gives it to the owners, the owners put it away in a scent-infused wicker hamper, and its lingering residual scent of salt earth, lye, or cow-dung is fully obliterated.

“In the same way, friends, even though a noble disciple has abandoned the five lower fetters, he still has with regard to the five clinging-aggregates a lingering residual ‘I am’ conceit, an ‘I am’ desire, an ‘I am’ obsession. But at a later time he keeps focusing on arising & passing away with regard to the five clinging-aggregates: ‘Such is form, such its origination, such its disappearance. Such is feeling.... Such is perception.... Such are fabrications.... Such is consciousness, such its origination, such its disappearance.’ As he keeps focusing on the arising & passing away of these five clinging-aggregates, the lingering residual ‘I am’ conceit, ‘I am’ desire, ‘I am’ obsession is fully obliterated.”

When this was said, the elder monks said to Ven. Khemaka, “We didn’t cross-examine Ven. Khemaka with the purpose of troubling him, just that (we thought) Ven. Khemaka is capable of declaring the Blessed One’s message, teaching it, describing it, setting it forth, revealing it, explaining it, making it plain—just as he has in fact declared it, taught it, described it, set it forth, revealed it, explained it, made it plain.”

That is what Ven. Khemaka said. Gratified, the elder monks delighted in his words. And while this explanation was being given, the minds of sixty-some monks, through lack of clinging/sustenance, were released from effluents—as was Ven. Khemaka’s.

See also: MN 140; [SN 12:68](#); AN 3:88

To Channa

Channa Sutta (SN 22:90)

Passages in the Vinaya show that Ven. Channa—apparently, Prince Siddhattha’s horseman on the night of his Great Renunciation—was proud and obdurate. After becoming a monk, he was unwilling to accept instruction from any of the other monks. (See the origin stories to Saṅghādisesa 12 and Pācittiya 12.) DN 16 tells of how the Buddha, on the night of his parinibbāna, imposed the brahmā-punishment on him: he was to be left to his own ways without anyone to teach or correct him. According to Cv XI, news of this punishment so shocked Ven. Channa that he fainted. He then went off into seclusion and practiced diligently to the point of attaining arahantship. As Ven. Ānanda later told him, his attainment nullified the punishment. This sutta tells a different version of Channa’s change of heart.

* * *

On one occasion many elder monks were staying near Vārāṇasī in the Deer Park at Isipatana. Then in the evening Ven. Channa left his seclusion and, taking his key, went from dwelling to dwelling, saying to the elder monks, “May the venerable elders exhort me, may the

venerable elders teach me, may the venerable elders give me a Dhamma talk so that I might see the Dhamma.”

When this was said, the elder monks said to Ven. Channa, “Form, friend Channa, is inconstant. Feeling is inconstant. Perception is inconstant. Fabrications are inconstant. Consciousness is inconstant. Form is not-self. Feeling is not-self. Perception is not-self. Fabrications are not-self. Consciousness is not-self. All fabrications are inconstant. All phenomena are not-self.”

Then the thought occurred to Ven. Channa, “I, too, think that form is inconstant, feeling is inconstant, perception is inconstant, fabrications are inconstant, consciousness is inconstant; form is not-self, feeling is not-self, perception is not-self, fabrications are not-self, consciousness is not-self; all fabrications are inconstant; all phenomena are not-self. But still my mind does not leap up, grow confident, steadfast, & released [alternate reading: firm] in the pacification of all fabrications, the relinquishing of all acquisitions, the ending of craving, dispassion, cessation, unbinding. Instead, agitation & clinging arise, and my intellect pulls back, thinking, ‘But who, then, is my self?’ But this thought doesn’t occur to one who sees the Dhamma. So who might teach me the Dhamma so that I might see the Dhamma?”

Then the thought occurred to Ven. Channa, “This Ven. Ānanda is staying near Kosambī at Ghosita’s monastery. He has been praised by the Teacher and is esteemed by his observant companions in the holy life. He is capable of teaching me the Dhamma so that I might see the Dhamma, and I have sudden trust in him. Why don’t I go to Ven. Ānanda?”

So, setting his lodgings in order and taking his robes & bowl, Ven. Channa went to Kosambī to where Ven. Ānanda was staying at Ghosita’s monastery. On arrival, he exchanged courteous greetings with Ven. Ānanda. After an exchange of friendly greetings & courtesies, he sat to one side. As he was sitting there, he (told Ven. Ānanda what had happened and added), “May Ven. Ānanda exhort me, may Ven. Ānanda teach me, may Ven. Ānanda give me a Dhamma talk so that I might see the Dhamma.”

“Even this much makes me feel gratified & satisfied with Ven. Channa, that he opens up & breaks down his stubbornness. So lend ear, friend Channa. You are capable of understanding the Dhamma.”

Then a sudden great rapture & joy welled up in Ven. Channa at the thought, “So I am capable of understanding the Dhamma!”

“Face-to-face with the Blessed One have I heard this, friend Channa. Face-to-face with him have I learned the exhortation he gave to the monk Kaccāna Gotta [[SN 12:15](#)]: ‘By & large, Kaccāna, this world is supported by [takes as its object] a polarity, that of existence & non-existence. But when one sees the origination of the world as it has come to be with right discernment, “non-existence” with reference to the world does not occur to one. When one sees the cessation of the world as it has come to be with right discernment, “existence” with reference to the world does not occur to one.

“By & large, Kaccāna, this world is in bondage to attachments, clingings (sustenances), & biases. But one such as this does not get involved with or cling to these attachments, clingings, fixations of awareness, biases, or obsessions; nor is he resolved on “my self.” He has no uncertainty or doubt that, when there is arising, only stress is arising; and that when there is passing away, only stress is passing away. In this, one’s knowledge is independent of others. It is to this extent, Kaccāna, that there is right view.

““Everything exists”: That is one extreme. “Everything doesn’t exist”: That is a second extreme. Avoiding these two extremes, the Tathāgata teaches the Dhamma via the middle: From ignorance as a requisite condition come fabrications.

From fabrications as a requisite condition comes consciousness.

From consciousness as a requisite condition comes name-&-form.

From name-&-form as a requisite condition come the six sense media.

From the six sense media as a requisite condition comes contact.

From contact as a requisite condition comes feeling.

From feeling as a requisite condition comes craving.

From craving as a requisite condition comes clinging/sustenance.

From clinging/sustenance as a requisite condition comes becoming.

From becoming as a requisite condition comes birth.

From birth as a requisite condition, then aging & death, sorrow, lamentation, pain, distress, & despair come into play. Such is the origination of this entire mass of stress & suffering.

“Now from the remainderless fading & cessation of that very ignorance comes the cessation of fabrications. From the cessation of fabrications comes the cessation of consciousness. From the cessation of consciousness comes the cessation of name-&-form. From the cessation of name-&-form comes the cessation of the six sense media. From the cessation of the six sense media comes the cessation of contact. From the cessation of contact comes the cessation of feeling. From the cessation of feeling comes the cessation of craving. From the cessation of craving comes the cessation of clinging/sustenance. From the cessation of clinging/sustenance comes the cessation of becoming. From the cessation of becoming comes the cessation of birth. From the cessation of birth, then aging & death, sorrow, lamentation, pain, distress, & despair all cease. Such is the cessation of this entire mass of stress & suffering.”

“That’s how it is, friend Ānanda, for those who have companions in the holy life like Ven. Ānanda—sympathetic, helpful, exhorting, & teaching. Just now, for me, listening to Ven. Ānanda’s Dhamma-teaching, has the Dhamma been penetrated.”

The River

Nadī Sutta (SN 22:93)

Near Sāvattthī. There the Blessed One said, “Monks, suppose there were a river, flowing down from the mountains, going far, its current swift, carrying everything with it, and—holding on to both banks—kāsa grasses, kusa grasses, reeds, vīraṇā grasses, & trees were growing. Then a man swept away by the current would grab hold of the kāsa grasses, but they would tear away, and so from that cause he would come to disaster. He would grab hold of the kusa grasses... the reeds... the vīraṇā

grasses... the trees, but they would tear away, and so from that cause he would come to disaster.

“In the same way, there is the case where an uninstructed, run-of-the-mill person—who has no regard for noble ones, is not well-versed or disciplined in their Dhamma; who has no regard for people of integrity, is not well-versed or disciplined in their Dhamma—assumes form to be the self, or the self as possessing form, or form as in the self, or the self as in form. That form tears away from him, and so from that cause he would come to disaster.

“He assumes feeling to be the self, or the self as possessing feeling, or feeling as in the self, or the self as in feeling. That feeling tears away from him, and so from that cause he would come to disaster.

“He assumes perception to be the self, or the self as possessing perception, or perception as in the self, or the self as in perception. That perception tears away from him, and so from that cause he would come to disaster.

“He assumes fabrications to be the self, or the self as possessing fabrications, or fabrications as in the self, or the self as in fabrications. Those fabrications tear away from him, and so from that cause he would come to disaster.

“He assumes consciousness to be the self, or the self as possessing consciousness, or consciousness as in the self, or the self as in consciousness. That consciousness tears away from him, and so from that cause he would come to disaster.

“Now, what do you think, monks? Is form constant or inconstant?”

“Inconstant, lord.” ...

“Is feeling constant or inconstant?”

“Inconstant, lord.” ...

“Is perception constant or inconstant?”

“Inconstant, lord.” ...

“Are fabrications constant or inconstant?”

“Inconstant, lord.” ...

“Is consciousness constant or inconstant?”

“Inconstant, lord.” ...

“Thus, monks, any form whatsoever that is past, future, or present; internal or external; blatant or subtle, common or sublime; far or near: Every form is to be seen as it has come to be with right discernment: ‘This is not mine. This is not my self. This is not what I am.’

“Any feeling whatsoever.... Any perception whatsoever.... Any fabrications whatsoever....

“Any consciousness whatsoever that is past, future, or present; internal or external; blatant or subtle, common or sublime; far or near: Every consciousness is to be seen as it has come to be with right discernment: ‘This is not mine. This is not my self. This is not what I am.’

“Seeing thus, the well-instructed disciple of the noble ones grows disenchanted with form, disenchanted with feeling, disenchanted with perception, disenchanted with fabrications, disenchanted with consciousness. Disenchanted, he becomes dispassionate. Through dispassion, he is released. With release, there is the knowledge, ‘Released.’ He discerns that ‘Birth is ended, the holy life fulfilled, the task done. There is nothing further for this world.’”

Flowers

Puppha Sutta (SN 22:94)

Many Indian Buddhist philosophers stated that conditioned phenomena can't be described as existing, not existing, both, or neither. However, the Buddha actually stated that conditioned phenomena—inconstant, stressful, subject to change—do exist.

* * *

Near Sāvattthī. There the Blessed One said, “Monks, it’s not that I dispute with the world, but that the world disputes with me. A proponent of the Dhamma doesn’t dispute with anyone with regard to the world.¹ Whatever is agreed upon by the wise as not existing in the

world, of that I too say, 'It doesn't exist.' Whatever is agreed upon by the wise as existing in the world, of that I too say, 'It exists.'

"And what is agreed upon by the wise as not existing in the world that I too say, 'It doesn't exist'?"

"Form that's constant, permanent, eternal, not subject to change is agreed upon by the wise as not existing in the world, and I too say, 'It doesn't exist.'

"Feeling that's constant, permanent, eternal, not subject to change is agreed upon by the wise as not existing in the world, and I too say, 'It doesn't exist.'

"Perception that's constant, permanent, eternal, not subject to change is agreed upon by the wise as not existing in the world, and I too say, 'It doesn't exist.'

"Fabrications that are constant, permanent, eternal, not subject to change are agreed upon by the wise as not existing in the world, and I too say, 'They don't exist.'

"Consciousness that's constant, permanent, eternal, not subject to change is agreed upon by the wise as not existing in the world, and I too say, 'It doesn't exist.'

"And what is agreed upon by the wise as existing in the world that I too say, 'It exists'?"

"Form that's inconstant, stressful, subject to change is agreed upon by the wise as existing in the world, and I too say, 'It exists.'

"Feeling that's inconstant, stressful, subject to change is agreed upon by the wise as existing in the world, and I too say, 'It exists.'

"Perception that's inconstant, stressful, subject to change is agreed upon by the wise as existing in the world, and I too say, 'It exists.'

"Fabrications that are inconstant, stressful, subject to change are agreed upon by the wise as existing in the world, and I too say, 'They exist.'

"Consciousness that's inconstant, stressful, subject to change is agreed upon by the wise as existing in the world, and I too say, 'It exists.'²

“Monks, there is a world-phenomenon in the world that the Tathāgata directly awakens to, breaks through to. Directly awakening to & breaking through to that, he declares it, teaches it, describes it, sets it forth. He reveals it, explains it, makes it plain. And what is a world-phenomenon in the world that the Tathāgata directly awakens to, breaks through to, that—directly awakening to & breaking through to it—he declares, teaches, describes, sets forth, reveals, explains, makes plain?³

“Form is a world-phenomenon in the world that the Tathāgata directly awakens to, breaks through to. Directly awakening to & breaking through to that, he declares it, teaches it, describes it, sets it forth. He reveals it, explains it, makes it plain. Whoever—when that is being declared, taught, described, set forth, revealed, explained, & made plain by the Tathāgata—doesn’t know, doesn’t see, then what can I do for that fool, that run-of-the-mill person: blind, without eye-sight, not knowing, not seeing?

“Feeling is a world-phenomenon in the world....

“Perception is a world-phenomenon in the world....

“Fabrications are world-phenomena in the world....

“Consciousness is a world-phenomenon in the world that the Tathāgata directly awakens to, breaks through to. Directly awakening to & breaking through to that, he declares it, teaches it, describes it, sets it forth. He reveals it, explains it, makes it plain. Whoever—when that is being declared, taught, described, set forth, revealed, explained, & made plain by the Tathāgata—doesn’t know, doesn’t see, then what can I do for that fool, that run-of-the-mill person: blind, without eye-sight, not knowing, not seeing?

“Monks, just as a blue, red, or white lotus—born in the water, grown up in the water—stands having risen above the water, unsmeared by the water; in the same way, the Tathāgata—born in the world, grown up in the world—dwells having conquered the world, unsmeared by the world.”

NOTES

1. This sentence could also be translated as, “A proponent of the Dhamma doesn’t dispute with anyone in the world.” The word “world” here

is in the locative case, which can mean either “in the world” or “with regard to the world.” However, the locative form used in this sentence (*lokasmim*) is different from the locative form used in the following sentence (*loke*).

Because *loke* in the following sentence clearly means “in the world,” the use of a different form of the locative in this sentence may have been intended to indicate that the locative here is meant with a different sense.

2. See [SN 12:15](#), note 3.

3. The latter part of this sentence—“that—directly awakening to & breaking through to it—he declares, teaches, describes, sets forth, reveals, explains, makes plain?”—is present in all the major editions of the Canon but is missing in CDB.

Foam

Phena Sutta (SN 22:95)

On one occasion the Blessed One was staying among the Ayujjhans on the banks of the Ganges River. There he addressed the monks: “Monks, suppose that a large glob of foam were floating down this Ganges River, and a man with good eyesight were to see it, observe it, & appropriately examine it. To him—seeing it, observing it, & appropriately examining it—it would appear empty, void, without substance: for what substance would there be in a glob of foam? In the same way, a monk sees, observes, & appropriately examines any form that is past, future, or present; internal or external; blatant or subtle; common or sublime; far or near. To him—seeing it, observing it, & appropriately examining it—it would appear empty, void, without substance: for what substance would there be in form?

“Now suppose that in the autumn—when it’s raining in fat, heavy drops—a water bubble were to appear & disappear on the water, and a man with good eyesight were to see it, observe it, & appropriately examine it. To him—seeing it, observing it, & appropriately examining it—it would appear empty, void, without substance: for what substance would there be in a water bubble? In the same way, a monk sees,

observes, & appropriately examines any feeling that is past, future, or present; internal or external; blatant or subtle; common or sublime; far or near. To him—seeing it, observing it, & appropriately examining it—it would appear empty, void, without substance: for what substance would there be in feeling?

“Now suppose that in the last month of the hot season a mirage were shimmering, and a man with good eyesight were to see it, observe it, & appropriately examine it. To him—seeing it, observing it, & appropriately examining it—it would appear empty, void, without substance: for what substance would there be in a mirage? In the same way, a monk sees, observes, & appropriately examines any perception that is past, future, or present; internal or external; blatant or subtle; common or sublime; far or near. To him—seeing it, observing it, & appropriately examining it—it would appear empty, void, without substance: for what substance would there be in perception?

“Now suppose that a man desiring heartwood, in quest of heartwood, seeking heartwood, were to go into a forest carrying a sharp ax. There he would see a large banana tree: straight, young, of enormous height. He would cut it at the root and, having cut it at the root, would chop off the top. Having chopped off the top, he would peel away the outer skin. Peeling away the outer skin, he wouldn’t even find sapwood, to say nothing of heartwood. Then a man with good eyesight would see it, observe it, & appropriately examine it. To him—seeing it, observing it, & appropriately examining it—it would appear empty, void, without substance: for what substance would there be in a banana tree? In the same way, a monk sees, observes, & appropriately examines any fabrications that are past, future, or present; internal or external; blatant or subtle; common or sublime; far or near. To him—seeing them, observing them, & appropriately examining them—they would appear empty, void, without substance: for what substance would there be in fabrications?

“Now suppose that a magician or magician’s apprentice were to display a magic trick at a major intersection, and a man with good eyesight were to see it, observe it, & appropriately examine it. To him—seeing it, observing it, & appropriately examining it—it would appear

empty, void, without substance: for what substance would there be in a magic trick? In the same way, a monk sees, observes, & appropriately examines any consciousness that is past, future, or present; internal or external; blatant or subtle; common or sublime; far or near. To him—seeing it, observing it, & appropriately examining it—it would appear empty, void, without substance: for what substance would there be in consciousness?

“Seeing thus, the well-instructed disciple of the noble ones grows disenchanted with form, disenchanted with feeling, disenchanted with perception, disenchanted with fabrications, disenchanted with consciousness. Disenchanted, he becomes dispassionate. Through dispassion, he is released. With release, there is the knowledge, ‘Released.’ He discerns that ‘Birth is ended, the holy life fulfilled, the task done. There is nothing further for this world.’”

That is what the Blessed One said. Having said that, the One Well-Gone, the Teacher, said further:

“Form is like a glob of foam;
feeling, a bubble;
perception, a mirage;
fabrications, a banana tree;
consciousness, a magic trick—
this has been taught
by the Kinsman of the Sun.¹

However you observe them,
appropriately examine them,
they’re empty, void
to whoever sees them
appropriately.

Beginning with the body
as taught by the One
with profound discernment:
When abandoned by three things
—life, warmth, & consciousness—
form is rejected, cast aside.

When bereft of these
it lies thrown away,
 senseless,
a meal for others.
That's the way it goes:
It's a magic trick,
an idiot's babbling.
It's said to be
a murderer.²
No substance here
is found.

Thus a monk, persistence aroused,
should view the aggregates
by day & by night,
 mindful,
 alert;
should discard all fetters;
should make himself
his own refuge;
should live as if
his head were on fire—
 in hopes of the state
 with no falling away.”

NOTES

1. An epithet of the Buddha.
2. See [SN 22:85](#).

See also: [SN 35:193](#); *AN 10:51*

The Tip of the Fingernail
Nakhasikhā Sutta (SN 22:97)

Near Sāvatthī. Sitting to one side, a monk said to the Blessed One, “Lord, is there any form that is constant, lasting, eternal, not subject to change, that will stay just as it is for eternity? Is there any feeling... any perception... Are there any fabrications... Is there any consciousness that is constant, lasting, eternal, not subject to change, that will stay just as it is for eternity?”

“No, monk, there is no form... no feeling... no perception... there are no fabrications... there is no consciousness that is constant, lasting, eternal, not subject to change, that will stay just as it is for eternity.”¹

Then the Blessed One, picking up a tiny bit of dust with the tip of his fingernail, said to the monk, “There isn’t even this much form that is constant, lasting, eternal, not subject to change, that will stay just as it is for eternity. If there were even this much form that was constant, lasting, eternal, not subject to change, that would stay just as it is for eternity, then this living of the holy life for the right ending of suffering & stress would not be discerned. But because there isn’t even this much form that is constant, lasting, eternal, not subject to change, that will stay just as it is for eternity, this living of the holy life for the right ending of suffering & stress *is* discerned.

“There isn’t even this much feeling....

“There isn’t even this much perception....

“There aren’t even this many fabrications....

“There isn’t even this much consciousness that is constant, lasting, eternal, not subject to change, that will stay just as it is for eternity. If there were even this much consciousness that was constant, lasting, eternal, not subject to change, that would stay just as it is for eternity, then this living of the holy life for the right ending of suffering & stress would not be discerned. But because there isn’t even this much consciousness that is constant, lasting, eternal, not subject to change, that will stay just as it is for eternity, this living of the holy life for the right ending of suffering & stress *is* discerned.

“What do you think, monk? Is form constant or inconstant?”

“Inconstant, lord.” “And is that which is inconstant easeful or stressful?”

“Stressful, lord.” “And is it fitting to regard what is inconstant, stressful, subject to change as: ‘This is mine. This is my self. This is what I am?’”

“No, lord.”

“... Is feeling constant or inconstant?”—“Inconstant, lord.” ...

“... Is perception constant or inconstant?”—“Inconstant, lord.” ...

“... Are fabrications constant or inconstant?”—“Inconstant, lord.” ...

“What do you think, monk? Is consciousness constant or inconstant?”
“Inconstant, lord.” “And is that which is inconstant easeful or stressful?”
“Stressful, lord.” “And is it fitting to regard what is inconstant, stressful, subject to change as: ‘This is mine. This is my self. This is what I am?’”

“No, lord.”

“Thus, monk, any form whatsoever that is past, future, or present; internal or external; blatant or subtle; common or sublime; far or near: Every form is to be seen as it has come to be with right discernment as: ‘This is not mine. This is not my self. This is not what I am.’

“Any feeling whatsoever....

“Any perception whatsoever....

“Any fabrications whatsoever....

“Any consciousness whatsoever that is past, future, or present; internal or external; blatant or subtle; common or sublime; far or near: Every consciousness is to be seen as it has come to be with right discernment as: ‘This is not mine. This is not my self. This is not what I am.’

“Seeing thus, the instructed disciple of the noble ones grows disenchanted with form, disenchanted with feeling, disenchanted with perception, disenchanted with fabrications, disenchanted with consciousness. Disenchanted, he becomes dispassionate. Through dispassion, he is released. With release, there is the knowledge, ‘Released.’ He discerns that ‘Birth is ended, the holy life fulfilled, the task done. There is nothing further for this world.’”

NOTE

1. See MN 109, note 1.

The Leash (1)

Gaddūla Sutta (SN 22:99)

Near Sāvattthī. There the Blessed One said: “Monks, from an inconceivable beginning comes transmigration. A beginning point is not evident, although beings hindered by ignorance and fettered by craving are transmigrating & wandering on.

“There comes a time when the great ocean evaporates, dries up, & does not exist. But for beings—as long as they are hindered by ignorance, fettered by craving, transmigrating & wandering on—I don’t say that there is an end of suffering & stress.

“There comes a time when Sineru, king of mountains, is consumed with flame, is destroyed, & does not exist. But for beings—as long as they are hindered by ignorance, fettered by craving, transmigrating & wandering on—I don’t say that there is an end of suffering & stress.

“There comes a time when the great earth is consumed with flame, is destroyed, & does not exist. But for beings—as long as they are hindered by ignorance, fettered by craving, transmigrating & wandering on—I don’t say that there is an end of suffering & stress.

“Just as a dog, tied by a leash to a post or stake, keeps running around and circling around that very post or stake; in the same way, an uninstructed, run-of-the-mill person—who has no regard for noble ones, is not well-versed or disciplined in their Dhamma; who has no regard for people of integrity, is not well-versed or disciplined in their Dhamma—assumes form to be the self, or the self as possessing form, or form as in the self, or the self as in form.

“He assumes feeling to be the self...

“He assumes perception to be the self...

“He assumes fabrications to be the self...

“He assumes consciousness to be the self, or the self as possessing consciousness, or consciousness as in the self, or the self as in consciousness.

“He keeps running around and circling around that very form... that very feeling... that very perception... those very fabrications... that very consciousness. Running and circling around form... feeling... perception... fabrications... consciousness, he is not set loose from form, not set loose from feeling... from perception... from fabrications... not set loose from consciousness. He is not set loose from birth, aging, & death; from sorrows, lamentations, pains, distresses, & despairs. He is not set loose, I tell you, from suffering & stress.

“But a well-instructed disciple of the noble ones—who has regard for noble ones, is well-versed & disciplined in their Dhamma; who has regard for people of integrity, is well-versed & disciplined in their Dhamma—doesn’t assume form to be the self, or the self as possessing form, or form as in the self, or the self as in form.

“He doesn’t assume feeling to be the self....

“He doesn’t assume perception to be the self....

“He doesn’t assume fabrications to be the self....

“He doesn’t assume consciousness to be the self, or the self as possessing consciousness, or consciousness as in the self, or the self as in consciousness.

“He doesn’t run around or circle around that very form... that very feeling... that very perception... those very fabrications... that very consciousness. He is set loose from form, set loose from feeling... from perception... from fabrications... set loose from consciousness. He is set loose from birth, aging, & death; from sorrows, lamentations, pains, distresses, & despairs. He is set loose, I tell you, from suffering & stress.”

The Leash (2)

Gaddūla Sutta (SN 22:100)

Near Sāvattthī. There the Blessed One said: “Monks, from an inconceivable beginning comes transmigration. A beginning point is not evident, although beings hindered by ignorance and fettered by craving are transmigrating & wandering on.

“It’s just as when a dog is tied by a leash to a post or stake: If it walks, it walks right around that post or stake. If it stands, it stands right next to that post or stake. If it sits, it sits right next to that post or stake. If it lies down, it lies down right next to that post or stake.

“In the same way, an uninstructed run-of-the-mill person regards form as: ‘This is mine, this is my self, this is what I am.’ He regards feeling... perception... fabrications... consciousness as: ‘This is mine, this is my self, this is what I am.’ If he walks, he walks right around these five clinging-aggregates. If he stands, he stands right next to these five clinging-aggregates. If he sits, he sits right next to these five clinging-aggregates. If he lies down, he lies down right next to these five clinging-aggregates. Thus one should reflect on one’s mind with every moment: ‘For a long time has this mind been defiled by passion, aversion, & delusion.’ From the defilement of the mind are beings defiled. From the purification of the mind are beings purified.

“Monks, have you ever seen a moving-picture show?”¹

“Yes, lord.”

“That moving-picture show was created by the mind. And this mind is even more variegated than a moving-picture show. Thus one should reflect on one’s mind with every moment: ‘For a long time has this mind been defiled by passion, aversion, & delusion.’ From the defilement of the mind are beings defiled. From the purification of the mind are beings purified.

“Monks, I can imagine no one group of beings more variegated than that of common animals. Common animals are created by mind. And the mind is even more variegated than common animals. Thus one should reflect on one’s mind with every moment: ‘For a long time has this mind been defiled by passion, aversion, & delusion.’ From the defilement of the mind are beings defiled. From the purification of the mind are beings purified.

“It’s just as when—there being dye, lac, yellow orpiment, indigo, or crimson—a dyer or painter would paint the picture of a woman or a man, complete in all its parts, on a well-polished panel or wall, or on a piece of cloth; in the same way, an uninstructed, run-of-the-mill person,

when creating, creates nothing but form... feeling... perception... fabrications... consciousness.

“Now what do you think, monks? Is form constant or inconstant?”
“Inconstant, lord.” “And is that which is inconstant easeful or stressful?”
“Stressful, lord.” “And is it fitting to regard what is inconstant, stressful, subject to change as: ‘This is mine. This is my self. This is what I am?’”

“No, lord.”

“... Is feeling constant or inconstant?”—“Inconstant, lord.” ...

“... Is perception constant or inconstant?”—“Inconstant, lord.” ...

“... Are fabrications constant or inconstant?”—“Inconstant, lord.” ...

“What do you think, monks? Is consciousness constant or inconstant?” “Inconstant, lord.” “And is that which is inconstant easeful or stressful?” “Stressful, lord.” “And is it fitting to regard what is inconstant, stressful, subject to change as: ‘This is mine. This is my self. This is what I am?’”

“No, lord.”

“Thus, monks, any form whatsoever that is past, future, or present; internal or external; blatant or subtle; common or sublime; far or near: Every form is to be seen as it has come to be with right discernment as: ‘This is not mine. This is not my self. This is not what I am.’

“Any feeling whatsoever....

“Any perception whatsoever....

“Any fabrications whatsoever....

“Any consciousness whatsoever that is past, future, or present; internal or external; blatant or subtle; common or sublime; far or near: Every consciousness is to be seen as it has come to be with right discernment as: ‘This is not mine. This is not my self. This is not what I am.’

“Seeing thus, the well-instructed disciple of the noble ones grows disenchanted with the body, disenchanted with feeling, disenchanted with perception, disenchanted with fabrications, disenchanted with consciousness. Disenchanted, he becomes dispassionate. Through dispassion, he is released. With release, there is the knowledge,

‘Released.’ He discerns that ‘Birth is ended, the holy life fulfilled, the task done. There is nothing further for this world.’”

NOTE

1. A moving-picture show was an ancient form of entertainment in Asia, in which semi-transparent pictures were placed in front of a lantern to cast images on walls or cloth screens in order to illustrate a tale told by a professional story-teller. Descendants of this form of entertainment include the shadow-puppet theater of East and Southeast Asia.

See also: [SN 12:61](#); [SN 15:3](#); [SN 15:5](#); [SN 15:6](#); [SN 15:8](#); [SN 15:9](#); [SN 15:11](#); [SN 15:12](#); [SN 15:13](#); [SN 15:14](#); [AN 1:48](#); [Dhp 33–37](#)

The Ship

Nava Sutta (SN 22:101)

Near Sāvattthī. There the Blessed One said, “I tell you, monks: It is for one who knows & sees that there is the ending of effluents. For one who knows & sees what is there the ending of effluents? ‘Such is form, such its origination, such its passing away. Such is feeling.... Such is perception.... Such are fabrications.... Such is consciousness, such its origination, such its passing away.’ It is for one who knows & sees in this way that there is the ending of effluents.

“Even though this wish may occur to a monk who dwells without devoting himself to development—‘O that my mind might be released from effluents through lack of clinging!’—still his mind is not released from effluents through lack of clinging. Why is that? From lack of developing, it should be said. Lack of developing what? The four establishing of mindfulness, the four right exertions, the four bases of power, the five faculties, the five strengths, the seven factors for awakening, the noble eightfold path.¹

“Suppose a hen has eight, ten, or twelve eggs: If she doesn’t cover them rightly, warm them rightly, or incubate them rightly, then even though this wish may occur to her—‘O that my chicks might break

through the egg shells with their spiked claws or beaks and hatch out safely!’—still it is not possible that the chicks will break through the egg shells with their spiked claws or beaks and hatch out safely. Why is that? Because the hen has not covered them rightly, warmed them rightly, or incubated them rightly. In the same way, even though this wish may occur to a monk who dwells without devoting himself to development—‘O that my mind might be released from effluents through lack of clinging!’—still his mind is not released from effluents through lack of clinging. Why is that? From lack of developing, it should be said. Lack of developing what? The four establishing of mindfulness, the four right exertions, the four bases of power, the five faculties, the five strengths, the seven factors for awakening, the noble eightfold path.

“Even though this wish may not occur to a monk who dwells devoting himself to development—‘O that my mind might be released from effluents through lack of clinging!’—still his mind is released from effluents through lack of clinging. Why is that? From developing, it should be said. Developing what? The four establishing of mindfulness, the four right exertions, the four bases of power, the five faculties, the five strengths, the seven factors for awakening, the noble eightfold path.

“Suppose a hen has eight, ten, or twelve eggs that she covers rightly, warms rightly, & incubates rightly: Even though this wish may not occur to her—‘O that my chicks might break through the egg shells with their spiked claws or beaks and hatch out safely!’—still it is possible that the chicks will break through the egg shells with their spiked claws or beaks and hatch out safely. Why is that? Because the hen has covered them, warmed them, & incubated them rightly. In the same way, even though this wish may not occur to a monk who dwells devoting himself to development—‘O that my mind might be released from effluents through lack of clinging!’—still his mind is released from effluents through lack of clinging. Why is that? From developing, it should be said. Developing what? The four establishing of mindfulness, the four right exertions, the four bases of power, the five faculties, the five strengths, the seven factors for awakening, the noble eightfold path.

“Just as when a carpenter or carpenter’s apprentice sees the marks of his fingers or thumb on the handle of his adze but does not know,

‘Today my adze handle wore down this much, or yesterday it wore down that much, or the day before yesterday it wore down this much,’ still he knows it is worn through when it is worn through. In the same way, when a monk dwells devoting himself to development, he does not know, ‘Today my effluents wore down this much, or yesterday they wore down that much, or the day before yesterday they wore down this much,’ still he knows they are worn through when they are worn through.

“Just as when an ocean-going ship, rigged with masts & stays, after six months on the water, is left on shore for the winter: Its stays, weathered by the heat & wind, moistened by the clouds of the rainy season, easily wither & rot away. In the same way, when a monk dwells devoting himself to development, his fetters easily wither & rot away.”

NOTE

1. These seven sets of qualities are together termed the wings to awakening (*bodhi-pakkhiya-dhamma*). According to DN 16, they constitute the Buddha’s own summary of his most important teachings.

See also: MN 126; [SN 42:6](#); AN 3:93; AN 5:43

Clinging

Upādāna Sutta (SN 22:121)

Near Sāvattthī. There the Blessed One said, “Monks, I will teach you clingable phenomena & clinging. Listen & pay close attention. I will speak.”

“As you say, lord,” the monks responded to him.

The Blessed One said, “And what, monks, are clingable phenomena? What is clinging?”

“Form is a clingable phenomenon. Any desire-passion related to it, is clinging related to it.

“Feeling is a clingable phenomenon. Any desire-passion related to it, is clinging related to it.

“Perception is a clingable phenomenon. Any desire-passion related to it, is clinging related to it.

“Fabrications are clingable phenomena. Any desire-passion related to them, is clinging related to them.

“Consciousness is a clingable phenomenon. Any desire-passion related to it, is clinging related to it.

“These are called clingable phenomena. This is clinging.”

See also: MN 44; MN 109; [SN 22:48](#); [SN 27:1–10](#); [SN 35:191](#)

Virtuous

Sīlavant Sutta (SN 22:122)

On one occasion Ven. Sāriputta & Ven. Mahā Koṭṭhita were staying near Vārāṇasī in the Deer Park at Isipatana. Then Ven. Mahā Koṭṭhita, emerging from his seclusion in the evening, went to Ven. Sāriputta and, on arrival, exchanged courteous greetings with him. After an exchange of friendly greetings & courtesies, he sat to one side. As he was sitting there, he said to Ven. Sāriputta, “Sāriputta my friend, which things should a virtuous monk attend to in an appropriate way?”

“A virtuous monk, Koṭṭhita my friend, should attend in an appropriate way to the five clinging-aggregates as inconstant, stressful, a disease, a cancer, an arrow, painful, an affliction, alien, a dissolution, an emptiness, not-self. Which five? The form clinging-aggregate, the feeling clinging-aggregate, the perception clinging-aggregate, the fabrications clinging-aggregate, the consciousness clinging-aggregate. A virtuous monk should attend in an appropriate way to these five clinging-aggregates as inconstant, stressful, a disease, a cancer, an arrow, painful, an affliction, alien, a dissolution, an emptiness, not-self. For it is possible that a virtuous monk, attending in an appropriate way to these five clinging-aggregates as inconstant... not-self, would realize the fruit of stream-entry.”

“Then which things should a monk who has attained stream-entry attend to in an appropriate way?”

“A monk who has attained stream-entry should attend in an appropriate way to these five clinging-aggregates as inconstant, stressful, a disease, a cancer, an arrow, painful, an affliction, alien, a dissolution, an emptiness, not-self. For it is possible that a monk who has attained stream-entry, attending in an appropriate way to these five clinging-aggregates as inconstant... not-self, would realize the fruit of once-returning.”

“Then which things should a monk who has attained once-returning attend to in an appropriate way?”

“A monk who has attained once-returning should attend in an appropriate way to these five clinging-aggregates as inconstant, stressful, a disease, a cancer, an arrow, painful, an affliction, alien, a dissolution, an emptiness, not-self. For it is possible that a monk who has attained once-returning, attending in an appropriate way to these five clinging-aggregates as inconstant... not-self, would realize the fruit of non-returning.”

“Then which things should a monk who has attained non-returning attend to in an appropriate way?”

“A monk who has attained non-returning should attend in an appropriate way to these five clinging-aggregates as inconstant, stressful, a disease, a cancer, an arrow, painful, an affliction, alien, a dissolution, an emptiness, not-self. For it is possible that a monk who has attained non-returning, attending in an appropriate way to these five clinging-aggregates as inconstant... not-self, would realize the fruit of arahantship.”

“Then which things should an arahant attend to in an appropriate way?”

“An arahant should attend in an appropriate way to these five clinging-aggregates as inconstant, stressful, a disease, a cancer, an arrow, painful, an affliction, alien, a dissolution, an emptiness, not-self. Although, for an arahant, there is nothing further to do, and nothing to add to what has been done, still these things—when developed &

pursued—lead both to a pleasant abiding in the here & now and to mindfulness & alertness.”

See also: MN 2; [SN 22:23](#); [SN 46:51](#); AN 9:36

Subject to Origination (1)

Samudaya-dhamma Sutta (SN 22:126)

At Sāvattthī. Then a certain monk went to the Blessed One and, on arrival, having bowed down to him, sat to one side. As he was sitting there he said to the Blessed One, “Ignorance, ignorance,’ it is said, lord. Which ignorance? And to what extent is one immersed in ignorance?”

“There is the case, monk, where an uninstructed run-of-the-mill person doesn’t discern, as it has come to be, form subject to origination as form subject to origination.¹ He doesn’t discern, as it has come to be, form subject to passing away as form subject to passing away. He doesn’t discern, as it has come to be, form subject to origination & passing away as form subject to origination & passing away.

“He doesn’t discern, as it has come to be, feeling subject to origination as feeling subject to origination. He doesn’t discern, as it has come to be, feeling subject to passing away as feeling subject to passing away. He doesn’t discern, as it has come to be, feeling subject to origination & passing away as feeling subject to origination & passing away.

“He doesn’t discern, as it has come to be, perception subject to origination as perception subject to origination. He doesn’t discern, as it has come to be, perception subject to passing away as perception subject to passing away. He doesn’t discern, as it has come to be, perception subject to origination & passing away as perception subject to origination & passing away.

“He doesn’t discern, as it they have come to be, fabrications subject to origination as fabrications subject to origination. He doesn’t discern, as they have come to be, fabrications subject to passing away as fabrications

subject to passing away. He doesn't discern, as they have come to be, fabrications subject to origination & passing away as fabrications subject to origination & passing away.

"He doesn't discern, as it has come to be, consciousness subject to origination as consciousness subject to origination. He doesn't discern, as it has come to be, consciousness subject to passing away as consciousness subject to passing away. He doesn't discern, as it has come to be, consciousness subject to origination & passing away as consciousness subject to origination & passing away.

"This, monk, is called ignorance, and it's to this extent that one is immersed in ignorance."

NOTE

1. Here and in the following sutta, CDB mistranslates *samudaya*, origination, as "arising." This gives the impression that ignorance can be ended simply through bare awareness of the aggregates' arising and passing away. *Samudaya*, however, denotes a condition responsible for making the aggregates arise, something that cannot be known through simply watching them. One has to interact with them in a way that allows one to see which factors co-arising with the aggregates are actually causing them to arise, and which are not. [SN 22:5](#) recommends developing concentration for this purpose. AN 9:36 expands on this recommendation, showing how concentration is actually composed of aggregates. In this way, one learns about the origination of the aggregates by trying to make a state of concentration from them.

[SN 22:5](#) also identifies acts of enjoying, welcoming, and remaining fastened as the origination of the aggregates. [SN 22:56–57](#) identify the origination of nutriment as the origination of form; the origination of contact as the origination of feeling, perception, and fabrications; and the origination of name-&-form as the origination of consciousness. These two analyses can perhaps be combined by noting, in the case of form, that the simple presence of nutriment does not cause form. There has to be the act of welcoming, etc., that causes one to *take* the nutriment that nurtures form.

See also: [SN 12:2](#)

Subject to Origination (2)

Samudaya-dhamma Sutta (SN 22:127)

At Sāvattthī. Then a certain monk went to the Blessed One and, on arrival, having bowed down to him, sat to one side. As he was sitting there he said to the Blessed One, “Clear knowing, clear knowing,’ it is said, lord. Which clear knowing? And to what extent is one immersed in clear knowing?”

“There is the case, monk, where an instructed disciple of the noble ones discerns, as it has come to be, form subject to origination as form subject to origination. He discerns, as it has come to be, form subject to passing away as form subject to passing away. He discerns, as it has come to be, form subject to origination & passing away as form subject to origination & passing away.

“He discerns, as it has come to be, feeling subject to origination as feeling subject to origination. He discerns, as it has come to be, feeling subject to passing away as feeling subject to passing away. He discerns, as it has come to be, feeling subject to origination & passing away as feeling subject to origination & passing away.

“He discerns, as it has come to be, perception subject to origination as perception subject to origination. He discerns, as it has come to be, perception subject to passing away as perception subject to passing away. He discerns, as it has come to be, perception subject to origination & passing away as perception subject to origination & passing away.

“He discerns, as it they have come to be, fabrications subject to origination as fabrications subject to origination. He discerns, as they have come to be, fabrications subject to passing away as fabrications subject to passing away. He discerns, as they have come to be, fabrications subject to origination & passing away as fabrications subject to origination & passing away.

“He discerns, as it has come to be, consciousness subject to origination as consciousness subject to origination. He discerns, as it has

come to be, consciousness subject to passing away as consciousness subject to passing away. He discerns, as it has come to be, consciousness subject to origination & passing away as consciousness subject to origination & passing away.

“This, monk, is called clear knowing, and it’s to this extent that one is immersed in clear knowing.”

Origination (1)

Samudaya Sutta (SN 22:131)

On one occasion Ven. Sāriputta and Ven. Mahā Koṭṭhita were staying near Vārāṇasī in the Deer Park at Isipatana. As he was sitting to one side, Ven. Mahā Koṭṭhita said to Ven. Sāriputta, “Ignorance, ignorance,’ it is said, friend Sāriputta. Which ignorance? And to what extent is one immersed in ignorance?”

“There is the case, my friend, where an uninstructed, run-of-the-mill person doesn’t discern, as they have come to be, the origination, the disappearance, the allure, the drawbacks of—and the escape from—form.

“He doesn’t discern, as they have come to be, the origination, the disappearance, the allure, the drawbacks of—and the escape from—feeling.

“He doesn’t discern, as they have come to be, the origination, the disappearance, the allure, the drawbacks of—and the escape from—perception.

“He doesn’t discern, as they have come to be, the origination, the disappearance, the allure, the drawbacks of—and the escape from—fabrications.

“He doesn’t discern, as they have come to be, the origination, the disappearance, the allure, the drawbacks of—and the escape from—consciousness.

“This, my friend, is called ignorance, and it’s to this extent that one is immersed in ignorance.”

See also: [SN 22:5](#); [SN 22:56–57](#)

Origination (2)

Samudaya Sutta (SN 22:132)

On one occasion Ven. Sāriputta and Ven. Mahā Koṭṭhita were staying near Vārāṇasī in the Deer Park at Isipatana. As he was sitting to one side, Ven. Mahā Koṭṭhita said to Ven. Sāriputta, “‘Clear knowing, clear knowing,’ it is said, friend Sāriputta. Which clear knowing? And to what extent is one immersed in clear knowing?”

“There is the case, my friend, where an instructed disciple of the noble ones discerns, as they have come to be, the origination, the disappearance, the allure, the drawbacks of—and the escape from—form.

“He discerns, as they have come to be, the origination, the disappearance, the allure, the drawbacks of—and the escape from—feeling.

“He discerns, as they have come to be, the origination, the disappearance, the allure, the drawbacks of—and the escape from—perception.

“He discerns, as they have come to be, the origination, the disappearance, the allure, the drawbacks of—and the escape from—fabrications.

“He discerns, as they have come to be, the origination, the disappearance, the allure, the drawbacks of—and the escape from—consciousness.

“This, my friend, is called clear knowing, and it’s to this extent that one is immersed in clear knowing.”

A Being

Satta Sutta (SN 23:2)

A number of discourses (among them, [SN 35:191](#); AN 6:63) make the point that the mind is fettered, not by things like the five aggregates or the objects of the six senses, but by the act of passion & delight for them. There are two ways to try to cut through this fetter. One is to focus on the drawbacks of passion & delight in & of themselves, seeing clearly the stress & suffering they engender in the mind. The other is to analyze the objects of passion & delight in such a way that they no longer seem worthy of interest. This second approach is the one recommended in this discourse: when the Buddha talks of “smashing, scattering, & demolishing form (etc.) and making it unfit for play,” he is referring to the practice of analyzing form minutely into its component parts until it no longer seems a fit object for passion & delight. When all five aggregates can be treated in this way, the mind is left with no conditioned object to serve as a focal point for its passion, and so is released—at the very least—to the stage of awakening called non-return.

* * *

I have heard that on one occasion the Blessed One was staying near Sāvattthī in Jeta’s Grove, Anāthapiṇḍika’s monastery. Then Ven. Rādhā went to the Blessed One and, on arrival, having bowed down to him, sat to one side. As he was sitting there he said to the Blessed One: “A being, lord. ‘A being,’ it’s said. To what extent is one said to be ‘a being’?”

“Any desire, passion, delight, or craving for form, Rādhā: when one is caught up [*satta*] there, tied up [*visatta*] there, one is said to be ‘a being [*satta*].’

“Any desire, passion, delight, or craving for feeling... perception... fabrications...

“Any desire, passion, delight, or craving for consciousness, Rādhā: when one is caught up there, tied up there, one is said to be ‘a being.’

“Just as when boys or girls are playing with little sand castles (lit: dirt houses): as long as they are not free from passion, desire, love, thirst, fever, & craving for those little sand castles, that’s how long they have fun with those sand castles, enjoy them, treasure them, feel possessive of them. But when they become free from passion, desire, love, thirst, fever, & craving for those little sand castles, then they smash them, scatter

them, demolish them with their hands or feet and make them unfit for play.

“In the same way, Rādhā, you too should smash, scatter, & demolish form, and make it unfit for play. Practice for the ending of craving for form.

“You should smash, scatter, & demolish feeling, and make it unfit for play. Practice for the ending of craving for feeling.

“You should smash, scatter, & demolish perception, and make it unfit for play. Practice for the ending of craving for perception.

“You should smash, scatter, & demolish fabrications, and make them unfit for play. Practice for the ending of craving for fabrications.

“You should smash, scatter, & demolish consciousness and make it unfit for play. Practice for the ending of craving for consciousness—because the ending of craving, Rādhā, is unbinding.”

*See also: [SN 1:55](#); [SN 5:10](#); [SN 22:36](#); [SN 35:205](#); *Khp* 4*

The Eye

Cakkhu Sutta (SN 25:1)

Near Sāvatthī. “Monks, the eye is inconstant, changeable, alterable. The ear... The nose... The tongue... The body... The mind is inconstant, changeable, alterable.

“One who has conviction & belief that these phenomena are this way is called a faith-follower: one who has entered the orderliness of rightness, entered the plane of people of integrity, transcended the plane of the run-of-the-mill. He is incapable of doing any deed by which he might be reborn in hell, in the animal womb, or in the realm of hungry ghosts. He is incapable of passing away until he has realized the fruit of stream-entry.

“One who, after pondering with a modicum of discernment, has accepted that these phenomena are this way is called a Dhamma-follower: one who has entered the orderliness of rightness, entered the

plane of people of integrity, transcended the plane of the run-of-the-mill. He is incapable of doing any deed by which he might be reborn in hell, in the animal womb, or in the realm of hungry ghosts. He is incapable of passing away until he has realized the fruit of stream-entry.

“One who knows and sees that these phenomena are this way is called a stream-enterer, steadfast, never again destined for states of woe, headed for self-awakening.”

See also: MN 70

Forms

Rūpa Sutta (SN 25:2)

Near Sāvatthī. “Monks, forms are inconstant, changeable, alterable. Sounds.... Aromas.... Flavors.... Tactile sensations.... Ideas are inconstant, changeable, alterable....

Consciousness

Viññāṇa Sutta (SN 25:3)

Near Sāvatthī. “Monks, eye-consciousness is inconstant, changeable, alterable. Ear-consciousness.... Nose-consciousness.... Tongue-consciousness.... Body-consciousness.... Intellect-consciousness is inconstant, changeable, alterable....

Contact

Phassa Sutta (SN 25:4)

Near Sāvatthī. “Monks, eye-contact is inconstant, changeable, alterable. Ear-contact.... Nose-contact.... Tongue-contact.... Body-contact.... Intellect-contact is inconstant, changeable, alterable...

Feeling

Vedanā Sutta (SN 25:5)

Near Sāvatthī. “Monks, feeling born of eye-contact is inconstant, changeable, alterable. Feeling born of ear-contact.... Feeling born of nose-contact.... Feeling born of tongue-contact.... Feeling born of body-contact.... Feeling born of intellect-contact is inconstant, changeable, alterable....

Perception

Saññā Sutta (SN 25:6)

Near Sāvatthī. “Monks, perception of forms is inconstant, changeable, alterable. Perception of sounds.... Perception of smells.... Perception of tastes.... Perception of tactile sensations.... Perception of ideas is inconstant, changeable, alterable....

Intention

Cetanā Sutta (SN 25:7)

Near Sāvatthī. “Monks, intention for forms is inconstant, changeable, alterable. Intention for sounds.... Intention for smells.... Intention for tastes.... Intention for tactile sensations.... Intention for ideas is inconstant, changeable, alterable....

Craving

Taṇhā Sutta (SN 25:8)

Near Sāvatthī. “Monks, craving for forms is inconstant, changeable, alterable. Craving for sounds.... Craving for smells.... Craving for tastes.... Craving for tactile sensations.... Craving for ideas is inconstant, changeable, alterable....

Properties

Dhātu Sutta (SN 25:9)

Near Sāvatthī. “Monks, the earth property is inconstant, changeable, alterable. The liquid property.... The fire property.... The wind property.... The space property.... The consciousness property is inconstant, changeable, alterable....

Aggregates

Khandha Sutta (SN 25:10)

Near Sāvatthī. “Monks, form is inconstant, changeable, alterable. Feeling.... Perception.... Fabrications.... Consciousness is inconstant, changeable, alterable.

“One who has conviction & belief that these phenomena are this way is called a faith-follower: one who has entered the orderliness of rightness, entered the plane of people of integrity, transcended the plane of the run-of-the-mill. He is incapable of doing any deed by which he might be reborn in hell, in the animal womb, or in the realm of hungry ghosts. He is incapable of passing away until he has realized the fruit of stream-entry.

“One who, after pondering with a modicum of discernment, has accepted that these phenomena are this way is called a Dhamma-follower: one who has entered the orderliness of rightness, entered the plane of people of integrity, transcended the plane of the run-of-the-mill. He is incapable of doing any deed by which he might be reborn in hell,

in the animal womb, or in the realm of hungry ghosts. He is incapable of passing away until he has realized the fruit of stream-entry.

“One who knows and sees that these phenomena are this way is called a stream-enterer, steadfast, never again destined for states of woe, headed for self-awakening.”

The Eye

Cakkhu Sutta (SN 27:1)

Near Sāvatthī. “Monks, any desire-passion with regard to the eye is a defilement of the mind. Any desire-passion with regard to the ear... the nose... the tongue... the body... the intellect is a defilement of the mind. When, with regard to these six bases, the defilements of awareness are abandoned, then the mind is inclined to renunciation. The mind fostered by renunciation feels malleable for the direct knowing of those qualities worth realizing.”¹

NOTE

1. Qualities worth realizing are those associated with the third noble truth. See [SN 56:11](#).

Forms

Rūpa Sutta (SN 27:2)

Near Sāvatthī. “Monks, any desire-passion with regard to forms is a defilement of the mind. Any desire-passion with regard to sounds... aromas... flavors... tactile sensations... ideas is a defilement of the mind. When, with regard to these six bases, the defilements of awareness are abandoned, then the mind is inclined to renunciation. The mind fostered by renunciation feels malleable for the direct knowing of those qualities worth realizing.”

Consciousness

Viññāṇa Sutta (SN 27:3)

Near Sāvatthī. “Monks, any desire-passion with regard to eye-consciousness is a defilement of the mind. Any desire-passion with regard to ear-consciousness... nose-consciousness... tongue-consciousness... body-consciousness... intellect-consciousness is a defilement of the mind. When, with regard to these six bases, the defilements of awareness are abandoned, then the mind is inclined to renunciation. The mind fostered by renunciation feels malleable for the direct knowing of those qualities worth realizing.”

Contact

Phassa Sutta (SN 27:4)

Near Sāvatthī. “Monks, any desire-passion with regard to contact at the eye is a defilement of the mind. Any desire-passion with regard to contact at the ear... contact at the nose... contact at the tongue... contact at the body... contact at the intellect is a defilement of the mind. When, with regard to these six bases, the defilements of awareness are abandoned, then the mind is inclined to renunciation. The mind fostered by renunciation feels malleable for the direct knowing of those qualities worth realizing.”

Feeling

Vedanā Sutta (SN 27:5)

Near Sāvatthī. “Monks, any desire-passion with regard to feeling born of contact at the eye is a defilement of the mind. Any desire-passion with regard to feeling born of contact at the ear... feeling born of contact at

the nose... feeling born of contact at the tongue... feeling born of contact at the body... feeling born of contact at the intellect is a defilement of the mind. When, with regard to these six bases, the defilements of awareness are abandoned, then the mind is inclined to renunciation. The mind fostered by renunciation feels malleable for the direct knowing of those qualities worth realizing.”

Perception

Saññā Sutta (SN 27:6)

Near Sāvatthī. “Monks, any desire-passion with regard to perception (naming, labeling) of forms is a defilement of the mind. Any desire-passion with regard to perception of sounds... perception of aromas... perception of flavors... perception of tactile sensations... perception of ideas is a defilement of the mind. When, with regard to these six bases, the defilements of awareness are abandoned, then the mind is inclined to renunciation. The mind fostered by renunciation feels malleable for the direct knowing of those qualities worth realizing.”

Intention

Cetanā Sutta (SN 27:7)

Near Sāvatthī. “Monks, any desire-passion with regard to intentions involving forms is a defilement of the mind. Any desire-passion with regard to intentions involving sounds... intentions involving aromas... intentions involving flavors... intentions involving tactile sensations... intentions involving ideas is a defilement of the mind. When, with regard to these six bases, the defilements of awareness are abandoned, then the mind is inclined to renunciation. The mind fostered by renunciation feels malleable for the direct knowing of those qualities worth realizing.”

Craving

Taṇhā Sutta (SN 27:8)

Near Sāvatthī. “Monks, any desire-passion with regard to craving for forms is a defilement of the mind. Any desire-passion with regard to craving for sounds... craving for aromas... craving for flavors... craving for tactile sensations... craving for ideas is a defilement of the mind. When, with regard to these six bases, the defilements of awareness are abandoned, then the mind is inclined to renunciation. The mind fostered by renunciation feels malleable for the direct knowing of those qualities worth realizing.”

Properties

Dhātu Sutta (SN 27:9)

Near Sāvatthī. “Monks, any desire-passion with regard to the earth property is a defilement of the mind. Any desire-passion with regard to the liquid property... the fire property... the wind property... the space property... the consciousness property is a defilement of the mind. When, with regard to these six bases, the defilements of awareness are abandoned, then the mind is inclined to renunciation. The mind fostered by renunciation feels malleable for the direct knowing of those qualities worth realizing.”

Aggregates

Khandha Sutta (SN 27:10)

Near Sāvatthī. “Monks, any desire-passion with regard to form is a defilement of the mind. Any desire-passion with regard to feeling... perception... fabrications... consciousness is a defilement of the mind.

When, with regard to these five bases, the defilements of awareness are abandoned, then the mind is inclined to renunciation. The mind fostered by renunciation feels malleable for the direct knowing of those qualities worth realizing.”

The All *Sabba Sutta* (SN 35:23)

“Monks, I will teach you the All. Listen & pay close attention. I will speak.”

“As you say, lord,” the monks responded to the Blessed One.

The Blessed One said, “What is the All? Simply the eye & forms, ear & sounds, nose & aromas, tongue & flavors, body & tactile sensations, intellect & ideas. This, monks, is called the All.¹ Anyone who would say, ‘Repudiating this All, I will describe another,’ if questioned on what exactly might be the grounds for his statement, would be unable to explain and, furthermore, would be put to grief. Why? Because it lies beyond range.”

NOTE

1. The Commentary’s treatment of this discourse is very peculiar. To begin with, it delineates three other “All’s” in addition to the one defined here, one of them supposedly larger in scope than the All of the six senses and their objects: the Allness of the Buddha’s omniscience (literally, All-knowingness). This, despite the fact that the discourse says that the description of such an All lies beyond range.

Secondly, the Commentary includes unbinding (*nibbāna*) within the scope of the All described here—as a *dhamma*, or object of the intellect—even though there are many other discourses in the Canon specifically stating that unbinding lies beyond the range of the six senses and their objects. Sn 5:6, for instance, indicates that a person who has attained unbinding has gone beyond all phenomena (*sabbe dhammā*), and therefore cannot be described. [SN 35:117](#) speaks of a dimension that is to be experienced with the cessation of the six sense media and the fading of their

objects. MN 49 discusses a “consciousness without surface” (*viññāṇam anidassanam*) that is not experienced through the “Allness of the All.” Furthermore, [SN 35:24](#) says that the “All” is to be abandoned. At no point does the Canon say that unbinding is to be abandoned. Unbinding follows on cessation (*nirodha*), which is to be realized. Once unbinding is realized, there are no further tasks to be done.

Thus it seems more likely that this discourse’s discussion of “All” is meant to limit the use of the word “all” throughout the Buddha’s teachings to the six sense media and their objects. As the following discourse shows, this would also include the consciousness, contact, and feelings connected with the sense media. Unbinding would lie outside of the word, “all.” This would fit in with another point made several times in the Canon: that dispassion is the highest of all dhammas (Iti 90), while the arahant has gone beyond even dispassion (Sn 4:6; Sn 4:10).

This raises the question: If the word “all” does not include unbinding, does that mean that one may infer from the statement, “all phenomena are not-self” that unbinding is self? The answer is No. As DN 15 notes, when all experience of the senses ceases, there would not be the thought, “I am.” And as AN 4:173 states, to even ask if there is anything remaining or not remaining (or both, or neither) after the cessation of the six sense media is to objectify non-objectification (see the Introduction to MN 18). The range of objectification goes only as far as the “All.” Perceptions of self or not-self, which would come under the classifications and perceptions of objectification, would not apply beyond the “All.” When the cessation of the “All” is experienced, all objectification is allayed.

See also: MN 1; MN 148; MN 149; [SN 12:15](#); [SN 12:48](#)

For Abandoning Pahāna Sutta (SN 35:24)

“Monks, I will teach you the All as a phenomenon to be abandoned. Listen & pay close attention. I will speak.”

“As you say, lord,” the monks responded to him.

The Blessed One said, “And which All is a phenomenon to be abandoned? The eye is to be abandoned.¹ Forms are to be abandoned. Eye-consciousness is to be abandoned. Eye-contact is to be abandoned. And whatever there is that arises in dependence on eye-contact—experienced as pleasure, pain or neither-pleasure-nor-pain—that too is to be abandoned.

“The ear is to be abandoned. Sounds are to be abandoned...

“The nose is to be abandoned. Aromas are to be abandoned...

“The tongue is to be abandoned. Flavors are to be abandoned...

“The body is to be abandoned. Tactile sensations are to be abandoned...

“The intellect is to be abandoned. Ideas are to be abandoned. Intellect-consciousness is to be abandoned. Intellect-contact is to be abandoned. And whatever there is that arises in dependence on intellect-contact—experienced as pleasure, pain or neither-pleasure-nor-pain—that too is to be abandoned.

“This is called the All as a phenomenon to be abandoned.”

NOTE

1. To abandon the eye, etc., here means to abandon passion and desire for these things. See [SN 27:1–10](#)

Aflame

Āditta-pariyāya Sutta (SN 35:28)

I have heard that on one occasion the Blessed One was staying near Gayā at Gayā Head with 1,000 monks. There he addressed the monks:

“Monks, the All is aflame. Which All is aflame? The eye is aflame. Forms are aflame. Eye-consciousness is aflame. Eye-contact is aflame. And whatever there is that arises in dependence on eye-contact—experienced as pleasure, pain or neither-pleasure-nor-pain—that too is aflame. Aflame with what? Aflame with the fire of passion, the fire of

aversion, the fire of delusion. Aflame, I tell you, with birth, aging & death, with sorrows, lamentations, pains, distresses, & despairs.

“The ear is aflame. Sounds are aflame...

“The nose is aflame. Aromas are aflame...

“The tongue is aflame. Flavors are aflame...

“The body is aflame. Tactile sensations are aflame...

“The intellect is aflame. Ideas are aflame. Intellect-consciousness is aflame. Intellect-contact is aflame. And whatever there is that arises in dependence on intellect-contact—experienced as pleasure, pain or neither-pleasure-nor-pain—that too is aflame. Aflame with what? Aflame with the fire of passion, the fire of aversion, the fire of delusion. Aflame, I say, with birth, aging & death, with sorrows, lamentations, pains, distresses, & despairs.

“Seeing thus, the instructed disciple of the noble ones grows disenchanted with the eye, disenchanted with forms, disenchanted with eye-consciousness, disenchanted with eye-contact. And whatever there is that arises in dependence on eye-contact, experienced as pleasure, pain or neither-pleasure-nor-pain: With that, too, he grows disenchanted.

“He grows disenchanted with the ear...

“He grows disenchanted with the nose...

“He grows disenchanted with the tongue...

“He grows disenchanted with the body...

“He grows disenchanted with the intellect, disenchanted with ideas, disenchanted with intellect-consciousness, disenchanted with intellect-contact. And whatever there is that arises in dependence on intellect-contact, experienced as pleasure, pain or neither-pleasure-nor-pain: With that, too, he grows disenchanted. Disenchanted, he becomes dispassionate. Through dispassion, he is released. With release, there is the knowledge, ‘Released.’ He discerns that ‘Birth is ended, the holy life fulfilled, the task done. There is nothing further for this world.’”

That is what the Blessed One said. Gratified, the monks delighted in the Blessed One’s words. And while this explanation was being given, the minds of the 1,000 monks, through lack of clinging/sustenance, were released from effluents.

See also: MN 72; [SN 12:52](#); Ud 3:10; Ud 8:9–10; Iti 44; Iti 93; Sn 5:6

To Migajāla

Migajāla Sutta (SN 35:63)

Near Sāvattthī. Then Ven. Migajāla went to the Blessed One and on arrival, having bowed down to him, sat to one side. As he was sitting there he said to the Blessed One: “A person who is living alone. A person who is living alone,’ thus it is said. To what extent, lord, is one a person who is living alone, and to what extent is one a person who is living with a companion?”

“Migajāla, there are forms cognizable via the eye—agreeable, pleasing, charming, endearing, enticing, linked to sensual desire—and a monk relishes them, welcomes them, & remains fastened to them. As he relishes them, welcomes them, & remains fastened to them, delight arises. There being delight, he is impassioned. Being impassioned, he is fettered. A monk joined with the fetter of delight is said to be a person who is living with a companion.

“There are sounds cognizable via the ear... aromas cognizable via the nose... flavors cognizable via the tongue... tactile sensations cognizable via the body... ideas cognizable via the intellect—agreeable, pleasing, charming, endearing, enticing, linked to sensual desire—and a monk relishes them, welcomes them, & remains fastened to them. As he relishes them, welcomes them, & remains fastened to them, delight arises. There being delight, he is impassioned. Being impassioned, he is fettered. A monk joined with the fetter of delight is said to be a person who is living with a companion.

“A person living in this way—even if he frequents isolated forest & wilderness dwellings, with an unpopulated atmosphere, lying far from humanity, appropriate for seclusion—is still said to be living with a companion. Why is that? Because the craving that is his companion has not been abandoned by him. Thus he is said to be a person who is living with a companion.

“Now, there are forms cognizable via the eye—agreeable, pleasing, charming, endearing, enticing, linked to sensual desire—and a monk does not relish them, welcome them, or remain fastened to them. As he doesn’t relish them, welcome them, or remain fastened to them, delight ceases. There being no delight, he is not impassioned. Being not impassioned, he is not fettered. A monk disjoined from the fetter of delight is said to be a person who is living alone.

“There are sounds cognizable via the ear... aromas cognizable via the nose... flavors cognizable via the tongue... tactile sensations cognizable via the body... ideas cognizable via the intellect—agreeable, pleasing, charming, endearing, enticing, linked to sensual desire—and a monk does not relish them, welcome them, or remain fastened to them. As he doesn’t relish them, welcome them, or remain fastened to them, delight ceases. There being no delight, he is not impassioned. Being not impassioned, he is not fettered. A monk disjoined from the fetter of delight is said to be a person who is living alone.

“A person living in this way—even if he lives near a village, associating with monks & nuns, with male & female lay followers, with kings & royal ministers, with sectarians & their disciples—is still said to be living alone. A person living alone is said to be a monk. Why is that? Because the craving that is his companion has been abandoned by him. Thus he is said to be a person who is living alone.”

See also: [SN 21:10](#); [SN 35:95](#); AN 6:63; Dhṛp 353; Iti 15; Sn 1:3

Upasena

Upasena Sutta (SN 35:69)

Once Ven. Sāriputta and Ven. Upasena were staying near Rājagaha in the Cool Forest, at Snakeshood Grotto. Then it so happened that a snake fell on Ven. Upasena’s body (and bit him). Then Ven. Upasena said to the monks, “Quick, friends, lift this body of mine onto a couch and carry it outside before it’s scattered like a fistful of chaff!”

When this was said, Ven. Sāriputta said to Ven. Upasena, “But we don’t see any alteration in your body or change in your faculties.”

Then Ven. Upasena said, “Quick, friends, lift this body of mine onto a couch and carry it outside before it’s scattered like a fistful of chaff! Friend Sāriputta, in anyone who had the thought, ‘I am the eye’ or ‘The eye is mine,’ ‘I am the ear’ or ‘The ear is mine,’ ‘I am the nose’ or ‘The nose is mine,’ ‘I am the tongue’ or ‘The tongue is mine,’ ‘I am the body’ or ‘The body is mine,’ ‘I am the intellect’ or ‘The intellect is mine’: In him there would be an alteration in his body or a change in his faculties. But as for me, the thought does not occur to me that ‘I am the eye’ or ‘The eye is mine,’ ... ‘I am the tongue’ or ‘The tongue is mine,’ ... ‘I am the intellect’ or ‘The intellect is mine.’ So what alteration should there be in my body, what change should there be in my faculties?”

Now, Ven. Upasena’s I-making, my-making, & obsession with conceit had already been well rooted out for a long time, which is why the thought did not occur to him that “I am the eye” or “The eye is mine,” ... “I am the tongue” or “The tongue is mine,” ... “I am the intellect” or “The intellect is mine.”

Then the monks lifted Ven. Upasena’s body on a couch and carried it outside. And Ven. Upasena’s body was scattered right there like a fistful of chaff.

See also: Ud 8:9–10; Thag 14:1; Thag 16:1

Ill (1)

Gilāna Sutta (SN 35:74)

Near Sāvattthī. Then a certain monk went to the Blessed One and, on arrival, having bowed down to him, sat to one side. As he was sitting there he said to the Blessed One, “Lord, in such and such a dwelling a certain monk—newly ordained, not well known—is diseased, in pain, severely ill. It would be good if the Blessed One would visit the monk, out of sympathy for him.”

Then the Blessed One, on hearing the word “newly ordained,” on hearing the word “diseased,” and realizing that the monk was not well known, went to him. The monk saw the Blessed One coming from afar and, on seeing him, stirred in his bed. Then the Blessed One said to him, “Enough, monk. Don’t stir in your bed. There are these seats made ready. I will sit down there.”

The Blessed One sat down on a seat made ready. Having sat down, he said to the monk, “I hope you are getting better, monk. I hope you are comfortable. I hope that your pains are lessening and not increasing. I hope that there are signs of their lessening, and not of their increasing.”

“I am not getting better, lord. I am not comfortable. My extreme pains are increasing, not lessening. There are signs of their increasing, and not of their lessening.”

“Then I hope you have no anxiety, monk. I hope you have no remorse.”

“Yes, lord, I do have not a small amount of anxiety, not a small amount of remorse.”

“I hope you can’t fault yourself with regard to your virtue.”

“No, lord, I can’t fault myself with regard to my virtue.”

“Then what are you anxious about? What is your remorse?”

“I understand that the Blessed One has not taught the Dhamma with purity of virtue as its goal.”

“If you understand that I have not taught the Dhamma with purity of virtue as its goal, then for what goal do you understand that I have taught the Dhamma?”

“I understand that the Blessed One has taught the Dhamma with the fading of passion as its goal.”

“Good, good, monk. It’s good that you understand that I have taught the Dhamma with the fading of passion as its goal, for I *have* taught the Dhamma with the fading of passion as its goal.

“What do you think, monk? Is the eye constant or inconstant?”

“Inconstant, lord.”

“And is that which is inconstant easeful or stressful?”

“Stressful, lord.”

“And is it fitting to regard what is inconstant, stressful, subject to change as: ‘This is mine. This is my self. This is what I am?’”

“No, lord.”

“... Is the ear constant or inconstant?”—“Inconstant, lord.” ...

“... Is the nose constant or inconstant?”—“Inconstant, lord.” ...

“... Is the tongue constant or inconstant?”—“Inconstant, lord.” ...

“... Is the body constant or inconstant?”—“Inconstant, lord.” ...

“What do you think, monk? Is the intellect constant or inconstant?”

“Inconstant, lord.” “

And is that which is inconstant easeful or stressful?”

“Stressful, lord.” “

And is it fitting to regard what is inconstant, stressful, subject to change as: ‘This is mine. This is my self. This is what I am?’”

“No, lord.”

“Seeing thus, the instructed disciple of the noble ones grows disenchanted with the eye, disenchanted with the ear, disenchanted with the nose, disenchanted with the tongue, disenchanted with the body, disenchanted with the intellect. Disenchanted, he becomes dispassionate. Through dispassion, he is released. With release, there is the knowledge, ‘Released.’ He discerns that ‘Birth is ended, the holy life fulfilled, the task done. There is nothing further for this world.’”

That is what the Blessed One said. Gratified, the monk delighted in the Blessed One’s words. And while this explanation was being given, there arose for the monk the dustless, stainless Dhamma eye: “Whatever is subject to origination is all subject to cessation.”

See also: MN 146; [SN 36:7](#); [SN 46:14](#); [SN 52:10](#); AN 4:173; AN 5:121; AN 10:60

Ill (2)

Gilāna Sutta (SN 35:75)

Near Sāvattthī. Then a certain monk went to the Blessed One and, on arrival, having bowed down to him, sat to one side. As he was sitting there he said to the Blessed One, “Lord, in such and such a dwelling a certain monk—newly ordained, not well known—is diseased, in pain, severely ill. It would be good if the Blessed One would visit the monk, out of sympathy for him.”

Then the Blessed One, on hearing the word “newly ordained,” on hearing the word “diseased,” and realizing that the monk was not well known, went to him. The monk saw the Blessed One coming from afar and, on seeing him, stirred in his bed. Then the Blessed One said to him, “Enough, monk. Don’t stir in your bed. There are these seats made ready. I will sit down there.”

The Blessed One sat down on a seat made ready. Having sat down, he said to the monk, “I hope you are getting better, monk. I hope you are comfortable. I hope that your pains are lessening and not increasing. I hope that there are signs of their lessening, and not of their increasing.”

“I am not getting better, lord. I am not comfortable. My extreme pains are increasing, not lessening. There are signs of their increasing, and not of their lessening.”

“Then I hope you have no anxiety, monk. I hope you have no remorse.”

“Yes, lord, I do have not a small amount of anxiety, not a small amount of remorse.”

“I hope you can’t fault yourself with regard to your virtue.”

“No, lord, I can’t fault myself with regard to my virtue.”

“Then what are you anxious about? What is your remorse?”

“I understand that the Blessed One has not taught the Dhamma with purity of virtue as its goal.”

“If you understand that I have not taught the Dhamma with purity of virtue as its goal, then for what goal do you understand that I have taught the Dhamma?”

“I understand that the Blessed One has taught the Dhamma with total unbinding through lack of clinging as its goal.”

“Good, good, monk. It’s good that you understand that I have taught the Dhamma with total unbinding through lack of clinging as its goal, for I *have* taught the Dhamma with total unbinding through lack of clinging as its goal.

“What do you think, monk? Is the eye constant or inconstant?”

“Inconstant, lord.”

“And is that which is inconstant easeful or stressful?”

“Stressful, lord.”

“And is it fitting to regard what is inconstant, stressful, subject to change as: ‘This is mine. This is my self. This is what I am?’”

“No, lord.”

“... Is the ear constant or inconstant?”—“Inconstant, lord.” ...

“... Is the nose constant or inconstant?”—“Inconstant, lord.” ...

“... Is the tongue constant or inconstant?”—“Inconstant, lord.” ...

“... Is the body constant or inconstant?”—“Inconstant, lord.” ...

“What do you think, monk? Is the intellect constant or inconstant?”

“Inconstant, lord.” “

And is that which is inconstant easeful or stressful?”

“Stressful, lord.” “

And is it fitting to regard what is inconstant, stressful, subject to change as: ‘This is mine. This is my self. This is what I am?’”

“No, lord.”

“Seeing thus, the instructed disciple of the noble ones grows disenchanted with the eye, disenchanted with the ear, disenchanted with the nose, disenchanted with the tongue, disenchanted with the body, disenchanted with the intellect. Disenchanted, he becomes dispassionate. Through dispassion, he is released. With release, there is the knowledge, ‘Released.’ He discerns that ‘Birth is ended, the holy life fulfilled, the task done. There is nothing further for this world.’”

That is what the Blessed One said. Gratified, the monk delighted in the Blessed One’s words. And while this explanation was being given, the mind of that monk, through lack of clinging/sustenance, was released from effluents.

Ignorance

Avijjā Sutta (SN 35:80)

Then a certain monk went to the Blessed One and, on arrival, having bowed down to him, sat to one side. As he was sitting there, he said to the Blessed One:

“Lord, is there any one thing with whose abandoning in a monk ignorance is abandoned and clear knowing arises?”

“Yes, monk, there is one thing with whose abandoning in a monk ignorance is abandoned and clear knowing arises.”

“What is that one thing?”

“Ignorance, monk, is the one thing with whose abandoning in a monk ignorance is abandoned and clear knowing arises.”¹

“But how does a monk know, how does a monk see, so that ignorance is abandoned and clear knowing arises?”

“There is the case, monk, where a monk has heard, ‘All dhammas are unworthy of attachment.’ Having heard that all dhammas are unworthy of attachment, he directly knows every dhamma. Directly knowing every dhamma, he comprehends every dhamma. Comprehending every dhamma, he sees all themes [all objects] as something separate.”²

“He sees the eye as something separate. He sees forms as something separate. He sees eye-consciousness as something separate. He sees eye-contact as something separate. And whatever arises in dependence on eye-contact—experienced either as pleasure, as pain, or as neither-pleasure-nor-pain—that too he sees as something separate.

“He sees the ear as something separate....

“He sees the nose as something separate....

“He sees the tongue as something separate....

“He sees the body as something separate....

“He sees the intellect as something separate. He sees ideas as something separate. He sees intellect-consciousness as something

separate. He sees intellect-contact as something separate. And whatever arises in dependence on intellect-contact—experienced either as pleasure, as pain, or as neither-pleasure-nor-pain—that too he sees as something separate.

“This is how a monk knows, this is how a monk sees, so that ignorance is abandoned and clear knowing arises.”

NOTES

1. In other words, ignorance is so fundamental that it has to be attacked directly.

2. *Aññato*: literally, “as other.” The Commentary explains this as “in another way” or “differently” from the way ordinary beings view things, but that does not fit with the syntax of the Pali, nor does it really answer the monk’s question.

See also: MN 140; MN 146; [SN 12:15](#); AN 7:58

The World

Loka Sutta (SN 35:82)

Then a certain monk went to the Blessed One and, on arrival, having bowed down to him, sat to one side. As he was sitting there, he said to the Blessed One: “‘The world, the world [*loka*],’ it is said. In what respect does the word ‘world’ apply?”

“Insofar as it disintegrates [*lujjati*], monk, it is called the ‘world.’ Now what disintegrates? The eye disintegrates. Forms disintegrate. Eye-consciousness disintegrates. Eye-contact disintegrates. And whatever there is that arises in dependence on eye-contact—experienced as pleasure, pain or neither-pleasure-nor-pain—that too disintegrates.

“The ear disintegrates. Sounds disintegrate...

“The nose disintegrates. Aromas disintegrate...

“The tongue disintegrates. Tastes disintegrate...

“The body disintegrates. Tactile sensations disintegrate...

“The intellect disintegrates. Ideas disintegrate. Intellect-consciousness disintegrates. Intellect-contact disintegrates. And whatever there is that arises in dependence on intellect-contact—experienced as pleasure, pain or neither-pleasure-nor-pain—that too disintegrates.

“Insofar as it disintegrates, it is called the ‘world.’”

[Because the word loka can also mean ‘cosmos,’ this discourse can also be translated as follows:]

Then a certain monk went to the Blessed One and, on arrival, having bowed down to him, sat to one side. As he was sitting there, he said to the Blessed One: “‘The cosmos, the cosmos [*loka*],’ it is said. In what respect does the word ‘cosmos’ apply?”

“Insofar as it disintegrates [*lujjati*], monk, it is called the ‘cosmos.’ Now what disintegrates? The eye disintegrates. Forms disintegrate. Eye-consciousness disintegrates. Eye-contact disintegrates. And whatever there is that arises in dependence on eye-contact—experienced as pleasure, pain or neither-pleasure-nor-pain—that too disintegrates.

“The ear disintegrates. Sounds disintegrate...

“The nose disintegrates. Aromas disintegrate...

“The tongue disintegrates. Tastes disintegrate...

“The body disintegrates. Tactile sensations disintegrate...

“The intellect disintegrates. Ideas disintegrate. Intellect-consciousness disintegrates. Intellect-contact disintegrates. And whatever there is that arises in dependence on intellect-contact—experienced as pleasure, pain or neither-pleasure-nor-pain—that too disintegrates.

“Insofar as it disintegrates, it is called the ‘cosmos.’”¹

NOTE

1. For alternative definition of “world/cosmos,” see AN 9:38.

See also: DN 11; MN 82; [SN 12:48](#); AN 4:45; AN 10:95

Empty

Suñña Sutta (SN 35:85)

Then Ven. Ānanda went to the Blessed One and on arrival, having bowed down to him, sat to one side. As he was sitting there he said to the Blessed One, “It is said that ‘the world is empty, the world is empty,’ lord. In what respect is it said that ‘the world is empty?’”

“Insofar as it is empty of a self or of anything pertaining to a self: Thus it is said, Ānanda, that ‘the world is empty.’¹ And what is empty of a self or of anything pertaining to a self? The eye is empty of a self or of anything pertaining to a self. Forms... Eye-consciousness... Eye-contact is empty of a self or of anything pertaining to a self. And whatever there is that arises in dependence on eye-contact—experienced as pleasure, pain or neither-pleasure-nor-pain—that too is empty of a self or of anything pertaining to a self.

“The ear is empty....

“The nose is empty....

“The tongue is empty....

“The body is empty....

“The intellect is empty of a self or of anything pertaining to a self. Ideas... Intellect-consciousness... Intellect-contact is empty of a self or of anything pertaining to a self. And whatever there is that arises in dependence on intellect-contact—experienced as pleasure, pain or neither-pleasure-nor-pain—that too is empty of a self or of anything pertaining to a self.

“Thus it is said that ‘the world is empty.’”

NOTE

1. This passage is sometimes interpreted as an implicit statement that there is no self. However, it has to be understood in the context of three other passages: In [SN 35:82](#), the Buddha defines “world” as the six senses, their objects, the contact between them, and whatever arises based on that

contact. In AN 4:173, Ven. Sāriputta states that, with the fading and cessation of the six media of contact, one should not ask whether there is or isn't anything left, as such questions apply the categories of objectification to what is non-objectified. In [SN 35:117](#), the Buddha insists that the dimension where the six sense media cease and fade should nevertheless be experienced. Thus “world” here covers only the part of experience that can be described. Beyond that range, perceptions of “self” and “not-self” do not and cannot apply.

See also: MN 2; MN 121; [SN 5:10](#); [SN 12:15](#); [SN 44:10](#); Ud 1:10; Sn 5:15

To Puṇṇa

Puṇṇa Sutta (SN 35:88)

In the following translation, the passage in braces { } is contained in the Thai edition of the Pali Canon, but not in the other major editions.

* * *

Then Ven. Puṇṇa went to the Blessed One and on arrival, having bowed down to the Blessed One, sat to one side. As he was sitting there he said to the Blessed One, “It would be good if the Blessed One would teach me the Dhamma in brief so that, having heard the Dhamma from the Blessed One, I might dwell alone in seclusion: heedful, ardent, & resolute.”

“There are, Puṇṇa, forms cognizable via the eye—agreeable, pleasing, charming, endearing, enticing, linked to sensual desire. If a monk relishes them, welcomes them, and remains fastened to them, then in him—relishing them, welcoming them, and remaining fastened to them—there arises delight. From the origination of delight, I tell you, comes the origination of suffering & stress.

“There are sounds cognizable via the ear... aromas cognizable by the nose... flavors cognizable via the tongue... tactile sensations cognizable via the body...

“There are ideas cognizable via the intellect—agreeable, pleasing, charming, endearing, enticing, linked to sensual desire. If a monk relishes them, welcomes them, and remains fastened to them, then in him—relishing them, welcoming them, and remaining fastened to them—there arises delight. From the origination of delight, I tell you, comes the origination of suffering & stress.

“There are forms cognizable via the eye—agreeable, pleasing, charming, endearing, enticing, linked to sensual desire. If a monk does not relish them, welcome them, or remain fastened to them, then in him—not relishing them, not welcoming them, not remaining fastened to them—there arises no delight. From the cessation of delight, I tell you, comes the cessation of suffering & stress.

“There are sounds cognizable via the ear... aromas cognizable by the nose... flavors cognizable via the tongue... tactile sensations cognizable via the body...

“There are ideas cognizable via the intellect—agreeable, pleasing, charming, endearing, enticing, linked to sensual desire. If a monk does not relish them, welcome them, or remain fastened to them, then in him—not relishing them, not welcoming them, not remaining fastened to them—there arises no delight. From the cessation of delight, I tell you, comes the cessation of suffering & stress. {By this means, Puṇṇa, you are not far from this Dhamma & Vinaya.”

When this was said, a certain monk said to the Blessed One, “Here is where I am ill at ease, lord, for I don’t discern, as they have come to be, the origination, the passing away, the allure, the drawback, and the escape from the six media of contact.”

“Then what do you think, monk? Do you regard that ‘The eye is not mine. It is not my self. It is not what I am?’”

“Yes, lord.”

“Very good, monk. When it is well-seen by you with right discernment that ‘The eye is not mine. It is not my self. It is not what I am,’ then the first medium of contact will be abandoned by you for the sake of no further becoming in the future.

“Do you regard that ‘The ear is not mine... The nose is not mine... The tongue is not mine... The body is not mine...

Do you regard that ‘The intellect is not mine. It is not my self. It is not what I am’?”

“Yes, lord.”

“Very good, monk. When it is well-seen by you with right discernment that ‘The intellect is not mine. It is not my self. It is not what I am,’ then the sixth medium of contact will be abandoned by you for the sake of no further becoming in the future.”

“Well then, Puṇṇa. Now that I have instructed you with a brief instruction, in which country are you going to live?”

“Lord, there is a country called Sunāparanta. I am going to live there.”

“Puṇṇa, the Sunāparanta people are fierce. They are rough. If they insult and ridicule you, what will you think?”

“If they insult and ridicule me, I will think, ‘These Sunāparanta people are civilized, very civilized, in that they don’t hit me with their hands.’ That is what I will think, O Blessed One. That is what I will think, O One Well-Gone.”

“But if they hit you with their hands, what will you think?”

“...I will think, ‘These Sunāparanta people are civilized, very civilized, in that they don’t hit me with a clod’...”

“But if they hit you with a clod...?”

“...I will think, ‘These Sunāparanta people are civilized, very civilized, in that they don’t hit me with a stick’...”

“But if they hit you with a stick...?”

“...I will think, ‘These Sunāparanta people are civilized, very civilized, in that they don’t hit me with a knife’...”

“But if they hit you with a knife...?”

“...I will think, ‘These Sunāparanta people are civilized, very civilized, in that they don’t take my life with a sharp knife’...”

“But if they take your life with a sharp knife...?”

“If they take my life with a sharp knife, I will think, ‘There are disciples of the Blessed One who—horrified, humiliated, and disgusted

by the body and by life—have sought for an assassin,¹ but here I have met my assassin without searching for him.² That is what I will think, O Blessed One. That is what I will think, O One Well-Gone.”

“Good, Puṇṇa, very good. Possessing such calm and self-control you are fit to dwell among the Sunāparantans. Now it is time to do as you see fit.”

Then Ven. Puṇṇa, delighting and rejoicing in the Blessed One’s words, rising from his seat, bowed down to the Blessed One and left, keeping him on his right side. Setting his dwelling in order and taking his robes & bowl, he set out for the Sunāparanta country and, after wandering stage by stage, he arrived there. There he lived. During that Rains retreat he established 500 male and 500 female lay followers in the practice, while he realized the three knowledges and then attained total [final] unbinding.

Then a large number of monks went to the Blessed One and on arrival, having bowed down to him, sat to one side. As they were sitting there, they said to him, “Lord, the clansman named Puṇṇa, whom the Blessed One instructed with a brief instruction, has died. What is his destination? What is his future state?”

“Monks, the clansman Puṇṇa was wise. He practiced the Dhamma in accordance with the Dhamma and did not pester me with issues related to the Dhamma. The clansman Puṇṇa is totally unbound.”

NOTES

1. *Satthahāraka*. Some scholars have objected that this word could not mean “assassin,” on the grounds that it is a neuter noun, and Pali does not use neuter nouns to describe people, but that is not true. For example, *kaṇṭaka*, “thorn,” another neuter noun, means “a subversive”—suggesting that neuter nouns were used to describe people as a way of showing disrespect.

Even more to the point, MN 12 contains references to people who are “hārakas”—a *tiṇa-hārakam*, or grass-carrier, and a *kaṭṭha-hārakam*, or firewood carrier—showing that the suffix *-hārakam* can easily be used to indicate a person.

2. In [SN 54:9](#) and in the origin story to Pārājika 3, a group of monks search for an assassin after becoming disgusted with their bodies when taking the unattractiveness of the body as their meditation theme. The Buddha, on learning of this, convenes the remaining monks and recommends that if they find such unskillful, aversive attitudes arising in their meditation, they should switch to the breath as their theme. Thus—contrary to some interpretations of this discourse—it seems unlikely that Puṇṇa is here extolling the act of searching for an assassin as a skillful approach toward death. Instead, the gist of his statement is that if he died under the circumstances described here, death would have found him without his having sought for it through aversion. This would parallel the attitude toward death that the Theragāthā frequently attributes to arahants:

I don't delight in death,
don't delight in living.
I await my time
like a worker his wage.
I don't delight in death,
don't delight in living.
I await my time
mindful, alert. — *Thag 14:1*

This may not be life affirming in the American sense of the word, but it does affirm that the arahants have awakened to a release that transcends life and death. And that is the whole point of Dhamma practice. If there were nothing more important than life, then life itself would be pointless.

See also: MN 21; MN 140; Ud 1:10; Thag 16:1; Thig 14

A Pair

Dvaya Sutta (SN 35:93)

“It's in dependence on a pair that consciousness comes into play. And how does consciousness come into play in dependence on a pair? In dependence on the eye & forms there arises eye-consciousness. The eye is

inconstant, changeable, of a nature to become otherwise. Forms are inconstant, changeable, of a nature to become otherwise. Thus this pair is both wavering & fluctuating—inconstant, changeable, of a nature to become otherwise.

“Eye-consciousness is inconstant, changeable, of a nature to become otherwise. Whatever is the cause, the requisite condition, for the arising of eye-consciousness, that is inconstant, changeable, of a nature to become otherwise. Having arisen in dependence on an inconstant factor, how could eye-consciousness be constant?

“The coming together, the meeting, the convergence of these three phenomena is eye-contact. Whatever is the cause, the requisite condition, for the arising of eye-contact, that is inconstant, changeable, of a nature to become otherwise. Having arisen in dependence on an inconstant factor, how could eye-contact be constant?

“Contacted, one feels. Contacted, one intends. Contacted, one perceives. These phenomena are both wavering & fluctuating—inconstant, changeable, of a nature to become otherwise. This is how it’s in dependence on a pair that eye-consciousness comes into play.

“In dependence on the ear & sounds there arises ear-consciousness....

“In dependence on the nose & aromas there arises nose-consciousness....

“In dependence on the tongue & flavors there arises tongue-consciousness....

“In dependence on the body & tactile sensations there arises body-consciousness....

“In dependence on the intellect & ideas there arises intellect-consciousness. The intellect is inconstant, changeable, of a nature to become otherwise. Ideas are inconstant, changeable, of a nature to become otherwise. Thus this pair is both wavering & fluctuating—inconstant, changeable, of a nature to become otherwise.

“Intellect-consciousness is inconstant, changeable, of a nature to become otherwise. Whatever is the cause, the requisite condition, for the arising of intellect-consciousness, that is inconstant, changeable, of a

nature to become otherwise. Having arisen in dependence on an inconstant factor, how could intellect-consciousness be constant?

“The coming together, the meeting, the convergence of these three phenomena is intellect-contact. Whatever is the cause, the requisite condition, for the arising of intellect-contact, that is inconstant, changeable, of a nature to become otherwise. Having arisen in dependence on an inconstant factor, how could intellect-contact be constant?

“Contacted, one feels. Contacted, one intends. Contacted, one perceives. These phenomena are both wavering & fluctuating—inconstant, changeable, of a nature to become otherwise. This is how it’s in dependence on a pair that intellect-consciousness comes into play.”

See also: MN 38; MN 146; [SN 35:193](#)

To Mālunkyaputta

Mālunkyaputta Sutta (SN 35:95)

Then Ven. Mālunkyaputta, who was ardent & resolute, went to the Blessed One and, on arrival, having bowed down to him, sat to one side. As he was sitting there, he said to the Blessed One: “It would be good, lord, if the Blessed One would teach me the Dhamma in brief so that, having heard the Dhamma from the Blessed One, I might dwell alone in seclusion: heedful, ardent, & resolute.”

“Here now, Mālunkyaputta: What will I say to the young monks when you—aged, old, elderly, along in years, come to the last stage of life—ask for an admonition in brief?”

“Lord, even though I’m aged, old, elderly, along in years, come to the last stage of life, may the Blessed One teach me the Dhamma in brief! May the One Well-Gone teach me the Dhamma in brief! It may well be that I’ll understand the Blessed One’s words. It may well be that I’ll become an heir to the Blessed One’s words.”

“What do you think, Mālunkyaputta? The forms cognizable via the eye that are unseen by you—that you have never before seen, that you don’t see, and that are not to be seen by you: Do you have any desire or passion or love there?”

“No, lord.”¹

“The sounds cognizable via the ear...

“The aromas cognizable via the nose...

“The flavors cognizable via the tongue...

“The tactile sensations cognizable via the body...

“The ideas cognizable via the intellect that are uncognized by you—the you have never before cognized, that you don’t cognize, and that are not to be cognized by you: Do you have any desire or passion or love there?”

“No, lord.”

“Then, Mālunkyaputta, with regard to phenomena to be seen, heard, sensed, or cognized: In reference to the seen, there will be only the seen. In reference to the heard, only the heard. In reference to the sensed, only the sensed. In reference to the cognized, only the cognized. That is how you should train yourself. When for you there will be only the seen in reference to the seen, only the heard in reference to the heard, only the sensed in reference to the sensed, only the cognized in reference to the cognized, then, Mālunkyaputta, there is no you in connection with that. When there is no you in connection with that, there is no you there. When there is no you there, you are neither here nor yonder nor between the two. This, just this, is the end of stress.”²

“I understand in detail, lord, the meaning of what the Blessed One has said in brief:

Seeing a form
—mindfulness lapsed—
attending
to the theme of ‘endearing,’
impassioned in mind,
one feels
and remains fastened on it.

One's feelings, born of the form,
 grow numerous,
Greed & annoyance
 injure one's mind.
Thus amassing stress,
 one is said to be far
 from unbinding.

Hearing a sound...
Smelling an aroma...
Tasting a flavor...
Touching a tactile sensation...

Knowing an idea
 —mindfulness lapsed—
attending
 to the theme of 'endearing,'
impassioned in mind,
 one feels
 and remains fastened on it.
One's feelings, born of the idea,
 grow numerous,
Greed & annoyance
 injure one's mind.
Thus amassing stress,
 one is said to be far
 from unbinding.

Not impassioned with forms
 —seeing a form with mindfulness firm—
dispassioned in mind,
 one knows
 and doesn't remain fastened on it.
While one is seeing a form
 —and even experiencing feeling—
it falls away and doesn't accumulate.
Thus one fares mindfully.
Thus not amassing stress,

one is said to be
in the presence of unbinding.
Not impassioned with sounds...
Not impassioned with aromas...
Not impassioned with flavors...
Not impassioned with tactile sensations...
Not impassioned with ideas
—knowing an idea with mindfulness firm—
dispassioned in mind,
one knows
and doesn't remain fastened on it.
While one is knowing an idea
—and even experiencing feeling—
it falls away and doesn't accumulate.
Thus one fares mindfully.
Thus not amassing stress,
one is said to be
in the presence of unbinding.

“It's in this way, lord, that I understand in detail the meaning of what the Blessed One said in brief.”

“Good, Mālunkyaputta. Very good. It's good that you understand in detail this way the meaning of what I said in brief.”

[The Buddha then repeats the verses.]

“It's in this way, Mālunkyaputta, that the meaning of what I said in brief should be regarded in detail.”

Then Ven. Mālunkyaputta, having been admonished by the admonishment from the Blessed One, got up from his seat and bowed down to the Blessed One, circled around him, keeping the Blessed One to his right side, and left. Then, dwelling alone, secluded, heedful, ardent, & resolute, he in no long time entered & remained in the supreme goal of the holy life for which clansmen rightly go forth from home into homelessness, directly knowing & realizing it for himself in the here & now. He knew: “Birth is ended, the holy life fulfilled, the task

done. There is nothing further for the sake of this world.” And thus Ven. Māluṅkyaputta became another one of the arahants.

NOTES

1. It is possible, of course, to have desire for a sight that one has not seen. However, strictly speaking, the desire is not “there” at the unseen sight. Rather, it’s there at the present idea of the unseen sight. This distinction is important for the purpose of the practice.

2. See Ud 1:10, where the Buddha gives these same instructions to Bāhiya of the Bark-cloth.

See also: MN 18; [SN 23:2](#); [SN 35:63](#); AN 6:63

Dwelling in Heedlessness *Pamādavihārin Sutta (SN 35:97)*

“Monks, I will teach you about one who dwells in heedlessness and one who dwells in heedfulness. Listen & pay careful attention, I will speak.”

“As you say, lord,” the monks responded to the Blessed One.

The Blessed One said: “And how does one dwell in heedlessness? When a monk dwells without restraint over the faculty of the eye, the mind is stained with forms cognizable via the eye. When the mind is stained, there is no joy. There being no joy, there is no rapture. There being no rapture, there is no calm. There being no calm, he dwells in pain. When pained, the mind does not become centered. When the mind is uncentered, phenomena don’t become manifest. When phenomena aren’t manifest, he is reckoned simply as one who dwells in heedlessness.

“When a monk dwells without restraint over the ear... nose... tongue... body...

“When a monk dwells without restraint over the faculty of the intellect, the mind is stained with ideas cognizable via the intellect. When the mind is stained, there is no joy. There being no joy, there is no

rapture. There being no rapture, there is no calm. There being no calm, he dwells in pain. When pained, the mind does not become centered. When the mind is uncentered, phenomena don't become manifest. When phenomena aren't manifest, he is reckoned simply as one who dwells in heedlessness.

“This is how one dwells in heedlessness.

“And how does one dwell in heedfulness? When a monk dwells with restraint over the faculty of the eye, the mind is not stained with forms cognizable via the eye. When the mind is not stained, joy is born. In one who has joy, rapture is born. The body of one enraptured at heart grows calm. When the body is calm, one feels pleasure. Feeling pleasure, the mind becomes centered. When the mind is centered, phenomena become manifest. When phenomena are manifest, he is reckoned as one who dwells in heedfulness.

“When a monk dwells with restraint over the ear... nose... tongue... body...

“When a monk dwells with restraint over the faculty of the intellect, the mind is not stained with ideas cognizable via the intellect. When the mind is not stained, joy is born. In one who has joy, rapture is born. The body of one enraptured at heart grows calm. When the body is calm, one feels pleasure. Feeling pleasure, the mind becomes centered. When the mind is centered, phenomena become manifest. When phenomena are manifest, he is reckoned as one who dwells in heedfulness.

“This is how one dwells in heedfulness.”

See also: DN 16; [SN 3:17](#); [SN 55:40](#); AN 10:15

Concentration

Samādhī Sutta (SN 35:99)

“Develop concentration, monks. A concentrated monk discerns things as they have come to be. And what does he discern as it has come to be?

“He discerns, as it has come to be, that ‘The eye is inconstant’ ... ‘Forms are inconstant’ ... ‘Eye-consciousness is inconstant’ ... ‘Eye-contact is inconstant’ ... ‘Whatever arises in dependence on eye-contact—experienced either as pleasure, as pain, or as neither-pleasure-nor-pain—that too is inconstant.’

“He discerns, as it has come to be, that ‘The ear is inconstant’ ... ‘The nose is inconstant’ ... ‘The tongue is inconstant’ ... ‘The body is inconstant’ ...

“He discerns, as it has come to be, that ‘The intellect is inconstant’ ... ‘Ideas are inconstant’ ... ‘Intellect-consciousness is inconstant’ ... ‘Intellect-contact is inconstant’ ... ‘Whatever arises in dependence on intellect-contact—experienced either as pleasure, as pain, or as neither-pleasure-nor-pain—that too is inconstant.’

“So develop concentration, monks. A concentrated monk discerns things as they have come to be.”

See also: MN 52; [SN 22:5](#); AN 3:74; AN 4:41; AN 5:28; AN 9:36

Not Yours

Na Tumhāka Sutta (SN 35:101)

“Monks, whatever’s not yours: Let go of it. Your letting go of it will be for your long-term happiness & benefit. And what is not yours?

“The eye isn’t yours: Let go of it. Your letting go of it will be for your long-term happiness & benefit. Forms are not yours... Eye-consciousness isn’t yours... Eye-contact isn’t yours... Whatever arises in dependence on eye-contact—experienced either as pleasure, as pain, or as neither-pleasure-nor-pain—that too isn’t yours: Let go of it. Your letting go of it will be for your long-term happiness & benefit.

“The ear isn’t yours: Let go of it...

“The nose isn’t yours: Let go of it...

“The tongue isn’t yours: Let go of it...

“The body’s not yours: Let go of it...

“The intellect’s not yours: Let go of it. Your letting go of it will be for your long-term happiness & benefit. Ideas are not yours... Intellect-consciousness isn’t yours... Intellect-contact isn’t yours... Whatever arises in dependence on intellect-contact—experienced either as pleasure, as pain, or as neither-pleasure-nor-pain—that too isn’t yours: Let go of it. Your letting go of it will be for your long-term happiness & benefit.

“Suppose a person were to gather or burn or do as he likes with the grass, twigs, branches, & leaves here in Jeta’s Grove. Would the thought occur to you, ‘It’s *us* that this person is gathering, burning, or doing with as he likes’?”

“No, lord. Why is that? Because those things are not our self nor do they pertain to our self.”

“In the same way, monks, the eye isn’t yours: Let go of it. Your letting go of it will be for your long-term happiness & benefit... The ear... The nose... The tongue... The body... The intellect’s not yours: Let go of it. Your letting go of it will be for your long-term happiness & benefit... Whatever arises in dependence on intellect-contact—experienced either as pleasure, as pain, or as neither-pleasure-nor-pain—that too isn’t yours: Let go of it. Your letting go of it will be for your long-term happiness & benefit.”

See also: MN 22; [SN 35:69](#); [SN 42:11](#)

Māra’s Power

Mārapāsa Sutta (SN 35:115)

“There are forms, monks, cognizable via the eye—agreeable, pleasing, charming, endearing, enticing, linked to sensual desire. If a monk relishes them, welcomes them, & remains fastened to them, he is said to be a monk fettered to forms cognizable by the eye. He has gone over to Māra’s camp; he has come under Māra’s power. The Evil One can do with him as he will.

“There are sounds cognizable via the ear...

“There are aromas cognizable via the nose...

“There are flavors cognizable via the tongue...

“There are tactile sensations cognizable via the body...

“There are ideas cognizable via the intellect—agreeable, pleasing, charming, endearing, enticing, linked to sensual desire. If a monk relishes them, welcomes them, & remains fastened to them, he is said to be a monk fettered to ideas cognizable by the intellect. He has gone over to Māra’s camp; he has come under Māra’s power. The Evil One can do with him as he will.

“Now, there are forms cognizable via the eye—agreeable, pleasing, charming, endearing, enticing, linked to sensual desire. If a monk does not relish them, welcome them, or remain fastened to them, he is said to be a monk freed from forms cognizable by the eye. He has not gone over to Māra’s camp; he has not come under Māra’s power. The Evil One cannot do with him as he will.

“There are sounds cognizable via the ear...

“There are aromas cognizable via the nose...

“There are flavors cognizable via the tongue...

“There are tactile sensations cognizable via the body...

“There are ideas cognizable via the intellect—agreeable, pleasing, charming, endearing, enticing, linked to sensual desire. If a monk does not relish them, welcome them, or remain fastened to them, he is said to be a monk freed from ideas cognizable by the intellect. He has not gone over to Māra’s camp; he has not come under Māra’s power. The Evil One cannot do with him as he will.”

See also: MN 49; [SN 4:19](#); [SN 5:1–10](#); [SN 35:202](#); [SN 47:6–7](#); AN 9:39; AN 10:72; Sn 4:2

Cosmos

Loka Sutta (SN 35:116)

“Monks, I don’t say that one would know, see, or reach the end of the cosmos by traveling. But I also don’t say that there is a putting an end to stress without reaching the end of the cosmos.”

Having said this, the Blessed One got up from his seat and went into his dwelling.

Then, not long after the Blessed One had left, this thought occurred to the monks: “This brief statement the Blessed One made, after which he went into his dwelling without analyzing the detailed meaning—i.e., ‘Monks, I don’t say that one would know, see, or reach the end of the cosmos by traveling. But I also don’t say that there is a putting an end to stress without reaching the end of the cosmos’: now who might analyze the unanalyzed detailed meaning of this brief statement?” Then the thought occurred to them, “Ven. Ānanda is praised by the Teacher and esteemed by his observant companions in the holy life. He is capable of analyzing the unanalyzed detailed meaning of this brief statement. Suppose we were to go to him and, on arrival, cross-question him about this matter.”

So the monks went to Ven. Ānanda and, on arrival, exchanged courteous greetings with him. After an exchange of friendly greetings & courtesies, they sat to one side. As they were sitting there, they [told him what had happened, and added,] “Analyze the meaning, Ven. Ānanda!”

[He replied:] “Friends, it’s as if a man needing heartwood, looking for heartwood, wandering in search of heartwood—passing over the root & trunk of a standing tree possessing heartwood—were to imagine that heartwood should be sought among its branches & leaves. So it is with you, who—having bypassed the Blessed One when you were face to face with him, the Teacher—imagine that I should be asked about this matter. For knowing, the Blessed One knows; seeing, he sees. He is the Eye, he is Knowledge, he is Dhamma, he is Brahmā. He is the speaker, the proclaimer, the elucidator of meaning, the giver of the deathless, the lord of the Dhamma, the Tathāgata. That was the time when you should have cross-questioned him about this matter. However he answered, that was how you should have remembered it.”

“Yes, friend Ānanda: Knowing, the Blessed One knows; seeing, he sees. He is the Eye, he is Knowledge, he is Dhamma, he is Brahmā. He is

the speaker, the proclaimer, the elucidator of meaning, the giver of the deathless, the lord of the Dhamma, the Tathāgata. That was the time when we should have cross-questioned him about this matter. However he answered, that was how we should have remembered it. But you are praised by the Teacher and esteemed by your observant companions in the holy life. You are capable of analyzing the unanalyzed detailed meaning of this brief statement. Analyze the meaning, Ven. Ānanda without making it difficult!”

“In that case, my friends, listen & pay close attention. I will speak.”

“As you say, friend,” the monks responded to him.

Ven. Ānanda said this: “Friends, concerning the brief statement the Blessed One made, after which he went into his dwelling without analyzing the detailed meaning—i.e., ‘Monks, I don’t say that one would know, see, or reach the end of the cosmos by traveling. But I also don’t say that there is a putting an end to stress without reaching the end of the cosmos’—I understand the detailed meaning to be this: That by means of which, with regard to the cosmos, one is a perceiver of a cosmos, a conceiver of a cosmos, that, in the discipline of the noble is called ‘the cosmos.’ And by means of what, with regard to the cosmos, is one a perceiver of a cosmos, a conceiver of a cosmos? By means of the eye one is, with regard to the cosmos, a perceiver of a cosmos, a conceiver of a cosmos. By means of the ear... the nose... the tongue... the body... the intellect one is, with regard to the cosmos, a perceiver of a cosmos, a conceiver of a cosmos. That by means of which, with regard to the cosmos, one is a perceiver of a cosmos, a conceiver of a cosmos, that, in the discipline of the noble is called ‘the cosmos.’

“So, concerning the brief statement the Blessed One made, after which he entered his dwelling without analyzing the detailed meaning—i.e., ‘Monks, I don’t say that one would know, see, or reach the end of the cosmos by traveling. But I also don’t say that there is a putting an end to stress without reaching the end of the cosmos’—this is how I understand the detailed meaning. Now, friends, if you wish, having gone to the Blessed One, cross-question him about this matter. However he answers is how you should remember it.”

Then the monks, delighting in & approving of Ven. Ānanda's words, got up from their seats and went to the Blessed One. On arrival, having bowed down to him, they sat to one side. As they were sitting there, they [told him what had happened after he had gone into his dwelling, and ended by saying,] "Then Ven. Ānanda analyzed the meaning using these words, these statements, these phrases."

"Ānanda is wise, monks. Ānanda is a person of great discernment. If you had asked me about this matter, I too would have answered in the same way he did. That is its meaning, and that is how you should remember it."

See also: DN 11; [SN 12:15](#); [SN 12:44](#); [SN 35:82](#); AN 4:45; AN 9:38

Strings of Sensuality

Kāmaguṇa Sutta (SN 35:117)

"Monks, before my awakening, when I was still just an unawakened bodhisatta, the thought occurred to me: 'Those five strings of sensuality that previously made contact with my awareness—that are past, ceased, changed: My mind, having often gone there, might go to those that are present, or occasionally to those that are future.'¹ Then the thought occurred to me: 'Those five strings of sensuality that previously made contact with my awareness—that are past, ceased, changed: There, for my own sake, heedfulness, mindfulness, and a protection of my awareness should be practiced.

"Therefore, monks, those five strings of sensuality that previously made contact with your awareness, too—that are past, ceased, changed: Your mind, having often gone there, might go to those that are present, or occasionally to those that are future. Therefore, those five strings of sensuality that previously made contact with your awareness, too—that are past, ceased, changed: There, for your own sake, heedfulness, mindfulness, and a protection of your awareness should be practiced.

“Therefore, monks, that dimension should be experienced² where the eye [vision] ceases and the perception [mental label] of form fades. That dimension should be experienced where the ear ceases and the perception of sound fades. That dimension should be experienced where the nose ceases and the perception of aroma fades. That dimension should be experienced where the tongue ceases and the perception of flavor fades. That dimension should be experienced where the body ceases and the perception of tactile sensation fades. That dimension should be experienced where the intellect ceases and the perception of idea fades. That dimension should be experienced.”

Having said this, the Blessed One got up from his seat and went into his dwelling.

Then, not long after the Blessed One had left, this thought occurred to the monks: “This brief statement the Blessed One made, after which he went into his dwelling without analyzing the detailed meaning—i.e., ‘Therefore, monks, that dimension should be experienced where the eye ceases and the perception of form fades. That dimension should be experienced where the ear ceases and the perception of sound fades... where the nose ceases and the perception of aroma fades... where the tongue ceases and the perception of flavor fades... where the body ceases and the perception of tactile sensation fades... where the intellect ceases and the perception of idea fades: That dimension should be experienced’: now who might analyze the unanalyzed detailed meaning of this brief statement?” Then the thought occurred to them, “Ven. Ānanda is praised by the Teacher and esteemed by his observant companions in the holy life. He is capable of analyzing the unanalyzed detailed meaning of this brief statement. Suppose we were to go to him and, on arrival, cross-question him about this matter.”

So the monks went to Ven. Ānanda and, on arrival, exchanged courteous greetings with him. After an exchange of friendly greetings & courtesies, they sat to one side. As they were sitting there, they [told him what had happened, and added,] “Analyze the meaning, Ven. Ānanda!”

[He replied:] “Friends, it’s as if a man needing heartwood, looking for heartwood, wandering in search of heartwood—passing over the root & trunk of a standing tree possessing heartwood—were to imagine that

heartwood should be sought among its branches & leaves. So it is with you, who—having bypassed the Blessed One when you were face to face with him, the Teacher—imagine that I should be asked about this matter. For knowing, the Blessed One knows; seeing, he sees. He is the Eye, he is Knowledge, he is Dhamma, he is Brahmā. He is the speaker, the proclaimer, the elucidator of meaning, the giver of the deathless, the lord of the Dhamma, the Tathāgata. That was the time when you should have cross-questioned him about this matter. However he answered, that was how you should have remembered it.”

“Yes, friend Ānanda: Knowing, the Blessed One knows; seeing, he sees. He is the Eye, he is Knowledge, he is Dhamma, he is Brahmā. He is the speaker, the proclaimer, the elucidator of meaning, the giver of the deathless, the lord of the Dhamma, the Tathāgata. That was the time when we should have cross-questioned him about this matter. However he answered, that was how we should have remembered it. But you are praised by the Teacher and esteemed by your observant companions in the holy life. You are capable of analyzing the unanalyzed detailed meaning of this brief statement. Analyze the meaning, Ven. Ānanda without making it difficult!”

“In that case, my friends, listen & pay close attention. I will speak.”

“As you say, friend,” the monks responded to him.

Ven. Ānanda said this: “Friends, concerning the brief statement the Blessed One made, after which he went into his dwelling without analyzing the detailed meaning—i.e., “Therefore, monks, that dimension should be experienced where the eye ceases and the perception of form fades. That dimension should be experienced where the ear ceases and the perception of sound fades... where the nose ceases and the perception of aroma fades... where the tongue ceases and the perception of flavor fades... where the body ceases and the perception of tactile sensation fades... where the intellect ceases and the perception of idea fades. That dimension should be experienced’—I understand the detailed meaning to be this: This was stated by the Blessed One with regard to the cessation of the six sense media.”³

“So, concerning the brief statement the Blessed One made, after which he entered his dwelling without analyzing the detailed meaning

—i.e., ‘Therefore, monks, that dimension should be experienced where the eye ceases and the perception of form fades. That dimension should be experienced where the ear ceases and the perception of sound fades... where the nose ceases and the perception of aroma fades... where the tongue ceases and the perception of flavor fades... where the body ceases and the perception of tactile sensation fades... where the intellect ceases and the perception of idea fades. That dimension should be experienced’—this is how I understand the detailed meaning. Now, friends, if you wish, having gone to the Blessed One, cross-question him about this matter. However he answers is how you should remember it.”

Then the monks, delighting in & approving of Ven. Ānanda’s words, got up from their seats and went to the Blessed One. On arrival, having bowed down to him, they sat to one side. As they were sitting there, they (told him what had happened after he had gone into his dwelling, and ended by saying,) “Then Ven. Ānanda analyzed the meaning using these words, these statements, these phrases.”

“Ānanda is wise, monks. Ānanda is a person of great discernment. If you had asked me about this matter, I too would have answered in the same way he did. That is its meaning, and that is how you should remember it.”

NOTES

1. More idiomatically, this sentence could be rendered as, “My mind—going often to those five strings of sensuality that previously made contact with my awareness and are past, ceased, changed—might go to those that are present, or occasionally to those that are future.” This sentence is mistranslated both in KSB and CDB.

2. This phrase, *se āyatane veditabbe*, bears traces of the eastern dialect that is believed to have been the Buddha’s native dialect. It was not regularized into the Pali form, apparently because this statement, with the rhapsodic quality of its repetitions, was so closely associated with the Buddha that there was a desire to preserve the way in which he said it. There are other examples in the Canon of phrases closely associated with the Buddha that maintained the form of his native dialect. The most common example is *bhikkhave*, instead of the standard Pali, *bhikkhavo*. The phrasing of the four

noble truths is also not in standard Pali syntax, a fact that might possibly be attributed to a similar desire to preserve the Buddha’s way of speaking in phrases that were particularly common to him.

In CDB, *veditabbe* in this passage is translated as “should be understood,” but the term more usually means, “should be felt” or “should be experienced.” Because the dimension described here falls under the third noble truth, the duty with regard to it is to realize it, rather than simply understanding it. Thus “should be experienced” appears to be the better translation here.

The Commentary explains the “therefore” at the beginning of this paragraph by saying that once the dimension described in this paragraph is experienced, there is no longer any need to exercise heedfulness and mindfulness to protect the mind. The mind in this dimension needs no protection.

3. The Commentary explains Ven. Ānanda’s statement here as referring to nibbāna. It’s hard to say that his explanation is more detailed than the Buddha’s statement, as it actually is briefer. However, he is translating that statement into vocabulary that is apparently more familiar to his listeners.

See also: DN 11; MN 49; [SN 4:19](#); [SN 35:23](#); AN 4:173; AN 6:61; Ud 1:10; Ud 8:1

About Bhāradvāja

Bhāradvāja Sutta (SN 35:127)

On one occasion Ven. Piṇḍola Bhāradvāja was staying near Kosambī at Ghosita’s monastery. Then King Udena went to him and, on arrival, exchanged courteous greetings with him. After this exchange of friendly greetings & courtesies, the king sat to one side. As he was sitting there he said to Ven. Piṇḍola Bhāradvāja: “What is the reason, Master Bhāradvāja, what is the cause why young monks—black-haired, endowed with the blessings of youth in the first stage of life—without having played with sensuality nevertheless follow the lifelong celibate life, perfect & pure, and make it last their entire lives?”

“Great king, this was said by the Blessed One who knows & sees, worthy & rightly self-awakened: ‘Come now, monks: with regard to women who are old enough to be your mother, establish the attitude you would have toward your mother. With regard to women who are old enough to be your sister, establish the attitude you’d have toward a sister. With regard to women who are young enough to be your daughter, establish the attitude you’d have toward a daughter.’ This is one reason, this is one cause, great king, why young monks—black-haired, endowed with the blessings of youth in the first stage of life—without having played with sensuality nevertheless follow the lifelong celibate life, perfect & pure, and make it last their entire lives.”

“The mind is unruly, Master Bhāradvāja. Sometimes thoughts of greed arise even for women who are old enough to be your mother... your sister... young enough to be your daughter. Is there another reason, another cause, why young monks... without having played with sensuality nevertheless follow the lifelong celibate life, perfect & pure, and make it last their entire lives?”

“Great king, this was said by the Blessed One who knows & sees, worthy & rightly self-awakened: ‘Come now, monks: reflect on this very body, from the soles of the feet on up, from the crown of the head on down, surrounded by skin, full of all sorts of unclean things: “In this body there are head hairs, body hairs, nails, teeth, skin, flesh, tendons, bones, bone marrow, kidneys, heart, liver, pleura, spleen, lungs, large intestines, small intestines, gorge, feces, bile, phlegm, pus, blood, sweat, fat, tears, skin-oil, saliva, mucus, fluid in the joints, urine.”’ This too is a reason, this too is a cause, great king, why young monks—black-haired, endowed with the blessings of youth in the first stage of life—without having played with sensuality nevertheless follow the lifelong celibate life, perfect & pure, and make it last their entire lives.”

“For those who are developed in body,¹ developed in virtue, developed in mind, developed in discernment, Master Bhāradvāja, that isn’t hard to do. But for those who are undeveloped in body, undeveloped in virtue, undeveloped in mind, undeveloped in discernment, that is hard to do. Sometimes when one thinks, ‘Let’s regard this as unattractive,’ it actually comes to be attractive. Is there

another reason, another cause, why young monks... without having played with sensuality nevertheless follow the lifelong celibate life, perfect & pure, and make it last their entire lives?”

“Great king, this was said by the Blessed One who knows & sees, worthy & rightly self-awakened: ‘Come now, monks: Keep guarding the doors to your sense faculties. On seeing a form with the eye, do not grasp at any theme or variations by which—if you were to dwell without restraint over the faculty of the eye—evil, unskillful qualities such as greed or distress might assail you. Practice with restraint. Guard the faculty of the eye. Achieve restraint with regard to the faculty of the eye.

“On hearing a sound with the ear...

“On smelling an aroma with the nose...

“On tasting a flavor with the tongue...

“On feeling a tactile sensation with the body...

“On cognizing an idea with the intellect, do not grasp at any theme or variations by which—if you were to dwell without restraint over the faculty of the intellect—evil, unskillful qualities such as greed or distress might assail you. Practice with restraint. Guard the faculty of the intellect. Achieve restraint with regard to the faculty of the intellect’

“This too is a reason, this too is a cause, great king, why young monks—black-haired, endowed with the blessings of youth in the first stage of life—without having played with sensuality nevertheless follow the lifelong celibate life, perfect & pure, and make it last their entire lives.”

“Amazing, Master Bhāradvāja! Astounding! How well that has been said by the Blessed One who knows & sees, worthy & rightly self-awakened! This is the very reason, this the very cause, why young monks—black-haired, endowed with the blessings of youth in the first stage of life—without having played with sensuality nevertheless follow the lifelong celibate life, perfect & pure, and make it last their entire lives. I myself, Master Bhāradvāja: Whenever I enter the inner apartments of the palace unguarded in body, unguarded in speech, unguarded in mind, with mindfulness unestablished and my senses unrestrained, I’m overcome with thoughts of greed. But whenever I enter the inner apartments of the palace guarded in body, guarded in speech, guarded in

mind, with mindfulness established and my senses restrained, then I'm not.

“Magnificent, Master Bhāradvāja! Magnificent! Just as if he were to place upright what was overturned, to reveal what was hidden, to show the way to one who was lost, or to carry a lamp into the dark so that those with eyes could see forms, in the same way has Master Bhāradvāja—through many lines of reasoning—made the Dhamma clear. I go to the Blessed One for refuge, to the Dhamma, & to the Saṅgha of monks. May Master Bhāradvāja remember me as a lay follower who has gone for refuge from this day forward, for life.”

NOTE

1. According to MN 36, one is said to be “developed in body” when feelings of pleasure do not invade the mind and remain, and “developed in mind” when feelings of pain do not invade the mind and remain.

See also: MN 54; [SN 1:20](#); [SN 27:1–10](#); AN 5:75-76; AN 5:114; AN 9:41; *Thag* 7:1

The Opportunity

Khana Sutta (SN 35:135)

“It’s a gain for you, monks, a great gain, that you’ve gained the opportunity to live the holy life. I have seen a hell named ‘Six Media of Contact.’ Whatever form one sees there with the eye is undesirable, never desirable; displeasing, never pleasing; disagreeable, never agreeable. Whatever sound one hears there with the ear... Whatever aroma one smells there with the nose... Whatever flavor one tastes there with the tongue... Whatever tactile sensation one touches there with the body... Whatever idea one cognizes there with the intellect is undesirable, never desirable; displeasing, never pleasing; disagreeable, never agreeable.

“It’s a gain for you, monks, a great gain, that you’ve gained the opportunity to live the holy life. I have seen a heaven named ‘Six Media of Contact.’ Whatever form one sees there with the eye is desirable, never

undesirable; pleasing, never displeasing; agreeable, never disagreeable. Whatever sound one hears there with the ear... Whatever aroma one smells there with the nose... Whatever flavor one tastes there with the tongue... Whatever tactile sensation one touches there with the body... Whatever idea one cognizes there with the intellect is desirable, never undesirable; pleasing, never displeasing; agreeable, never disagreeable.

“It’s a gain for you, monks, a great gain, that you’ve gained the opportunity to live the holy life.”¹

NOTE

1. The message here is that in realms where sense objects are totally disagreeable or totally agreeable it is very difficult to practice the holy life, for in the former, one is too distracted by pain; in the latter, too distracted by pleasure.

See also: MN 130; [SN 9:9](#)

Action

Kamma Sutta (SN 35:145)

“Monks, I will teach you new & old kamma, the cessation of kamma, and the path of practice leading to the cessation of kamma. Listen & pay close attention. I will speak.

“Now what, monks, is old kamma? The eye is to be seen as old kamma, fabricated & willed, capable of being felt. The ear... The nose... The tongue... The body... The intellect is to be seen as old kamma, fabricated & willed, capable of being felt. This is called old kamma.

“And what is new kamma? Whatever kamma one does now with the body, with speech, or with the intellect: This is called new kamma.

“And what is the cessation of kamma? Whoever touches the release that comes from the cessation of bodily kamma, verbal kamma, & mental kamma: This is called the cessation of kamma.

“And what is the path of practice leading to the cessation of kamma? Just this noble eightfold path: right view, right resolve, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness, right concentration. This is called the path of practice leading to the cessation of kamma.

“So, monks, I have taught you new & old kamma, the cessation of kamma, and the path of practice leading to the cessation of kamma. Whatever a teacher should do—seeking the welfare of his disciples, out of sympathy for them—that have I done for you. Over there are the roots of trees; over there, empty dwellings. Practice jhāna, monks. Don’t be heedless. Don’t later fall into regret. This is our message to you.”

See also: [SN 22:79](#); [SN 36:21](#); [SN 42:8](#); AN 3:101; AN 6:63

Faculties

Indriya Sutta (SN 35:153)

This sutta is based on a play on words. In everyday Pali, the term “consummate in faculties” is used to describe a person whose beauty and health are inspiring. Here the Buddha gives a different meaning to the term.

* * *

Then a certain monk went to the Blessed One and, on arrival, having bowed down to him, sat to one side. As he was sitting there he said to the Blessed One, “Consummate in faculties, consummate in faculties; it is said. To what extent is one consummate in faculties?”

“If a monk, while keeping track of arising & passing away with regard to the eye-faculty, becomes disenchanted with the eye-faculty; if, while keeping track of arising & passing away with regard to the ear-faculty... the nose-faculty... the tongue-faculty... the body faculty... the intellect-faculty, he becomes disenchanted with the intellect-faculty; and, disenchanted, he becomes dispassionate; through dispassion, he is released; with release, there is the knowledge, ‘Released’; he discerns that ‘Birth is ended, the holy life fulfilled, the task done. There is nothing

further for this world,’ it is to this extent that one is consummate in faculties.”

See also: MN 152

The Fisherman

Bālisika Sutta (SN 35:189)

“Monks,¹ just as if a fisherman were to cast a baited hook into a deep lake and a fish with its eye out for food would swallow it—so that the fish that had thus swallowed the fisherman’s hook would fall into misfortune & disaster, and the fisherman could do with it as he will—in the same way, there are these six hooks in the world for the misfortune of beings, for the slaughter of those that breathe. Which six?

“There are forms, monks, cognizable via the eye—agreeable, pleasing, charming, endearing, enticing, linked to sensual desire. If a monk relishes them, welcomes them, & remains fastened to them, he is said to be a monk who has swallowed Māra’s hook, who has fallen into misfortune & disaster. The Evil One can do with him as he will.

“There are sounds cognizable via the ear...

“There are aromas cognizable via the nose...

“There are flavors cognizable via the tongue...

“There are tactile sensations cognizable via the body...

“There are ideas cognizable via the intellect—agreeable, pleasing, charming, endearing, enticing, linked to sensual desire. If a monk relishes them, welcomes them, & remains fastened to them, he is said to be a monk who has swallowed Māra’s hook, who has fallen into misfortune & disaster. The Evil One can do with him as he will.

“Now, there are forms cognizable via the eye—agreeable, pleasing, charming, endearing, enticing, linked to sensual desire. If a monk does not relish them, welcome them, or remain fastened to them, he is said to be a monk who has not swallowed Māra’s hook, who has snapped the

hook, who has broken the hook, who has not fallen into misfortune & disaster. The Evil One cannot do with him as he will.

“There are sounds cognizable via the ear...

“There are aromas cognizable via the nose...

“There are flavors cognizable via the tongue...

“There are tactile sensations cognizable via the body...

“There are ideas cognizable via the intellect—agreeable, pleasing, charming, endearing, enticing, linked to sensual desire. If a monk does not relish them, welcome them, or remain fastened to them, he is said to be a monk who has not swallowed Māra’s hook, who has snapped the hook, who has broken the hook, who has not fallen into misfortune & disaster. The Evil One cannot do with him as he will.”

NOTE

1. The translation of this sutta in KSB starts with a paragraph and a verse that actually belong at the end of the preceding sutta.

See also: MN 26; [SN 4:19](#); [SN 47:6–7](#); [SN 35:115](#); AN 9:39

To Koṭṭhita

Koṭṭhita Sutta (SN 35:191)

Once, Ven. Sāriputta and Ven. Mahā Koṭṭhita were staying near Vārāṇasī in the Deer Park at Isipatana. Then Ven. Mahā Koṭṭhita, in the evening, left his seclusion and went to Ven. Sāriputta. On arrival, he exchanged courteous greetings with him. After an exchange of friendly greetings & courtesies, he sat to one side. As he was sitting there, he said to Ven. Sāriputta, “Now tell me, friend Sāriputta, is the eye the fetter of forms, or are forms the fetter of the eye? Is the ear... Is the nose... Is the tongue... Is the body... Is the intellect the fetter of ideas, or are ideas the fetter of the intellect?”

“No, my friend. The eye is not the fetter of forms, nor are forms the fetter of the eye. Whatever desire-passion arises in dependence on the

two of them: That is the fetter there. The ear is not the fetter of sounds... The nose is not the fetter of aromas... The tongue is not the fetter of flavors... The body is not the fetter of tactile sensations... The intellect is not the fetter of ideas, nor are ideas the fetter of the intellect. Whatever desire-passion arises in dependence on the two of them: That is the fetter there.

“Suppose that a black ox and a white ox were joined with a single collar or yoke. If someone were to say, ‘The black ox is the fetter of the white ox, the white ox is the fetter of the black’—speaking this way, would he be speaking rightly?”

“No, my friend. The black ox is not the fetter of the white ox, nor is the white ox the fetter of the black. The single collar or yoke by which they are joined: That is the fetter there.”

“In the same way, the eye is not the fetter of forms, nor are forms the fetter of the eye. Whatever desire-passion arises in dependence on the two of them: That is the fetter there. The ear is not the fetter of sounds... The nose is not the fetter of aromas... The tongue is not the fetter of flavors... The body is not the fetter of tactile sensations... The intellect is not the fetter of ideas, nor are ideas the fetter of the intellect. Whatever desire-passion arises in dependence on the two of them: That is the fetter there.

“If the eye were the fetter of forms, or if forms were the fetter of the eye, then this holy life for the right ending of stress & suffering would not be proclaimed. But because whatever desire-passion arises in dependence on the two of them is the fetter there, that is why this holy life for the right ending of stress & suffering is proclaimed.

“If the ear were the fetter...

“If the nose were the fetter...

“If the tongue were the fetter...

“If the body were the fetter...

“If the intellect were the fetter of ideas, or if ideas were the fetter of the intellect, then this holy life for the right ending of stress & suffering would not be proclaimed. But because whatever desire-passion arises in

dependence on the two of them is the fetter there, that is why this holy life for the right ending of stress & suffering is proclaimed.

“And through this line of reasoning one may know how the eye is not the fetter of forms, nor are forms the fetter of the eye, but whatever desire-passion arises in dependence on the two of them: That is the fetter there. The ear is not the fetter of sounds... The nose is not the fetter of aromas... The tongue is not the fetter of flavors... The body is not the fetter of tactile sensations... The intellect is not the fetter of ideas, nor are ideas the fetter of the intellect, but whatever desire-passion arises in dependence on the two of them: That is the fetter there. There is an eye in the Blessed One. The Blessed One sees forms with the eye. There is no desire or passion in the Blessed One. The Blessed One is well released in mind.

“There is an ear in the Blessed One...

“There is a nose in the Blessed One...

“There is a tongue in the Blessed One...

“There is a body in the Blessed One...

“There is an intellect in the Blessed One. The Blessed One knows ideas with the intellect. There is no desire or passion in the Blessed One. The Blessed One is well released in mind.

“It is through this line of reasoning that one may know how the eye is not the fetter of forms, nor are forms the fetter of the eye, but whatever desire-passion arises in dependence on the two of them: That is the fetter there. The ear is not the fetter of sounds... The nose is not the fetter of aromas... The tongue is not the fetter of flavors... The body is not the fetter of tactile sensations... The intellect is not the fetter of ideas, nor are ideas the fetter of the intellect, but whatever desire-passion arises in dependence on the two of them: That is the fetter there.”

See also: [SN 22:48](#); [SN 27:1–10](#)

With Udāyin

Udāyī Sutta (SN 35:193)

On one occasion Ven. Ānanda and Ven. Udāyin were staying near Kosambī at Ghosita’s monastery. Then Ven. Udāyin, emerging from his seclusion in the evening, went to Ven. Ānanda and exchanged courteous greetings with him. After an exchange of friendly greetings & courtesies, he sat to one side. As he was sitting there, he said to Ven. Ānanda, “In many ways the body has been pointed out, revealed, and announced by the Blessed One (with these words): ‘For this reason the body is not-self. Can consciousness in the same way be declared, taught, described, set forth, revealed, explained, & made plain (with these words): ‘For this reason consciousness is not-self?’”

“It can... Doesn’t eye-consciousness arise in dependence on the eye & forms?”

“Yes, friend.”

“And if the cause & reason for the arising of eye-consciousness were to cease totally everywhere, totally in every way without remainder, would eye-consciousness be discerned?”

“No, friend.”

“It’s in this way, friend, that consciousness has been pointed out, revealed, and announced by the Blessed One: ‘For this reason consciousness is not-self.’

“Doesn’t ear-consciousness arise in dependence on the ear & sounds?”

...

“Doesn’t nose-consciousness arise in dependence on the nose & aromas?” ...

“Doesn’t tongue-consciousness arise in dependence on the tongue & flavors?” ...

“Doesn’t body-consciousness arise in dependence on the body & tactile sensations?” ...

Doesn’t intellect-consciousness arise in dependence on the intellect & ideas?”

“Yes, friend.”

“And if the cause & reason for the arising of intellect-consciousness were to cease totally everywhere, totally in every way without remainder, would intellect-consciousness be discerned?”

“No, friend.”

“It’s in this way, friend, that consciousness has been pointed out, revealed, and announced by the Blessed One: ‘For this reason consciousness is not-self.’

“It’s just as if a man going around wanting heartwood, seeking heartwood, searching for heartwood, would take a sharp ax and enter a forest. There he would see a large banana tree trunk: straight, young, without shoots. He would cut off the root, cut off the crown, and unfurl the coil of the stem. There he wouldn’t even find softwood, much less heartwood.

“In the same way, a monk assumes neither a self nor anything pertaining to a self in the six media of contact. Assuming in this way, he doesn’t cling to anything in the world. Not clinging, he is not agitated. Unagitated, he is totally unbound right within. He discerns that ‘Birth is ended, the holy life fulfilled, the task done. There is nothing further for this world.’”

See also: [SN 22:95](#); [SN 35:93](#)

Vipers

Āsīvisa Sutta (SN 35:197)

I have heard that on one occasion the Blessed One was staying near Sāvattthī in Jeta’s Grove. Then he addressed the monks, “Monks, suppose there were four vipers of utmost heat & horrible venom. Then a man would come along—desiring life, desiring not to die, desiring happiness, & loathing pain—and people would tell him: ‘Good man, these four vipers, of utmost heat & horrible venom, are yours. Time after time they must be lifted up, time after time they must be bathed, time after time they must be fed, time after time put to rest. And if any of these vipers ever gets provoked¹ with you, then you will meet with death or death-like suffering. Do what you think should be done.’

“Then the man—afraid of the four vipers of utmost heat & horrible venom—would flee this way or that. They would tell him, ‘Good man, there are five enemy executioners chasing right on your heels, (thinking,) “Wherever we see him, we’ll kill him right on the spot.” Do what you think should be done.’

“Then the man—afraid of the four vipers of utmost heat & horrible venom, afraid of the five enemy executioners—would flee this way or that. They would tell him, ‘Good man, there is a sixth executioner, a fellow-traveler, chasing right on your heels with upraised sword, (thinking,) “Wherever I see him, I’ll kill him right on the spot.” Do what you think should be done.’

“Then the man—afraid of the four vipers of utmost heat & horrible venom, afraid of the five enemy executioners, afraid of the sixth fellow-traveling executioner with upraised sword—would flee this way or that. He would see an empty village. Whatever house he entered would be abandoned, void, & empty as he entered it. Whatever pot he grabbed hold of would be abandoned, void, & empty as he grabbed hold of it. They would tell him, ‘Good man, right now, village-plundering bandits are entering this empty village. Do what you think should be done.’

“Then the man—afraid of the four vipers of utmost heat & horrible venom, afraid of the five enemy executioners, afraid of the sixth fellow-traveling executioner with upraised sword, afraid of the village-plundering bandits—would flee this way or that. He would see a great expanse of water, with the near shore dubious & risky, the further shore secure & free from risk, but with neither a ferryboat nor a bridge going from this shore to the other. The thought would occur to him, ‘Here is this great expanse of water, with the near shore dubious & risky, the further shore secure & free from risk, but with neither a ferryboat nor a bridge going from this shore to the other. What if I were to gather grass, twigs, branches, & leaves and, having bound them together to make a raft, were to cross over to safety on the other shore in dependence on the raft, making an effort with my hands & feet?’ Then the man, having gathered grass, twigs, branches, & leaves, having bound them together to make a raft, would cross over to safety on the other shore in dependence

on the raft, making an effort with his hands & feet. Crossed over, having gone to the other shore, he would stand on high ground, a brahman.

“Monks, I have made this simile to convey a meaning. Here the meaning is this: ‘The four vipers of utmost heat & horrible venom’ stands for the four great elements: the earth property, the liquid property, the fire-property, & the wind property. ‘The five enemy executioners’ stands for the five clinging-aggregates: the form clinging-aggregate, the feeling clinging-aggregate, the perception clinging-aggregate, the fabrications clinging-aggregate, the consciousness clinging-aggregate. ‘The sixth fellow-traveling executioner with upraised sword’ stands for passion & delight.

“‘The empty village’ stands for the six internal sense media. If a wise, competent, intelligent person examines them from the point of view of the eye, they appear abandoned, void, & empty. If he examines them from the point of view of the ear... the nose... the tongue... the body... the intellect, they appear abandoned, void, & empty. ‘The village-plundering bandits’ stands for the six external sense-media. The eye is attacked by agreeable & disagreeable forms. The ear is attacked by agreeable & disagreeable sounds. The nose is attacked by agreeable & disagreeable aromas. The tongue is attacked by agreeable & disagreeable flavors. The body is attacked by agreeable & disagreeable tactile sensations. The intellect is attacked by agreeable & disagreeable ideas.

“‘The great expanse of water’ stands for the fourfold flood: the flood of sensuality, the flood of becoming, the flood of views, & the flood of ignorance.

‘The near shore, dubious & risky’ stands for self-identification. ‘The further shore, secure and free from risk’ stands for unbinding. ‘The raft’ stands for just this noble eightfold path: right view, right resolve, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness, right concentration. ‘Making an effort with hands & feet’ stands for the arousing of persistence. ‘Crossed over, having gone to the other shore, he would stand on high ground, a brahman’ stands for the arahant.”

NOTE

1. The word “provoked” here alludes both to the vipers’ being angered and to the terminology that the Buddha commonly uses with regard to the four properties: that they cause trouble when “provoked.” See MN 28, note 1.

See also: MN 22; AN 4:5; [SN 35:200](#); Iti 109

The Chariot

Ratha Sutta (SN 35:198)

“Endowed with three qualities, a monk dwells full of happiness & joy in the here & now, and has initiated a source for the ending of the effluents. Which three? He is one who guards the doors to his sense faculties, knows moderation in eating, & is devoted to wakefulness.

“And how is a monk one who guard the doors to his sense faculties? There is the case where a monk, on seeing a form with the eye, doesn’t grasp at any theme or variations by which—if he were to dwell without restraint over the faculty of the eye—evil, unskillful qualities such as greed or distress might assail him. He practices with restraint. He guards the faculty of the eye. He achieves restraint with regard to the faculty of the eye.

“On hearing a sound with the ear...

“On smelling an aroma with the nose...

“On tasting a flavor with the tongue...

“On touching a tactile sensation with the body...

“On cognizing an idea with the intellect, he doesn’t grasp at any theme or variations by which—if he were to dwell without restraint over the faculty of the intellect—evil, unskillful qualities such as greed or distress might assail him. He practices with restraint. He guards the faculty of the intellect. He achieves restraint with regard to the faculty of the intellect.

“Suppose there were a chariot on level ground at four crossroads, harnessed to thoroughbreds, waiting with whips lying ready, so that a

dexterous driver, a trainer of tamable horses, might mount and—taking the reins with his left hand and the whip with his right—drive out & back, to whatever place & by whichever road he liked; in the same way, the monk trains for the protection of these six senses, for their restraint, for their taming, for their stilling.

“This is how a monk is one who guards the doors to his sense faculties.

“And how is a monk one who knows moderation in eating? There is the case where a monk, considering it appropriately, takes his food not playfully, nor for intoxication, nor for putting on bulk, nor for beautification, but simply for the survival & continuance of this body, for ending its afflictions, for the support of the holy life, thinking, ‘I will destroy old feelings [of hunger] & not create new feelings [from overeating]. Thus I will maintain myself, be blameless, & live in comfort.’

“Just as a person anoints a wound simply for its healing, or greases an axle simply for the sake of carrying a load, in the same way a monk, considering it appropriately, takes his food not playfully, nor for intoxication, nor for putting on bulk, nor for beautification, but simply for the survival & continuance of this body, for ending its afflictions, for the support of the holy life, thinking, ‘I will destroy old feelings [of hunger] & not create new feelings [from overeating]. Thus I will maintain myself, be blameless, & live in comfort.’

“This is how a monk is one who knows moderation in eating.

“And how is a monk one who is devoted to wakefulness? There is the case where a monk during the day, sitting & pacing back & forth, cleanses his mind of any qualities that would hold the mind in check. During the first watch of the night [dusk to 10 p.m.], sitting & pacing back & forth, he cleanses his mind of any qualities that would hold the mind in check. During the second watch of the night [10 p.m. to 2 a.m.], reclining on his right side, he takes up the lion’s posture, one foot placed on top of the other, mindful, alert, with his mind set on getting up [either as soon as he awakens or at a particular time]. During the last watch of the night [2 a.m. to dawn], sitting & pacing back & forth, he cleanses his mind of any qualities that would hold the mind in check.

“This is how a monk is one who is devoted to wakefulness.

“Endowed with these three qualities, a monk dwells full of happiness & joy in the here & now, and has initiated a source for the ending of the effluents.”

See also: AN 4:37

The Turtle

Kumma Sutta (SN 35:199)

“Once upon a time, monks, a hard-shelled turtle was foraging for food in the evening along the shore of a lake. And a jackal was also foraging for food in the evening along the shore of the lake. The turtle saw the jackal from afar, foraging for food, and so—withdrawing its four legs, with its neck as a fifth, into its own shell—it remained perfectly quiet and still. But the jackal also saw the turtle from afar, foraging for food, and so it went to the turtle and, on arrival, hovered around it, (thinking,) “As soon as the turtle stretches out one or another of its four limbs—or its neck as a fifth—I’ll seize it right there, tear it off, and eat it.” But when the turtle didn’t stretch out any of its four limbs—or its neck as a fifth—the jackal, not having gotten any opportunity, lost interest and left.

“In the same way, monks, Māra is continually, ceaselessly, hovering around you, (thinking,) “Perhaps I’ll get an opportunity by means of the eye... the ear... the nose... the tongue... the body. Perhaps I’ll get an opportunity by means of the intellect.” Thus, monks, you should dwell with the doors to your senses well-guarded.

“On seeing a form with the eye, do not grasp at any theme or details by which—if you were to dwell without restraint over the faculty of the eye—evil, unskillful qualities such as greed or distress might assail you. Practice for its restraint. Guard the faculty of the eye. Secure your restraint with regard to the faculty of the eye.

“On hearing a sound with the ear...

“On smelling an aroma with the nose...

“On tasting a flavor with the tongue...

“On touching a tactile sensation with the body...

“On cognizing an idea with the intellect, do not grasp at any theme or details by which—if you were to dwell without restraint over the faculty of the intellect—evil, unskillful qualities such as greed or distress might assail you. Practice for its restraint. Guard the faculty of the intellect. Secure your restraint with regard to the faculty of the intellect.

“When you dwell with the doors to your senses well-guarded, Māra, not getting any opportunity, will lose interest and leave, just as the jackal did with the turtle.”

Like a turtle with its limbs withdrawn in its shell,
so the monk, the thoughts of the heart:

Not dependent, harming no others,
totally unbound, he would berate no one.

See also: [*SN 4*](#); [*SN 5*](#); [*SN 47:6–7*](#)

The Log

Dārukkhandha Sutta (SN 35:200)

On one occasion the Blessed One was staying near Ajjheya on the bank of the river Ganges. He saw a large log being carried along by the current of the river Ganges, and on seeing it said to the monks: “Monks, do you see that large log being carried along by the current of the river Ganges?”

“Yes, lord.”

“Monks, if that log doesn’t veer toward the near shore, doesn’t veer toward the far shore, doesn’t sink in the middle, doesn’t get washed up on high ground, doesn’t get snared by human beings, doesn’t get snared by non-human beings, doesn’t get snared in a whirlpool, and doesn’t become rotten inside, it will tend to the ocean, tilt to the ocean, incline

to the ocean. Why is that? Because the current of the river Ganges tends to the ocean, tilts to the ocean, inclines to the ocean.

“In the same way, monks, if you don’t veer toward the near shore, don’t veer toward the far shore, don’t sink in the middle, don’t get washed up on high ground, don’t get snared by human beings, don’t get snared by non-human beings, don’t get snared in a whirlpool, and don’t become rotten inside, you will tend to unbinding, tilt to unbinding, incline to unbinding. Why is that? Because right view tends to unbinding, tilts to unbinding, inclines to unbinding.”

When this was said, a certain monk addressed the Blessed One: “What, lord, is the near shore? What is the far shore? What is sinking in the middle? What is being washed up on high ground? What is being snared by human beings? What is being snared by non-human beings? What is being snared by a whirlpool? What is becoming rotten inside?”

“‘The near shore,’ monks, stands for the six internal sense media. ‘The far shore’ stands for the six external sense media. ‘Sinking in the middle’ stands for passion & delight. ‘Being washed up on high ground’ stands for the conceit, ‘I am.’

“And what, monks, is being snared by human beings? There is the case where a monk lives entangled with householders, delighting with them and sorrowing with them, happy when they are happy, pained when they are in pain, taking on their affairs as his own duty. This is called being snared by human beings.

“And what, monks, is being snared by non-human beings? There is the case where a certain monk lives the holy life in hopes of a certain company of devas, (thinking,) ‘By means of this virtue or practice or austerity or holy life I will become one sort of deva or another.’ This is called being snared by non-human beings.

“‘Being snared by a whirlpool’ stands for the five strings of sensuality.

“ And what, monks, is becoming rotten inside? There is the case where a certain monk is unprincipled, evil, unclean and suspect in his undertakings, hidden in his actions, not a contemplative though claiming to be one, not leading the holy life though claiming to do so,

inwardly rotten, oozing with desire, filthy by nature. This is called becoming rotten inside.”

Now at that time Nanda the cowherd was standing not far from the Blessed One. Then he said to the Blessed One, “Lord, I don’t veer toward the near shore, I don’t veer toward the far shore, I won’t sink in the middle, I won’t get washed up on high ground, I won’t get snared by human beings, I won’t get snared by non-human beings, I won’t get snared in a whirlpool, and I won’t become rotten inside. It would be good, lord, if I could obtain the Going-forth, if I could obtain Acceptance [as a monk].

“In that case, Nanda, lead the cows back to their owners.”

“The cows will go back, lord, out of attachment for their calves.”

“Lead the cows back to their owners, Nanda.”

Then, having led the cows back to their owners, Nanda the cowherd went to the Blessed One and, on arrival, told him, “The cows, lord, have been led back to their owners. Let me obtain the Going-forth in the Blessed One’s presence! Let me obtain Acceptance!”

So Nanda the cowherd obtained the Going-forth in the Blessed One’s presence, he obtained Acceptance. And not long after his Acceptance—dwelling alone, secluded, heedful, ardent, & resolute—he in no long time entered & remained in the supreme goal of the holy life, for which clansmen rightly go forth from home into homelessness, directly knowing & realizing it for himself in the here & now. He knew: “Birth is ended, the holy life fulfilled, the task done. There is nothing further for the sake of this world.” And thus Ven. Nanda became another one of the arahants.

See also: AN 6:60; Iti 109

Soggy

Avassuta Sutta (SN 35:202)

I have heard that on one occasion the Blessed One was staying among the Sakyans at Kapilavatthu in the Banyan Park. Now at that time a new reception hall¹ had just been built by the Kapilavatthu Sakyans, and it had not yet been dwelled in by any contemplative, brahman, or anyone at all in human form. So the Kapilavatthu Sakyans went to the Blessed One and, on arrival, having bowed down, sat to one side. As they were sitting there they said to him, “Lord, a new reception hall has just been built by the Kapilavatthu Sakyans, and it has not yet been dwelled in by any contemplative, brahman, or anyone at all in human form. May the Blessed One be the first to use it. When the Blessed One has used it first, the Kapilavatthu Sakyans will use it afterwards. That will be for their long-term welfare & happiness.”

The Blessed One acquiesced with silence. Sensing his acquiescence, the Kapilavatthu Sakyans got up from their seats, bowed down to him, circumambulated him, and then went to the new reception hall. On arrival, they spread it all over with felt rugs, arranged seats, set out a water vessel, and raised an oil lamp. Then they went to the Blessed One and, on arrival, having bowed down, stood to one side. As they were standing there they said to him, “Lord, the reception hall has been covered all over with felt rugs, seats have been arranged, a water vessel has been set out, and an oil lamp raised. It is now time for the Blessed One to do as he sees fit.”

So the Blessed One—adjusting his lower robe and taking his bowl & outer robe—went together with a Saṅgha of monks to the reception hall. On arrival he washed his feet, entered the hall, and sat with his back to the central post, facing east. The Saṅgha of monks washed their feet, entered the hall, and sat with their backs to the western wall, facing east, ranged around the Blessed One. The Kapilavatthu Sakyans washed their feet, entered the hall, and sat with their backs to the eastern wall, facing west, ranged around the Blessed One. Then the Blessed One—having spent most of the night instructing, urging, rousing, & encouraging the Kapilavatthu Sakyans with a Dhamma talk—dismissed them, saying, “The night is far past, Gotamas. Do what you now think it is time to do.”

Responding, “As you say, lord,” to the Blessed One, the Kapilavatthu Sakyans rose from their seats, bowed down to the Blessed One, and—

circumambulating him, keeping him to their right—departed.

Then not long after the Kapilavatthu Sakyans had left, the Blessed One addressed Ven. Mahā Moggallāna: “Moggallāna, the Saṅgha of monks is free of drowsiness. Give them a Dhamma talk of your own devising. My back aches. I will rest it.”

“As you say, lord, Ven. Mahā Moggallāna responded to him.

Then the Blessed One, having arranged his outer robe folded in four, lay down on his right side in the lion’s sleeping posture, with one foot on top of the other, mindful & alert, having made a mental note to get up.

Then Ven. Mahā Moggallāna addressed the monks, “Friend monks!”

“Yes, friend,” the monks responded to him.

Ven. Mahā Moggallāna said, “Friends, I will teach you a discourse on being soggy and a discourse on not being soggy.² Listen & pay careful attention. I will speak.”

“As you say, friend,” the monks responded to him.

Ven. Mahā Moggallāna said, “And how is one soggy? There is the case where a monk, when seeing a form via the eye, is, in the case of pleasing forms, committed to forms and, in the case of displeasing forms, afflicted by forms. He remains with body-mindfulness not present, and with limited awareness. And he does not discern, as it has come to be, the awareness-release & discernment-release where those evil, unskillful qualities that have arisen cease without trace.

“When hearing a sound via the ear...

“When smelling an aroma via the nose...

“When tasting a flavor via the tongue...

“When touching a tactile sensation via the body...

“When cognizing an idea via the intellect, he is, in the case of pleasing ideas, committed to ideas and, in the case of displeasing ideas, afflicted by ideas. He remains with body-mindfulness not present, and with limited awareness. And he does not discern, as it has come to be, the awareness-release & discernment-release where those evil, unskillful qualities that have arisen cease without trace.

“This is called a monk who is soggy with forms cognizable via the eye, soggy with sounds cognizable via the ear, soggy with aromas cognizable via the nose, soggy with flavors cognizable via the tongue, soggy with tactile sensations cognizable via the body, soggy with ideas cognizable via the intellect.

“When a monk dwells in this way, then if Māra comes to him via the eye, Māra gains entry, Māra gains a foothold. If Māra comes to him via the ear... nose... tongue... body... intellect, Māra gains entry, Māra gains a foothold. Just as if there were a shack made of reeds or a shack made of grass—dry, desiccated, more than a year old—and if a man were to come to it from the east with a burning grass torch, fire would gain entry, fire would gain a foothold. If a man were to come to it from the west... north... south... from below... from above... From whatever direction the man would come to it with a burning grass torch, fire would gain entry, fire would gain a foothold. In the same way, when a monk dwells in this way, then if Māra comes to him via the eye, Māra gains entry, Māra gains a foothold. If Māra comes to him via the ear... nose... tongue... body... intellect, Māra gains entry, Māra gains a foothold.

“And when a monk dwells in this way, forms overpower him. He does not overpower forms. Sounds overpower him... Aromas... Flavors... Tactile sensations... Ideas overpower him. He does not overpower ideas. This is called a monk overpowered by forms, overpowered by sounds, overpowered by aromas, overpowered by flavors, overpowered by tactile sensations, overpowered by ideas—one overpowered who does not overpower. He is overpowered by evil, unskillful qualities that defile, that lead to further becoming, that are miserable, that result in suffering & stress, that tend toward future birth, aging, & death.

“It’s in this way, friends, that one is soggy.

“And how is one not soggy? There is the case where a monk, when seeing a form via the eye, is not, in the case of pleasing forms, committed to forms nor, in the case of displeasing forms, afflicted by forms. He remains with body-mindfulness present, and with immeasurable awareness. And he discerns, as it has come to be, the awareness-release & discernment-release where those evil, unskillful qualities that have arisen cease without trace.

“When hearing a sound via the ear...

“When smelling an aroma via the nose...

“When tasting a flavor via the tongue...

“When touching a tactile sensation via the body...

“When cognizing an idea via the intellect, he is not, in the case of pleasing ideas, committed to ideas nor, in the case of displeasing ideas, afflicted by ideas. He remains with body-mindfulness present, and with immeasurable awareness. And he discerns, as it has come to be, the awareness-release & discernment-release where those evil, unskillful qualities that have arisen cease without trace.

“This is called a monk who is not soggy with forms cognizable via the eye, not soggy with sounds cognizable via the ear, not soggy with aromas cognizable via the nose, not soggy with flavors cognizable via the tongue, not soggy with tactile sensations cognizable via the body, not soggy with ideas cognizable via the intellect.

“When a monk dwells in this way, then if Māra comes to him via the eye, Māra gains no entry, Māra gains no foothold. If Māra comes to him via the ear... nose... tongue... body... intellect, Māra gains no entry, Māra gains no foothold. Just as if there were a peaked house or hall thickly plastered with fine clay, and if a man were to come to it from the east with a burning grass torch, fire would gain no entry, fire would gain no foothold. If a man were to come to it from the west... north... south... from below... from above... From whatever direction the man would come to it with a burning grass torch, fire would gain no entry, fire would gain no foothold. In the same way, when a monk dwells in this way, then if Māra comes to him via the eye, Māra gains no entry, Māra gains no foothold. If Māra comes to him via the ear... nose... tongue... body... intellect, Māra gains no entry, Māra gains no foothold.

“And when a monk dwells in this way, he overpowers forms. Forms do not overpower him. He overpowers sounds... aromas... flavors... tactile sensations... ideas. Ideas do not overpower him. This is called a monk who overpowers forms, overpowers sounds, overpowers aromas, overpowers flavors, overpowers tactile sensations, overpowers ideas—one who overpowers and is not overpowered. He overpowers evil, unskillful

qualities that defile, that lead to further becoming, that are miserable, that result in suffering & stress, that tend toward future birth, aging, & death.

“It’s in this way, friends, that one is not soggy.”

Then the Blessed One got up and said to Ven. Mahā Moggallāna, “Good, good, Moggallāna. What you have said to the monks about the discourse on being soggy and the discourse on not being soggy is good.”

That is what Ven. Mahā Moggallāna said, and the Teacher approved. Gratified, the monks delighted in Ven. Mahā Moggallāna’s words.

NOTES

1. According to the Commentary, this was a hall built to receive royal guests, together with their entourages. See MN 53.

2. The word for “soggy” or “leaking” (*avassuta*) can also mean “defiled.” For a similar usage, see the verse to Ud 5:5.

See also: MN 49; MN 101; MN 119; [SN 4:19](#); [SN 5:7](#); AN 3:110; AN 3:129

The Riddle Tree

Kimśuka Sutta (SN 35:204)

A certain monk went to another monk and, on arrival, said to him, “To what extent, my friend, is a monk’s vision said to be well-purified?”

“When a monk discerns, as it has come to be, the origination & passing away of the six media of sensory contact, my friend, it is to that extent that his vision is said to be well-purified.”

The first monk, dissatisfied with the other monk’s answer to his question, went to still another monk and, on arrival, said to him, “To what extent, my friend, is a monk’s vision said to be well-purified?”

“When a monk discerns, as it has come to be, the origination & passing away of the five clinging-aggregates, my friend, it is to that extent that his vision is said to be well-purified.”

The first monk, dissatisfied with this monk's answer to his question, went to still another monk and, on arrival, said to him, "To what extent, my friend, is a monk's vision said to be well-purified?"

"When a monk discerns, as it has come to be, the origination & passing away of the four great elements [earth, water, wind, & fire], my friend, it is to that extent that his vision is said to be well-purified."

The first monk, dissatisfied with this monk's answer to his question, went to still another monk and, on arrival, said to him, "To what extent, my friend, is a monk's vision said to be well-purified?"

"When a monk discerns, as it has come to be, that whatever is subject to origination is all subject to cessation, my friend, it is to that extent that his vision is said to be well-purified."

The first monk, dissatisfied with this monk's answer to his question, then went to the Blessed One and, on arrival, having bowed down to him, sat to one side. As he was sitting there he [reported to the Blessed One his conversations with the other monks. The Blessed One then said:]

"Monk, it's as if there were a man who had never seen a riddle tree.¹ He would go to another man who had seen one and, on arrival, would say to him, 'What, my good man, is a riddle tree like?'

"The other would say, 'A riddle tree is black, my good man, like a burnt stump.' For at the time he saw it, that's what the riddle tree was like.

"Then the first man, dissatisfied with the other man's answer, went to still another man who had seen a riddle tree and, on arrival, said to him, 'What, my good man, is a riddle tree like?'

"The other would say, 'A riddle tree is red, my good man, like a lump of meat.' For at the time he saw it, that's what the riddle tree was like.

"Then the first man, dissatisfied with this man's answer, went to still another man who had seen a riddle tree and, on arrival, said to him, 'What, my good man, is a riddle tree like?'

"The other would say, 'A riddle tree is stripped of its bark, my good man, and has burst pods, like an acacia tree.' For at the time he saw it, that's what the riddle tree was like.

“Then the first man, dissatisfied with this man’s answer, went to still another man who had seen a riddle tree and, on arrival, said to him, ‘What, my good man, is a riddle tree like?’

“The other would say, ‘A riddle tree has thick foliage, my good man, and gives a dense shade, like a banyan.’ For at the time he saw it, that’s what the riddle tree was like.

“In the same way, monk, however those intelligent men of integrity were focused when their vision became well purified is the way in which they answered.

“Suppose, monk, that there were a royal frontier fortress with strong ramparts, strong walls & arches, and six gates. In it would be a wise, competent, intelligent gatekeeper to keep out those he didn’t know and to let in those he did. A swift pair of messengers, coming from the east, would say to the gatekeeper, ‘Where, my good man, is the commander of this fortress?’ He would say, ‘There he is, sirs, sitting in the central square.’ The swift pair of messengers, delivering their accurate report to the commander of the fortress, would then go back by the route by which they had come. Then a swift pair of messengers, coming from the west... the north... the south, would say to the gatekeeper, ‘Where, my good man, is the commander of this fortress?’ He would say, ‘There he is, sirs, sitting in the central square.’ The swift pair of messengers, delivering their accurate report to the commander of the fortress, would then go back by the route by which they had come.

“I have given you this simile, monk, to convey a message. The message is this: The fortress stands for this body—composed of the four great elements, born of mother & father, nourished with rice & barley gruel, subject to constant rubbing & abrasion, to breaking & falling apart. The six gates stand for the six internal sense media. The gatekeeper stands for mindfulness. The swift pair of messengers stands for tranquility [*samatha*] and insight [*vipassanā*]. The commander of the fortress stands for consciousness. The central square stands for the four great elements: the earth-property, the liquid-property, the fire-property, & the wind-property. The accurate report stands for unbinding [*nibbāna*]. The route by which they had come stands for the noble

eightfold path: right view, right resolve, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness, right concentration.”

NOTE

1. Literally, a “what’s it” tree—apparently, *Butea frondosa*, the flame of the forest. It is often the subject of riddles in its native habitats because its seasonal changes—such as losing all its leaves just before its striking red flowers bloom—are so vivid and unusual.

See also: MN 149; AN 2:29–30; AN 4:94; AN 4:170; AN 6:61; AN 10:71

The Lute

Vīṇā Sutta (SN 35:205)

“Monks, in whatever monk or nun there arises desire, passion, aversion, delusion, or mental resistance with regard to forms cognizable via the eye, he/she should hold the mind in check. (Thinking,) ‘It’s dangerous & dubious, that path, thorny & overgrown, a miserable path, a devious path, impenetrable. It’s a path followed by people of no integrity, not a path followed by people of integrity. It’s not worthy of you,’ he/she should hold the mind in check with regard to forms cognizable via the eye.

“In whatever monk or nun there arises desire, passion, aversion, delusion, or mental resistance with regard to sounds cognizable via the ear... aromas cognizable via the nose... flavors cognizable via the tongue... tactile sensations cognizable via the body... ideas cognizable via the intellect, he/she should hold the mind in check. (Thinking,) ‘It’s dangerous & dubious, that path, thorny & overgrown, a miserable path, a devious path, impenetrable. It’s a path followed by people of no integrity, not a path followed by people of integrity. It’s not worthy of you,’ he/she should hold the mind in check with regard to ideas cognizable via the intellect.

“Suppose that corn had ripened and the watchman was heedless. A corn-eating ox, invading the corn to eat it, would intoxicate itself as

much as it liked. In the same way, an uninstructed run-of-the-mill person, not exercising restraint with regard to the six media of sensory contact, intoxicates himself with the five strings of sensuality as much as he likes.

“Now suppose that corn had ripened and the watchman was heedful. The corn-eating ox would invade the corn to eat it, but then the watchman would grab it firmly by the muzzle. Having grabbed it firmly by the muzzle, he would pin it down by the forehead. Having pinned it down by the forehead, he would give it a sound thrashing with a stick. Having given it a sound thrashing with a stick, he would let it go.

“A second time... A third time, the corn-eating ox would invade the corn to eat it, but then the watchman would grab it firmly by the muzzle. Having grabbed it firmly by the muzzle, he would pin it down by the forehead. Having pinned it down by the forehead, he would give it a sound thrashing with a stick. Having given it a sound thrashing with a stick, he would let it go.

“As a result, the corn-eating ox—regardless of whether it went to the village or to the wilds, was standing still or lying down—wouldn’t invade the corn again, because it would recall the earlier taste it got of the stick.

“In the same way, when a monk’s mind is held back, thoroughly held back, from the six media of sensory contact, his mind settles inwardly, grows steady, unified, & concentrated.

“Suppose there were a king or king’s minister who had never heard the sound of a lute before. He might hear the sound of a lute and say, ‘What, my good men, is that sound—so delightful, so tantalizing, so intoxicating, so ravishing, so enthralling?’ They would say, ‘That, sire, is called a lute, whose sound is so delightful, so tantalizing, so intoxicating, so ravishing, so enthralling.’ Then he would say, ‘Go & fetch me that lute.’ They would fetch the lute and say, ‘Here, sire, is the lute whose sound is so delightful, so tantalizing, so intoxicating, so ravishing, so enthralling.’ He would say, ‘Enough of your lute. Fetch me just the sound.’ Then they would say, ‘This lute, sire, is made of numerous components, a great many components. It’s through the activity of numerous components that it sounds: that is, in dependence on the

body, the skin, the neck, the frame, the strings, the bridge, and the appropriate human effort. Thus it is that this lute—made of numerous components, a great many components—sounds through the activity of numerous components?

“Then the king would split the lute into ten pieces, a hundred pieces. Having split the lute into ten pieces, a hundred pieces, he would shave it to splinters. Having shaved it to splinters, he would burn it in a fire. Having burned it in a fire, he would reduce it to ashes. Having reduced it to ashes, he would winnow it before a high wind or let it be washed away by a swift-flowing stream. He would then say, ‘A sorry thing, this lute—whatever a lute may be—by which people have been so thoroughly tricked & deceived.’

“In the same way, a monk investigates form, however far form may go. He investigates feeling... perception... fabrications... consciousness, however far consciousness may go. As he is investigating form... feeling... perception... fabrications... consciousness, however far consciousness may go, any thoughts of ‘me’ or ‘mine’ or ‘I am’ do not occur to him.”

See also: MN 19; [SN 5:10](#); [SN 23:2](#)

The Six Animals

Chappāṇa Sutta (SN 35:206)

“Suppose that a man, wounded and festering, were to go into a swampy jungle. Its sharp-bladed grasses would pierce his feet; its thorns would scratch his festering sores. And so, from that cause, he would experience an even greater measure of pain and unhappiness. In the same way, there is the case where a certain monk, having gone to a village or to the wilderness, meets up with someone who upbraids him: ‘This venerable one, acting in this way, undertaking practices in this way, is a thorn of impurity in this village.’ Knowing this person to be a thorn, one should understand restraint and lack of restraint.

“And what is lack of restraint? There is the case where a monk, seeing a form with the eye, is set on pleasing forms, is repelled by unpleasing forms, and remains with body-mindfulness unestablished, with limited awareness. He does not discern, as it has come to be, the awareness-release, the discernment-release, where any evil, unskillful mental qualities that have arisen utterly cease without remainder.

“Hearing a sound with the ear...

“Smelling an aroma with the nose...

“Tasting a flavor with the tongue...

“Touching a tactile sensation with the body...

“Cognizing an idea with the intellect, he is set on pleasing ideas, is repelled by unpleasing ideas, and remains with body-mindfulness unestablished, with limited awareness. He does not discern, as it has come to be, the awareness-release, the discernment-release, where any evil, unskillful mental qualities that have arisen utterly cease without remainder.

“Just as if a person, catching six animals of different ranges, of different habitats, were to bind them with a strong rope. Catching a snake, he would bind it with a strong rope. Catching a crocodile... a bird... a dog... a hyena... a monkey, he would bind it with a strong rope. Binding them all with a strong rope, and tying a knot in the middle, he would set chase to them.

“Then those six animals, of different ranges, of different habitats, would each pull toward its own range & habitat. The snake would pull, thinking, ‘I’ll go into the anthill.’ The crocodile would pull, thinking, ‘I’ll go into the water.’ The bird would pull, thinking, ‘I’ll fly up into the air.’ The dog would pull, thinking, ‘I’ll go into the village.’ The hyena would pull, thinking, ‘I’ll go into the charnel ground.’ The monkey would pull, thinking, ‘I’ll go into the forest.’ And when these six animals became internally exhausted, they would submit, they would surrender, they would come under the sway of whichever among them was the strongest. In the same way, in any monk whose mindfulness immersed in the body is undeveloped & unpursued, the eye pulls toward pleasing forms, while unpleasing forms are repellent. The ear pulls toward

pleasing sounds... The nose pulls toward pleasing aromas... The tongue pulls toward pleasing flavors... The body pulls toward pleasing tactile sensations... The intellect pulls toward pleasing ideas, while unpleasing ideas are repellent. This, monks, is lack of restraint.

“And what is restraint? There is the case where a monk, seeing a form with the eye, is not set on pleasing forms, is not repelled by unpleasing forms, and remains with body-mindfulness established, with immeasurable awareness. He discerns, as it has come to be, the awareness-release, the discernment-release, where all evil, unskillful mental qualities that have arisen utterly cease without remainder.

“Hearing a sound with the ear...

“Smelling an aroma with the nose...

“Tasting a flavor with the tongue...

“Touching a tactile sensation with the body...

“Cognizing an idea with the intellect, he is not set on pleasing ideas, is not repelled by unpleasing ideas, and remains with body-mindfulness established, with immeasurable awareness. He discerns, as it has come to be, the awareness-release, the discernment-release, where all evil, unskillful mental qualities that have arisen utterly cease without remainder.

“Just as if a person, catching six animals of different ranges, of different habitats, were to bind them with a strong rope. Catching a snake, he would bind it with a strong rope. Catching a crocodile... a bird... a dog... a hyena... a monkey, he would bind it with a strong rope. Binding them all with a strong rope, he would tether them to a strong post or stake.

“Then those six animals, of different ranges, of different habitats, would each pull toward its own range & habitat. The snake would pull, thinking, ‘I’ll go into the anthill.’ The crocodile would pull, thinking, ‘I’ll go into the water.’ The bird would pull, thinking, ‘I’ll fly up into the air.’ The dog would pull, thinking, ‘I’ll go into the village.’ The hyena would pull, thinking, ‘I’ll go into the charnel ground.’ The monkey would pull, thinking, ‘I’ll go into the forest.’ And when these six animals became internally exhausted, they would stand, sit, or lie down right

there next to the post or stake. In the same way, in any monk whose mindfulness immersed in the body is developed & pursued, the eye does not pull toward pleasing forms, and unpleasing forms are not repellent. The ear does not pull toward pleasing sounds... The nose does not pull toward pleasing aromas... The tongue does not pull toward pleasing flavors... The body does not pull toward pleasing tactile sensations... The intellect does not pull toward pleasing ideas, and unpleasing ideas are not repellent. This, monks, is restraint.

“The ‘strong post or stake’ is a synonym for mindfulness immersed in the body.

“Thus you should train yourselves: ‘We will develop mindfulness immersed in the body. We will pursue it, give it a means of transport, give it a grounding. We will steady it, consolidate it, and set about it properly.’ That is how you should train yourselves.”

See also: MN 119; [SN 47:20](#)

The Sheaf of Barley

Yavakalāpi Sutta (SN 35:207)

“Suppose, monks, that a sheaf of barley were thrown down at a large four-way intersection, and six men were to come along with flails in their hands. They would thrash the sheaf of barley with their six flails. Thus the sheaf of barley would be thoroughly thrashed with the six flails. Then a seventh man would come along with a flail in his hand. He would thrash the sheaf of barley with a seventh flail. Thus the sheaf of barley would be even more thoroughly thrashed with the seventh flail.

“In the same way, the uninstructed run-of-the-mill person is thrashed in the eye by pleasing & unpleasing forms... thrashed in the ear by pleasing & unpleasing sounds... thrashed in the nose by pleasing & unpleasing aromas... thrashed in the tongue by pleasing & unpleasing flavors... thrashed in the body by pleasing & unpleasing tactile sensations... thrashed in the intellect by pleasing & unpleasing ideas. And if that uninstructed run-of-the-mill person forms intentions for the

sake of further becoming in the future, then he—that foolish person—is even more thoroughly thrashed, just like the sheaf of barley thrashed with the seventh flail.

“Once, monks, the devas & asuras were arrayed for battle. Then Vepacitti, the lord of the asuras, addressed the asuras: ‘If, dear sirs, in the battle of the devas arrayed against the asuras, the asuras win and the devas are defeated, bind Sakka, the lord of the devas, neck, hand, & foot and bring him before me in the city of the asuras.’

“As for Sakka, lord of the devas, he addressed the Devas of the Thirty-three: ‘If dear sirs, in the battle of the devas arrayed against the asuras, the devas win and the asuras are defeated, bind Vepacitti, the lord of the asuras, neck, hand, & foot and bring him before me in the righteous assembly of the devas.’

“Now, in that battle the devas won. So the Devas of the Thirty-three bound Vepacitti, the lord of the asuras, neck, hand, & foot and brought him before Sakka in the righteous assembly of the devas.

“So there was Vepacitti, the lord of the asuras, bound neck, hand, & foot. When the thought occurred to him, ‘The devas are in the right and the asuras in the wrong. I’m now going over to the city of the devas,’ then he viewed himself as freed from that fivefold bond. He was fully provided with the five strings of heavenly sensuality. But when the thought occurred to him, ‘The asuras are in the right and the devas in the wrong. I will go over to the city of the asuras,’ then he viewed himself as bound with that fivefold bond, deprived of the five strings of heavenly sensuality. That’s how subtle the bonds of Vepacitti were. But the bonds of Māra are even more subtle. Anyone who supposes is bound by Māra. Anyone who doesn’t suppose is freed from the Evil One.

“‘I am’ is a supposition. ‘I am this’ is a supposition. ‘I shall be’ is a supposition. ‘I shall not be’..‘I shall be possessed of form’..‘I shall not be possessed of form’..‘I shall be percipient’..‘I shall not be percipient’.. ‘I shall be neither percipient nor non-percipient’ is a supposition. Supposition is a disease, supposition is a cancer, supposition is an arrow. Therefore, monks, you should train yourselves: ‘We will dwell with an awareness free of suppositions.’

“‘I am’ is a perturbation. ‘I am this’ is a perturbation. ‘I shall be’ is a perturbation. ‘I shall not be’..‘I shall be possessed of form’..‘I shall not be possessed of form’..‘I shall be percipient’..‘I shall not be percipient’.. ‘I shall be neither percipient nor non-percipient’ is a perturbation. Perturbation is a disease, perturbation is a cancer, perturbation is an arrow. Therefore, monks, you should train yourselves: ‘We will dwell with an awareness free of perturbations.’

“‘I am’ is a wavering. ‘I am this’ is a wavering. ‘I shall be’ is a wavering. ‘I shall not be’..‘I shall be possessed of form’..‘I shall not be possessed of form’..‘I shall be percipient’..‘I shall not be percipient’.. ‘I shall be neither percipient nor non-percipient’ is a wavering. Wavering is a disease, wavering is a cancer, wavering is an arrow. Therefore, monks, you should train yourselves: ‘We will dwell with an awareness free of waverings.’

“‘I am’ is an objectification. ‘I am this’ is an objectification. ‘I shall be’ is an objectification. ‘I shall not be’..‘I shall be possessed of form’..‘I shall not be possessed of form’..‘I shall be percipient’..‘I shall not be percipient’.. ‘I shall be neither percipient nor non-percipient’ is an objectification. Objectification is a disease, objectification is a cancer, objectification is an arrow. Therefore, monks, you should train yourselves: ‘We will dwell with an awareness free of objectifications.’

“‘I am’ is an act of conceit. ‘I am this’ is an act of conceit. ‘I shall be’ is an act of conceit. ‘I shall not be’..‘I shall be possessed of form’..‘I shall not be possessed of form’..‘I shall be percipient’..‘I shall not be percipient’.. ‘I shall be neither percipient nor non-percipient’ is an act of conceit. An act of conceit is a disease, an act of conceit is a cancer, an act of conceit is an arrow. Therefore, monks, you should train yourselves: ‘We will dwell with an awareness free of acts of conceit.’”

See also: MN 18; MN 140; [SN 11:5](#); [SN 35:115](#)

The Bottomless Chasm

Pātāla Sutta (SN 36:4)

“Monks, when an uninstructed run-of-the-mill person makes the statement, ‘There is a bottomless chasm in the ocean,’ he is talking about something that doesn’t exist, that can’t be found. The word ‘bottomless chasm’ is actually a designation for painful bodily feeling.

“When an uninstructed run-of-the-mill person is touched by a painful bodily feeling, he sorrows, grieves, & laments, beats his breast, becomes distraught. This is called an uninstructed run-of-the-mill person who has not risen up out of the bottomless chasm, who has not gained a foothold.

“When a well-instructed disciple of the noble ones is touched by a painful bodily feeling, he does not sorrow, grieve, or lament, does not beat his breast or become distraught. This is called a well-instructed disciple of the noble ones who has risen up out of the bottomless chasm, whose foothold is gained.”

Whoever can’t endure them
once they’ve arisen—
 painful bodily feelings
 that could kill living beings—
who trembles at their touch,
who cries & wails,
a weakling with no resilience:
 He hasn’t risen up
 out of the bottomless chasm
 or even gained
 a foothold.

Whoever endures them
once they’ve arisen—
 painful bodily feelings
 that could kill living beings—
who doesn’t tremble at their touch:
 He’s risen up
 out of the bottomless chasm;
 his foothold is gained.

The Arrow

Sallattha Sutta (SN 36:6)

“Monks, an uninstructed run-of-the-mill person feels feelings of pleasure, feelings of pain, feelings of neither-pleasure-nor-pain. A well-instructed disciple of the noble ones also feels feelings of pleasure, feelings of pain, feelings of neither-pleasure-nor-pain. So what difference, what distinction, what distinguishing factor is there between the well-instructed disciple of the noble ones and the uninstructed run-of-the-mill person?”

“For us, lord, the teachings have the Blessed One as their root, their guide, & their arbitrator. It would be good if the Blessed One himself would explicate the meaning of this statement. Having heard it from the Blessed One, the monks will remember it.”

“In that case, monks, listen & pay close attention. I will speak.”

“As you say, lord,” the monks responded to him.

The Blessed One said, “When touched with a feeling of pain, the uninstructed run-of-the-mill person sorrows, grieves, & laments, beats his breast, becomes distraught. So he feels two pains, physical & mental. Just as if they were to shoot a man with an arrow and, right afterward, were to shoot him with another one, so that he would feel the pains of two arrows, in the same way, when touched with a feeling of pain, the uninstructed run-of-the-mill person sorrows, grieves, & laments, beats his breast, becomes distraught. So he feels two pains, physical & mental.

“As he is touched by that painful feeling, he is resistant. Any resistance-obsession with regard to that painful feeling obsesses him. Touched by that painful feeling, he delights in sensuality. Why is that? Because the uninstructed run-of-the-mill person does not discern any escape from painful feeling aside from sensuality. As he is delighting in sensuality, any passion-obsession with regard to that feeling of pleasure obsesses him. He does not discern, as it has come to be, the origination, passing away, allure, drawback, or escape from that feeling. As he does

not discern the origination, passing away, allure, drawback, or escape from that feeling, then any ignorance-obsession with regard to that feeling of neither-pleasure-nor-pain obsesses him.

“Sensing a feeling of pleasure, he senses it as though joined with it. Sensing a feeling of pain, he senses it as though joined with it. Sensing a feeling of neither-pleasure-nor-pain, he senses it as though joined with it. This is called an uninstructed run-of-the-mill person joined with birth, aging, & death; with sorrows, lamentations, pains, distresses, & despairs. He is joined, I tell you, with suffering & stress.

“Now, the well-instructed disciple of the noble ones, when touched with a feeling of pain, does not sorrow, grieve, or lament, does not beat his breast or become distraught. So he feels one pain: physical, but not mental. Just as if they were to shoot a man with an arrow and, right afterward, did not shoot him with another one, so that he would feel the pain of only one arrow, in the same way, when touched with a feeling of pain, the well-instructed disciple of the noble ones does not sorrow, grieve, or lament, does not beat his breast or become distraught. He feels one pain: physical, but not mental.

“As he is touched by that painful feeling, he is not resistant. No resistance-obsession with regard to that painful feeling obsesses him. Touched by that painful feeling, he does not delight in sensuality. Why is that? Because the well-instructed disciple of the noble ones discerns an escape from painful feeling aside from sensuality. As he is not delighting in sensuality, no passion-obsession with regard to that feeling of pleasure obsesses him. He discerns, as it has come to be, the origination, passing away, allure, drawback, and escape from that feeling. As he discerns the origination, passing away, allure, drawback, and escape from that feeling, no ignorance-obsession with regard to that feeling of neither-pleasure-nor-pain obsesses him.

“Sensing a feeling of pleasure, he senses it disjoined from it. Sensing a feeling of pain, he senses it disjoined from it. Sensing a feeling of neither-pleasure-nor-pain, he senses it disjoined from it. This is called a well-instructed disciple of the noble ones disjoined from birth, aging, & death; from sorrows, lamentations, pains, distresses, & despairs. He is disjoined, I tell you, from suffering & stress.

“This is the difference, this the distinction, this the distinguishing factor between the well-instructed disciple of the noble ones and the uninstructed run-of-the-mill person.”

The discerning person, learned,
doesn't sense a (mental) feeling
of pleasure or pain:
This is the difference in skillfulness
between the sage
& the person run-of-the-mill.
For a learned person
who has fathomed the Dhamma,
clearly seeing this world & the next,
desirable things don't charm the mind,
undesirable ones bring no resistance.

His acceptance
& rejection are scattered,
 gone to their end,
 do not exist.

Knowing the dustless, sorrowless state,
he discerns rightly,
has gone, beyond becoming,
to the Further Shore.

See also: MN 44; [SN 1:38](#); [SN 12:19](#); [SN 52:10](#)

The Sick Ward

Gelaṇṇa Sutta (SN 36:7)

I have heard that on one occasion the Blessed One was staying near Vesālī at the Gabled Hall in the Great Forest. Then, emerging from his seclusion in the evening, he went to the sick ward. On arrival he sat down on a seat made ready. Having sat down, he addressed the monks:

“A monk should approach the time of death mindful & alert. This is our instruction to you all.

“And how is a monk mindful? There is the case where a monk remains focused on the body in & of itself—ardent, alert, & mindful—putting aside greed & distress with reference to the world. He remains focused on feelings in & of themselves... mind in & of itself... mental qualities in & of themselves—ardent, alert, & mindful—putting aside greed & distress with reference to the world. This is how a monk is mindful.

“And how is a monk alert? When going forward & returning, he makes himself fully alert; when looking toward & looking away... when bending & extending his limbs... when carrying his outer cloak, his upper robe, & his bowl... when eating, drinking, chewing, & savoring... when urinating & defecating... when walking, standing, sitting, falling asleep, waking up, talking, & remaining silent, he makes himself fully alert. This is how a monk is alert.

“So a monk should approach the time of death mindful & alert. This is our instruction to you all.

“As a monk is dwelling thus mindful & alert—heedful, ardent, & resolute—a feeling of pleasure arises in him. He discerns that ‘A feeling of pleasure has arisen in me. It is dependent on a requisite condition, not independent. Dependent on what? Dependent on this body. Now, this body is inconstant, fabricated, dependently co-arisen. Being dependent on a body that is inconstant, fabricated, & dependently co-arisen, how can this feeling of pleasure that has arisen be constant?’ He remains focused on inconstancy with regard to the body & to the feeling of pleasure. He remains focused on dissolution... dispassion... cessation... relinquishment with regard to the body & to the feeling of pleasure. As he remains focused on inconstancy... dissolution... dispassion... cessation... relinquishment with regard to the body & to the feeling of pleasure, he abandons any passion-obsession for the body & the feeling of pleasure.

“As he is dwelling thus mindful & alert—heedful, ardent, & resolute—a feeling of pain arises in him. He discerns that ‘A feeling of pain has arisen in me. It is dependent on a requisite condition, not independent.

Dependent on what? Dependent on this body. Now, this body is inconstant, fabricated, dependently co-arisen. Being dependent on a body that is inconstant, fabricated, & dependently co-arisen, how can this feeling of pain that has arisen be constant?' He remains focused on inconstancy with regard to the body & to the feeling of pain. He remains focused on dissolution... dispassion... cessation... relinquishment with regard to the body & to the feeling of pain. As he remains focused on inconstancy... dissolution... dispassion... cessation... relinquishment with regard to the body & to the feeling of pain, he abandons any resistance-obsession for the body & the feeling of pain.

"As he is dwelling thus mindful & alert—heedful, ardent, & resolute—a feeling of neither-pleasure-nor-pain arises in him. He discerns that 'A feeling of neither-pleasure-nor-pain has arisen in me. It is dependent on a requisite condition, not independent. Dependent on what? Dependent on this body. Now, this body is inconstant, fabricated, dependently co-arisen. Being dependent on a body that is inconstant, fabricated, & dependently co-arisen, how can this feeling of neither-pleasure-nor-pain that has arisen be constant?' He remains focused on inconstancy with regard to the body & to the feeling of neither-pleasure-nor-pain. He remains focused on dissolution... dispassion... cessation... relinquishment with regard to the body & to the feeling of neither-pleasure-nor-pain. As he remains focused on inconstancy... dissolution... dispassion... cessation... relinquishment with regard to the body & to the feeling of neither-pleasure-nor-pain, he abandons any ignorance-obsession for the body & the feeling of neither-pleasure-nor-pain.

"Sensing a feeling of pleasure, he discerns that it is inconstant, not grasped at, not relished. Sensing a feeling of pain... Sensing a feeling of neither-pleasure-nor-pain, he discerns that it is inconstant, not grasped at, not relished. Sensing a feeling of pleasure, he senses it disjoined from it. Sensing a feeling of pain... Sensing a feeling of neither-pleasure-nor-pain, he senses it disjoined from it. When sensing a feeling limited to the body, he discerns that 'I am sensing a feeling limited to the body.' When sensing a feeling limited to life, he discerns that 'I am sensing a feeling

limited to life.’ He discerns that ‘With the break-up of the body, after the termination of life, all that is experienced, not being relished, will grow cold right here.’

“Just as an oil lamp burns in dependence on oil & wick; and from the termination of the oil & wick—and from not being provided any other sustenance—it goes out unnourished; in the same way, when sensing a feeling limited to the body, he discerns that ‘I am sensing a feeling limited to the body.’ When sensing a feeling limited to life, he discerns that ‘I am sensing a feeling limited to life.’ He discerns that ‘With the break-up of the body, after the termination of life, all that is sensed, not being relished, will grow cold right here.’”

See also: MN 140; MN 146; [SN 46:14](#); [SN 47:35](#); [SN 52:10](#); AN 4:173; AN 5:121; AN 10:60

Alone

Rahogata Sutta (SN 36:11)

Then a certain monk went to the Blessed One and, on arrival, having bowed down to him, sat to one side. As he was sitting there he said to the Blessed One: “Just now, lord, while I was alone in seclusion, this train of thought arose in my awareness: ‘Three feelings have been spoken of by the Blessed One: a feeling of pleasure, a feeling of pain (stress), & a feeling of neither pleasure nor pain. These are the three feelings spoken of by the Blessed One. But the Blessed One has said: “Whatever is felt comes under stress (pain).” Now in what connection was this stated by the Blessed One: “Whatever is felt comes under stress (pain)?”’”

“Excellent, monk. Excellent. These three feelings have been spoken of by me: a feeling of pleasure, a feeling of pain (stress), & a feeling of neither pleasure nor pain. These are the three feelings spoken of by me. But I have also said: ‘Whatever is felt comes under stress (pain).’ That I have stated simply in connection with the inconstancy of fabrications. That I have stated simply in connection with the nature of fabrications to end... in connection with the nature of fabrications to fall away... to

fade away... to cease... in connection with the nature of fabrications to change.

“And I have also taught the step-by-step cessation of fabrications. When one has attained the first jhāna, speech has ceased. When one has attained the second jhāna, directed thought & evaluation have ceased. When one has attained the third jhāna, rapture has ceased. When one has attained the fourth jhāna, in-and-out breathing has ceased. When one has attained the dimension of the infinitude of space, the perception of forms has ceased. When one has attained the dimension of the infinitude of consciousness, the perception of the dimension of the infinitude of space has ceased. When one has attained the dimension of nothingness, the perception of the dimension of the infinitude of consciousness has ceased. When one has attained the dimension of neither-perception nor non-perception, the perception of the dimension of nothingness has ceased. When one has attained the cessation of perception & feeling, perception & feeling have ceased. When a monk’s effluents have ended, passion has ceased, aversion has ceased, delusion has ceased.

“Then, monk, I have also taught the step-by-step total stilling of fabrications. When one has attained the first jhāna, speech has been totally stilled. When one has attained the second jhāna, directed thought & evaluation have been totally stilled. When one has attained the third jhāna, rapture has been totally stilled. When one has attained the fourth jhāna, in-and-out breathing has been totally stilled. When one has attained the dimension of the infinitude of space, the perception of forms has been totally stilled. When one has attained the dimension of the infinitude of consciousness, the perception of the dimension of the infinitude of space has been totally stilled. When one has attained the dimension of nothingness, the perception of the dimension of the infinitude of consciousness has been totally stilled. When one has attained the dimension of neither-perception nor non-perception, the perception of the dimension of nothingness has been totally stilled. When one has attained the cessation of perception & feeling, perception & feeling have been totally stilled. When a monk’s effluents have ended,

passion has been totally stilled, aversion has been totally stilled, delusion has been totally stilled.

“There are these six calmings. When one has attained the first jhāna, speech has been calmed. When one has attained the second jhāna, directed thought & evaluation have been calmed. When one has attained the third jhāna, rapture has been calmed. When one has attained the fourth jhāna, in-and-out breathing has been calmed. When one has attained the cessation of perception & feeling, perception & feeling have been calmed. When a monk’s effluents have ended, passion has been calmed, aversion has been calmed, delusion has been calmed.”

See also: MN 44; MN 45; MN 121; MN 136; [SN 5:10](#); [SN 12:15](#); AN 10:20; AN 10:72

Pañcakaṅga

Pañcakaṅga Sutta (SN 36:19)

(Except for the opening and closing sentences, this sutta is identical to MN 59.)

Then Pañcakaṅga the carpenter¹ went to Ven. Udāyin and, on arrival, having bowed down to him, sat to one side. As he was sitting there, he said to Ven. Udāyin, “Venerable Udāyin, how many feelings have been described by the Blessed One?”

“The Blessed One has described three feelings, householder: a feeling of pleasure, a feeling of pain, a feeling of neither pleasure nor pain. These are the three feelings described by the Blessed One.”

When this was said, Pañcakaṅga the carpenter said to Ven. Udāyin, “No, Venerable Udāyin, the Blessed One hasn’t described three feelings, he’s described two feelings: a feeling of pleasure & a feeling of pain. As for the feeling of neither pleasure nor pain, that has been described by the Blessed One as a peaceful, sublime pleasure.”

A second time... A third time, Ven. Udāyin said to Pañcakaṅga the carpenter, “No, householder, the Blessed One hasn’t described two feelings, he’s described three feelings: a feeling of pleasure, a feeling of pain, a feeling of neither pleasure nor pain. These are the three feelings described by the Blessed One.”

A second time... A third time, Pañcakaṅga the carpenter said to Ven. Udāyin, “No, Venerable Udāyin, the Blessed One hasn’t described three feelings, he’s described two feelings: a feeling of pleasure & a feeling of pain. As for the feeling of neither pleasure nor pain, that has been described by the Blessed One as a peaceful, sublime pleasure.”

But neither was Ven. Udāyin able to convince Pañcakaṅga the carpenter, nor was Pañcakaṅga the carpenter able to convince Ven. Udāyin.

Ven. Ānanda heard of Ven. Udāyin’s conversation with Pañcakaṅga the carpenter. So he went to the Blessed One and, on arrival, having bowed down to him, sat to one side. As he was sitting there, he told the Blessed One the entire extent of Ven. Udāyin’s conversation with Pañcakaṅga the carpenter.

(The Blessed One said,) “Ānanda, it was a genuine exposition that Pañcakaṅga the carpenter didn’t accept from Udāyin the monk, and it was a genuine exposition that Udāyin the monk didn’t accept from Pañcakaṅga the carpenter. There is the exposition whereby I have spoken of two feelings, the exposition whereby I have spoken of three feelings... five... six... eighteen... thirty-six... one hundred and eight feelings.²

“Thus I have taught the Dhamma by means of exposition. When I have taught the Dhamma by means of exposition, if there are those who do not concede, allow, or approve of what has been well-spoken & well-stated by one another, it can be expected that they will dwell arguing, quarreling, & disputing, stabbing one another with weapons of the mouth.

Thus I have taught the Dhamma by means of exposition. When I have taught the Dhamma by means of exposition, if there are those who concede, allow, & approve of what has been well-spoken & well-stated by one another, it can be expected that they will dwell harmoniously,

cordially, without dispute, becoming like milk mixed with water, regarding one another with affectionate eyes.

“Ānanda, there are these five strings of sensuality. Which five? Forms cognizable via the eye—agreeable, pleasing, charming, endearing, enticing, linked with sensual desire. Sounds cognizable via the ear... Aromas cognizable via the nose... Flavors cognizable via the tongue... Tactile sensations cognizable via the body—agreeable, pleasing, charming, endearing, enticing, linked with sensual desire. Now, whatever pleasure & joy arises in dependence on these five strings of sensuality, that is called sensual pleasure.

“Though there are those who say, ‘They [i.e., beings] experience this as the highest existing pleasure & joy,’³ I do not grant them that. Why is that? Because there is another pleasure more excellent than that pleasure and more sublime.

“And which, Ānanda, is the other pleasure more excellent than that pleasure and more sublime? There is the case where a monk—quite secluded from sensuality, secluded from unskillful qualities—enters & remains in the first jhāna: rapture & pleasure born of seclusion, accompanied by directed thought & evaluation. This is the other pleasure more excellent than that pleasure and more sublime.

“Though there are those who say, ‘They experience this as the highest existing pleasure & joy,’ I do not grant them that. Why is that? Because there is another pleasure more excellent than that pleasure and more sublime.

“And which, Ānanda, is the other pleasure more excellent than that pleasure and more sublime? There is the case where, with the stilling of directed thoughts & evaluations, a monk enters & remains in the second jhāna: rapture & pleasure born of concentration, unification of awareness free from directed thought & evaluation—internal assurance. This is the other pleasure more excellent than that pleasure and more sublime.

“Though there are those who say, ‘They experience this as the highest existing pleasure & joy,’ I do not grant them that. Why is that? Because

there is another pleasure more excellent than that pleasure and more sublime.

“And which, Ānanda, is the other pleasure more excellent than that pleasure and more sublime? There is the case where a monk, with the fading of rapture, remains equanimous, mindful, & alert, and senses pleasure with the body. He enters & remains in the third jhāna, of which the noble ones declare, ‘Equanimous & mindful, he has a pleasant abiding.’ This is the other pleasure more excellent than that pleasure and more sublime.

“Though there are those who say, ‘They experience this as the highest existing pleasure & joy,’ I do not grant them that. Why is that? Because there is another pleasure more excellent than that pleasure and more sublime.

“And which, Ānanda, is the other pleasure more excellent than that pleasure and more sublime? There is the case where a monk, with the abandoning of pleasure & pain—as with the earlier disappearance of elation & distress—enters & remains in the fourth jhāna: purity of equanimity & mindfulness, neither pleasure nor pain. This is the other pleasure more excellent than that pleasure and more sublime.⁴

“Though there are those who say, ‘They experience this as the highest existing pleasure & joy,’ I do not grant them that. Why is that? Because there is another pleasure more excellent than that pleasure and more sublime.

“And which, Ānanda, is the other pleasure more excellent than that pleasure and more sublime? There is the case where a monk, with the complete transcending of perceptions of form, with the disappearance of perceptions of resistance,⁵ and not attending to perceptions of multiplicity,⁶ (perceiving,) ‘Infinite space,’ enters & remains in the dimension of the infinitude of space. This is the other pleasure more excellent than that pleasure and more sublime.

“Though there are those who say, ‘They experience this as the highest existing pleasure & joy,’ I do not grant them that. Why is that? Because there is another pleasure more excellent than that pleasure and more sublime.

“And which, Ānanda, is the other pleasure more excellent than that pleasure and more sublime? There is the case where a monk, with the complete transcending of the dimension of the infinitude of space, (perceiving,) ‘Infinite consciousness,’ enters & remains in the dimension of the infinitude of consciousness. This is the other pleasure more excellent than that pleasure and more sublime.

“Though there are those who say, ‘They experience this as the highest existing pleasure & joy,’ I do not grant them that. Why is that? Because there is another pleasure more excellent than that pleasure and more sublime.

“And which, Ānanda, is the other pleasure more excellent than that pleasure and more sublime? There is the case where a monk, with the complete transcending of the dimension of the infinitude of consciousness, (perceiving,) ‘There is nothing,’ enters & remains in the dimension of nothingness. This is the other pleasure more excellent than that pleasure and more sublime.

“Though there are those who say, ‘They experience this as the highest existing pleasure & joy,’ I do not grant them that. Why is that? Because there is another pleasure more excellent than that pleasure and more sublime.

“And which, Ānanda, is the other pleasure more excellent than that pleasure and more sublime? There is the case where a monk, with the complete transcending of the dimension of nothingness, enters & remains in the dimension of neither perception nor non-perception. This is the other pleasure more excellent than that pleasure and more sublime.

“Though there are those who say, ‘They experience this as the highest existing pleasure & joy,’ I do not grant them that. Why is that? Because there is another pleasure more excellent than that pleasure and more sublime.

“And which, Ānanda, is the other pleasure more excellent than that pleasure and more sublime? There is the case where a monk, with the complete transcending of the dimension of neither perception nor non-perception, enters & remains in the cessation of perception & feeling.⁷

This is the other pleasure more excellent than that pleasure and more sublime.

“Now, it’s possible, Ānanda, that some wanderers of other persuasions might say, ‘Gotama the contemplative speaks of the cessation of perception & feeling and yet describes it as pleasure. What is this? How is this?’ When they say that, they are to be told, ‘It’s not the case, friends, that the Blessed One describes only pleasant feeling as included under pleasure. Wherever pleasure is found, in whatever terms, the Blessed One describes it as pleasure.’”

NOTES

1. See MN 78.

2. See [SN 36:22](#). [SN 48:38–9](#) provide further explanations of the five feelings. MN 137 provides a further explanation of the eighteen and thirty-six feelings.

The two types of feelings described in [SN 36:22](#) do not correspond to the two types cited here by Pañcakaṅga, but see note 4, below. As for the three types described in [SN 36:22](#), they do correspond to the three types cited here by Ven. Udayin. It may be that, in this sutta, Ven. Udāyin is still smarting from the rebuke he received from the Buddha in MN 136 for trying to apply the teaching that all feelings are stressful—essentially, an assertion that there is only one type of feeling—to a question about the results of kamma: a question that, the Buddha said, should have been answered with an explanation of the three types of feeling, corresponding to the three types of action.

3. Reading, ‘*etaṃ paramaṇṇi santaṃ sukhaṃ somanassaṃ paṭisaṃvedentī*,’ with the Thai edition.

4. By identifying the neither-pleasure nor pain of the fourth jhāna as a kind of pleasure, the Buddha shows that Pañcakaṅga was, at least partially, right.

5. “Resistance” is a translation of the Pali term, *paṭigha*. According to DN 15, resistance-contact results from the characteristics of physical form and allows mental activity to know the presence of form. In other words, if form did not put up resistance to something else taking its place, one would not know that form is present. Thus the disappearance of perceptions of

resistance aids in the mind's ability to transcend perceptions of form and to sense, in its place, infinite space.

6. “Multiplicity” is a translation of the Pali term, *nānattā*. MN 137 identifies multiplicity as the input of the five physical senses. See the essay, “Silence Isn’t Mandatory.”

7. Notice that this description of the cessation of perception & feeling lacks the statement often added in some passages where this attainment is described (as in MN 26 and AN 9:38): “and, as he sees (that) with discernment, his effluents are completely ended.” This suggests that the arising of discernment may not be an automatic feature of this attainment.

See also: DN 2; DN 9; MN 14; MN 140; AN 9:33; AN 9:34; Dhṛ 202—204; Thag 9

To Sivaka

Sivaka Sutta (SN 36:21)

Some people have interpreted this sutta as stating that there are many experiences that cannot be explained by the principle of kamma. A casual glance of the alternative factors here—drawn from the various causes for pain that were recognized in the medical treatises of his time—would seem to support this conclusion. However, if we compare this list with his definition of old kamma in [SN 35:145](#), we see that many of the alternative causes are actually the results of past actions. Those that aren’t are the result of new kamma. For instance, MN 101 counts asceticism—which produces pain in the immediate present—under the factor harsh treatment. The point here is that old and new kamma do not override other causal factors operating in the universe—such as those recognized by the physical sciences—but instead find expression within them. A second point is that some of the influences of past kamma can be mitigated in the present—a disease caused by bile, for instance, can be cured by medicine that brings the bile back to normal. Similarly with the mind: Mental suffering caused by physical pain can be ended by understanding and abandoning the attachment that led to that suffering. In this way, the Buddha’s teaching on kamma avoids determinism and opens the

way for a path of practice focused on eliminating the causes of suffering in the here and now.

* * *

On one occasion the Blessed One was staying near Rājagaha in the Bamboo Forest, the Squirrel's Sanctuary. There Moliyasivaka the wanderer went to the Blessed One and, on arrival, exchanged courteous greetings with him. After an exchange of friendly greetings & courtesies, he sat to one side. As he was sitting there, he said to the Blessed One, "Master Gotama, there are some contemplatives & brahmins who are of this doctrine, this view: Whatever an individual feels—pleasure, pain, neither-pleasure-nor-pain—is entirely caused by what was done before. Now what does Master Gotama say to that?"

[The Buddha:] "There are cases where some feelings arise based on bile [i.e., diseases and pains that come from a malfunction of the gall bladder]. You yourself should know how some feelings arise based on bile. Even the world is agreed on how some feelings arise based on bile. So any contemplatives & brahmins who are of the doctrine & view that whatever an individual feels—pleasure, pain, neither-pleasure-nor-pain—is entirely caused by what was done before—slip past what they themselves know, slip past what is agreed on by the world. Therefore I say that those contemplatives & brahmins are wrong."

"There are cases where some feelings arise based on phlegm... based on internal winds... based on a combination of bodily humors... from the change of the seasons... from uneven ['out-of-tune'] care of the body... from harsh treatment... from the result of kamma. You yourself should know how some feelings arise from the result of kamma. Even the world is agreed on how some feelings arise from the result of kamma. So any contemplatives & brahmins who are of the doctrine & view that whatever an individual feels—pleasure, pain, neither pleasure-nor-pain—is entirely caused by what was done before—slip past what they themselves know, slip past what is agreed on by the world. Therefore I say that those contemplatives & brahmins are wrong."

When this was said, Moliyasivaka the wanderer said to the Blessed One: "Magnificent, lord! Magnificent! Just as if he were to place upright

what was overturned, to reveal what was hidden, to point out the way to one who was lost, or to carry a lamp into the dark so that those with eyes could see forms, in the same way has the Blessed One—through many lines of reasoning—made the Dhamma clear. I go to the Blessed One for refuge, to the Dhamma, & to the Saṅgha of monks. May the Blessed One remember me as a lay follower who has gone for refuge from this day forward, for life."

"Bile, phlegm, wind, a combination,
Season, uneven, harsh treatment,
and through the result of kamma as the eighth."¹

NOTE

1. This concluding verse seems to have been added by the compilers of the Canon as a mnemonic device.

The One-Hundred-and-Eight Exposition *Aṭṭhasata Sutta* (SN 36:22)

"Monks, I will teach you a one-hundred-and-eight exposition that is a Dhamma exposition. Listen & pay close attention. I will speak."

"As you say, lord," the monks responded to him.

The Blessed One said: "And which one-hundred-and-eight exposition is a Dhamma exposition? There is the exposition whereby I have spoken of two feelings, the exposition whereby I have spoken of three feelings... five... six... eighteen... thirty-six... one hundred and eight feelings.

"And which are the two feelings? Physical & mental. These are the two feelings.

"And which are the three feelings? A feeling of pleasure, a feeling of pain, a feeling of neither pleasure nor pain. These are the three feelings.

"And which are the five feelings? The pleasure-faculty, the pain-faculty, the happiness-faculty, the distress-faculty, the equanimity-faculty. These are the five feelings."¹

“And which are the six feelings? A feeling born of eye-contact, a feeling born of ear-contact... nose-contact... tongue-contact... body-contact... intellect-contact. These are the six feelings.

“And which are the eighteen feelings? Six happiness-explorations, six distress-explorations, six equanimity-explorations.² These are the eighteen feelings.

“And which are the thirty-six feelings? Six kinds of house-based happiness & six kinds of renunciation-based happiness; six kinds of house-based distress & six kinds of renunciation-based distress; six kinds of house-based equanimity & six kinds of renunciation-based equanimity.³ These are the thirty-six feelings.

“And which are the one hundred and eight feelings? Thirty-six past feelings, thirty-six future feelings, and thirty-six present feelings. These are the one hundred and eight feelings.

“And this, monks, is the one-hundred-and-eight exposition that is a Dhamma exposition.”

NOTES

1. See [SN 48:38–39](#).

2. See MN 137.

3. See MN 137.

To a Certain Bhikkhu *Bhikkhu Sutta (SN 36:23)*

Then a certain bhikkhu went to the Blessed One and, on arrival, having bowed down to him, sat to one side. As he was sitting there he said to the Blessed One, “What, lord, is feeling? What is the origination of feeling? What is the path of practice leading to the origination of feeling? What is the cessation of feeling? What is the path of practice leading to the cessation of feeling? What is the allure of feeling, what is its drawback, what is the escape from it?”

“Monk, there are three feelings: a feeling of pleasure, a feeling of pain, a feeling of neither pleasure nor pain. These are called feelings.

“From the origination of contact comes the origination of feeling.

“Craving is the path of practice leading to the origination of feeling.

“From the cessation of contact is the cessation of feeling.

“This very noble eightfold path is the path of practice leading to the cessation of feeling. In other words, right view, right resolve, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness, right concentration.

“Whatever pleasure & happiness arise in dependence on feeling: That is the allure of feeling.

“The fact that feeling is inconstant, stressful, subject to change: That is the drawback of feeling.

“The subduing of desire-passion for feeling, the abandoning of desire-passion for feeling: That is the escape from feeling.”

See also: MN 13; MN 137

Not of the Flesh

Nirāmisā Sutta (SN 36:31)

“Monks, there is rapture of the flesh, rapture not of the flesh, and rapture more not-of-the-flesh than that not of the flesh. There is pleasure of the flesh, pleasure not of the flesh, and pleasure more not-of-the-flesh than that not of the flesh. There is equanimity of the flesh, equanimity not of the flesh, and equanimity more not-of-the-flesh than that not of the flesh. There is liberation of the flesh, liberation not of the flesh, and liberation more not-of-the-flesh than that not of the flesh.

“And what is rapture of the flesh? There are these five strings of sensuality. Which five? Forms cognizable via the eye—agreeable, pleasing, charming, endearing, enticing, linked to sensual desire. Sounds cognizable via the ear... Aromas cognizable via the nose... Flavors cognizable via the tongue... Tactile sensations cognizable via the body—

agreeable, pleasing, charming, endearing, enticing, linked to sensual desire. Now whatever rapture arises in dependence on these five strings of sensuality, that is called rapture of the flesh.

“And what is rapture not of the flesh? There is the case where a monk—quite secluded from sensuality, secluded from unskillful qualities—enters & remains in the first jhāna: rapture & pleasure born of seclusion, accompanied by directed thought & evaluation. With the stilling of directed thoughts & evaluations, he enters & remains in the second jhāna: rapture & pleasure born of concentration, unification of awareness free from directed thought & evaluation—internal assurance. This is called rapture not of the flesh.

“And what is the rapture more not-of-the-flesh than that not of the flesh? Whatever rapture arises in an effluent-ended monk as he is reflecting on his mind released from passion, reflecting on his mind released from aversion, reflecting on his mind released from delusion, that is called rapture more not-of-the-flesh than that not of the flesh.

“And what is pleasure of the flesh? There are these five strings of sensuality. Which five? Forms cognizable via the eye—agreeable, pleasing, charming, endearing, enticing, linked to sensual desire. Sounds cognizable via the ear... Aromas cognizable via the nose... Flavors cognizable via the tongue... Tactile sensations cognizable via the body—agreeable, pleasing, charming, endearing, enticing, linked to sensual desire. Now whatever pleasure arises in dependence on these five strings of sensuality, that is called pleasure of the flesh.

“And what is pleasure not of the flesh? There is the case where a monk—quite secluded from sensuality, secluded from unskillful qualities—enters & remains in the first jhāna: rapture & pleasure born of seclusion, accompanied by directed thought & evaluation. With the stilling of directed thoughts & evaluations, he enters & remains in the second jhāna: rapture & pleasure born of concentration, unification of awareness free from directed thought & evaluation—internal assurance. With the fading of rapture, he remains equanimous, mindful, & alert, senses pleasure with the body, and enters & remains in the third jhāna, of which the Noble Ones declare, ‘Equanimous & mindful, he has a pleasant abiding.’ This is called pleasure not of the flesh.

“And what is the pleasure more not-of-the-flesh than that not of the flesh? Whatever pleasure arises in an effluent-ended monk as he is reflecting on his mind released from passion, reflecting on his mind released from aversion, reflecting on his mind released from delusion, that is called pleasure more not-of-the-flesh than that not of the flesh.

“And what is equanimity of the flesh? There are these five strings of sensuality. Which five? Forms cognizable via the eye—agreeable, pleasing, charming, endearing, enticing, linked to sensual desire. Sounds cognizable via the ear... Aromas cognizable via the nose... Flavors cognizable via the tongue... Tactile sensations cognizable via the body—agreeable, pleasing, charming, endearing, enticing, linked to sensual desire. Whatever equanimity arises in dependence on these five strings of sensuality, that is called equanimity of the flesh.

“And what is equanimity not of the flesh? There is the case where a monk, with the abandoning of pleasure & pain—as with the earlier disappearance of elation & distress—enters & remains in the fourth jhāna: purity of equanimity & mindfulness, neither-pleasure-nor-pain. This is called equanimity not of the flesh.

“And what is the equanimity more not-of-the-flesh than that not of the flesh? Whatever equanimity arises in an effluent-ended monk as he is reflecting on his mind released from passion, reflecting on his mind released from aversion, reflecting on his mind released from delusion, that is called equanimity more not-of-the-flesh than that not of the flesh.

“And what is liberation of the flesh? Liberation associated with form is of the flesh. What is liberation not of the flesh? Liberation associated with the formless is not of the flesh.

“And what is the liberation more not-of-the-flesh than that not of the flesh? Whatever liberation arises in an effluent-ended monk as he is reflecting on his mind released from passion, reflecting on his mind released from aversion, reflecting on his mind released from delusion, that is called liberation more not-of-the-flesh than that not of the flesh.”

See also: DN 21–22; MN 101; MN 102; Thag 1:85

Growth

Vaḍḍhinā Sutta (SN 37:34)

“A female disciple of the noble ones who grows in terms of these five types of growth grows in the noble growth. She grasps hold of what is essential and what is excellent in the body. Which five?

“She grows in terms of conviction.

“She grows in terms of virtue.

“She grows in terms of learning.

“She grows in terms of generosity.

“She grows in terms of discernment.¹

“Growing in terms of these five types of growth, the female disciple of the noble ones grows in the noble growth. She grasps hold of what is essential and what is excellent in the body.”

She grows in conviction & virtue,
discernment, generosity, & learning:

A virtuous female lay disciple

such as this

takes hold of the essence

right here within herself.

NOTE

1. As AN 3:71 states, these five qualities are conducive to rebirth as a deva.

See also: [SN 5](#); AN 7:6; AN 8:54

Stress

Dukkha Sutta (SN 38:14)

On one occasion Ven. Sāriputta was staying in Magadha near Nāla Village. Then Jambukhādaka the wanderer went to Ven. Sāriputta and, on arrival, exchanged courteous greetings with him. After an exchange of friendly greetings & courtesies, he sat to one side. As he was sitting there he said to Ven. Sāriputta: “‘Stress, stress,’ it is said, my friend Sāriputta. Which type of stress (are they referring to)?”

“There are these three forms of stressfulness, my friend: the stressfulness of pain, the stressfulness of fabrication, the stressfulness of change. These are the three forms of stressfulness.”

“But is there a path, is there a practice for the full comprehension of these forms of stressfulness?”

“Yes, there is a path, there is a practice for the full comprehension of these forms of stressfulness.”

“Then what is the path, what is the practice for the full comprehension of these forms of stressfulness?”

“Precisely this noble eightfold path, my friend: right view, right resolve, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness, right concentration. This is the path, this is the practice for the full comprehension of these forms of stressfulness.”

“It’s an auspicious path, my friend, an auspicious practice for the full comprehension of these forms of stressfulness—enough for the sake of heedfulness.”

See also: MN 149; [SN 22:23](#); [SN 56:11](#); [SN 56:30](#)

About Isidatta

Isidatta Sutta (SN 41:3)

On one occasion a large number of senior monks were staying near Macchikāsaṇḍa in the Wild Mango Grove. Then Citta the householder went to them and, on arrival, having bowed down to them, sat to one side. As he was sitting there he said to them: “Venerable sirs, may the senior monks acquiesce to tomorrow’s meal from me.”

The senior monks acquiesced by silence. Then Citta the householder, sensing the senior monks' acquiescence, got up from his seat and, having bowed down to them, circumambulated them—keeping them to his right—and left.

When the night had passed, the senior monks adjusted their lower robes in the early morning and, taking their bowls & outer robes, went to Citta's residence. There they sat down on the appointed seats. Citta the householder went to them and, having bowed down to them, sat to one side. As he was sitting there, he said to the most senior monk:

“Venerable sir, concerning the various views that arise in the world —‘The cosmos is eternal’ or ‘The cosmos isn’t eternal’; ‘The cosmos is finite’ or ‘The cosmos is infinite’; ‘The soul and the body are the same’ or ‘The soul is one thing, the body another’; ‘A Tathāgata exists after death’ or ‘A Tathāgata doesn’t exist after death’ or ‘A Tathāgata both exists & doesn’t exist after death’ or ‘A Tathāgata neither exists nor doesn’t exist after death’; these along with the sixty-two views mentioned in the *Brahmajāla* [DN 1]—when what is present do these views come into being, and when what is absent do they not come into being?”

When this was said, the senior monk was silent. A second time... A third time Citta the householder asked, “Concerning the various views that arise in the world... when what is present do they come into being, and what is absent do they not come into being?” A third time the senior monk was silent.

Now on that occasion Ven. Isidatta was the most junior of all the monks in that Saṅgha. Then he said to the senior monk: “Allow me, venerable sir, to answer Citta the householder’s question.”

“Go ahead & answer it, friend Isidatta.”

“Now, householder, are you asking this: ‘Concerning the various views that arise in the world... when what is present do they come into being, and what is absent do they not come into being?’”

“Yes, venerable sir.”

“Concerning the various views that arise in the world, householder... when self-identity view is present, these views come into being; when self-identity view is absent, they don’t come into being.”

“But, venerable sir, how does self-identity view come into being?”

“There is the case, householder, where an uninstructed, run-of-the-mill person—who has no regard for noble ones, is not well-versed or disciplined in their Dhamma; who has no regard for people of integrity, is not well-versed or disciplined in their Dhamma—assumes form (the body) to be the self, or the self as possessing form, or form as in the self, or the self as in form. He assumes feeling to be the self, or the self as possessing feeling, or feeling as in the self, or the self as in feeling. He assumes perception to be the self, or the self as possessing perception, or perception as in the self, or the self as in perception. He assumes fabrications to be the self, or the self as possessing fabrications, or fabrications as in the self, or the self as in fabrications. He assumes consciousness to be the self, or the self as possessing consciousness, or consciousness as in the self, or the self as in consciousness. This is how self-identity view comes into being.”

“And, venerable sir, how does self-identity view not come into being?”

“There is the case, householder, where a well-instructed disciple of the noble ones—who has regard for noble ones, is well-versed & disciplined in their Dhamma; who has regard for people of integrity, is well-versed & disciplined in their Dhamma—doesn’t assume form to be the self, or the self as possessing form, or form as in the self, or the self as in form. He doesn’t assume feeling to be the self... He doesn’t assume perception to be the self... He doesn’t assume fabrications to be the self... He doesn’t assume consciousness to be the self, or the self as possessing consciousness, or consciousness as in the self, or the self as in consciousness. This is how self-identity view does not come into being.”

“Venerable sir, where does Master Isidatta come from?”

“I come from Avanti, householder.”

“There is, venerable sir, a clansman from Avanti named Isidatta, an unseen friend of mine, who has gone forth. Have you ever seen him?”

“Yes, householder.”

“Where is he living now, venerable sir?”

When this was said, the Venerable Isidatta was silent.

“Are you my Isidatta?”

“Yes, householder.”

“Then may Master Isidatta delight in the charming Wild Mango Grove at Macchikāsaṇḍa. I will be responsible for your robes, almsfood, lodgings, & medicinal requisites.”

“That is admirably said, householder.”

Then Citta the householder—having delighted & rejoiced in the Venerable Isidatta’s words—with his own hand served & satisfied the senior monks with choice staple & non-staple foods. When the senior monks had finished eating and had rinsed their bowls & hands, they got up from their seats and left.

Then the most senior monk said to the Venerable Isidatta: “It was excellent, friend Isidatta, the way that question inspired you to answer. It didn’t inspire an answer in me at all. Whenever a similar question comes up again, may it inspire you to answer as you did just now.”

Then Ven. Isidatta—having set his lodging in order and taking his bowl & robes—left Macchikāsaṇḍa. And in leaving Macchikāsaṇḍa, he was gone for good and never returned.

See also: [SN 12:15](#); [SN 41:4](#); AN 8:30; Ud 3:1; Thag 6:10

About Mahaka

Mahaka Sutta (SN 41:4)

On one occasion a large number of senior monks were staying near Macchikāsaṇḍa in the Wild Mango Grove. Then Citta the householder went to them and, on arrival, having bowed down to them, sat to one side. As he was sitting there, he said to them: “Venerable sirs, may the senior monks acquiesce to tomorrow’s meal from me.”

The senior monks acquiesced by silence. Then Citta the householder, sensing the senior monks’ acquiescence, got up from his seat and, having bowed down to them, circumambulated them—keeping them to his right—and left.

When the night had passed, the senior monks adjusted their lower robes in the early morning and, taking their bowls & outer robes, went to Citta's residence. There they sat down on the appointed seats. Then Citta the householder, with his own hand, served & satisfied them with exquisite milk-rice mixed with ghee. When the senior monks had finished eating and had rinsed their bowls & hands, they got up from their seats and left. Citta the householder, having said, "Give away the rest," followed behind the senior monks.

Now on that occasion it was hot & sweltering. The senior monks went along with their bodies melting, as it were, from the meal they had finished. And on that occasion Ven. Mahaka was the most junior of all the monks in that Saṅgha. He said to the senior monk: "Wouldn't it be nice, venerable elder, if a cool wind were to blow, and there were a thundering cloud, and rain would fall in scattered drops?"

"Yes, friend Mahaka, that would be nice..."

Then Ven. Mahaka willed a psychic feat such that a cool wind blew, a thundering cloud developed, and the rain fell in scattered drops. The thought occurred to Citta the householder, "Such is the psychic power of the most junior of all the monks in this Saṅgha!"

Then when Ven. Mahaka reached the monastery/park, he said to the senior monk, "Is that enough, venerable sir?"

"That's enough, friend Mahaka—what you have done, what you have offered."

Then the monks went to their separate dwellings, and Ven. Mahaka went to his.

Then Citta the householder went to Ven. Mahaka and, on arrival, having bowed down to him, sat to one side. As he was sitting there he said to him, "It would be good, venerable sir, if Master Mahaka would show me a superior human attainment, a miracle of psychic power."

"In that case, householder, spread out your upper robe on the porch and put a pile of grass on it."

Responding, "As you say, venerable sir," to Ven. Mahaka, Citta the householder spread out his upper robe on the porch and put a pile of grass on it.

Then Ven. Mahaka, having entered his dwelling and bolted the door, willed a psychic feat such that flame shot through the keyhole and the space around the door, burning up the grass but not the robe.

Then Citta the householder, having shaken out the robe, stood to one side—in awe, his hair standing on end. Ven. Mahaka came out of his dwelling and said, “Is that enough, householder?”

“That’s enough, venerable sir—what you have done, what you have offered. May Master Mahaka delight in the charming Wild Mango Grove at Macchikāsaṇḍa. I will be responsible for your robes, almsfood, lodgings, & medicinal requisites.”

“That is admirably said, householder.”

Then Ven. Mahaka—having set his lodging in order and taking his bowl & robes—left Macchikāsaṇḍa. And in leaving Macchikāsaṇḍa, he was gone for good and never returned.¹

NOTE

1. A rule in the Pātimokkha—Pācittiya 8—forbids monks from displaying feats of psychic power to lay people. There is no way of knowing whether the incident in this sutta predated or postdated the formulation of that rule, but this story illustrates the reason for that rule: If word of Ven. Mahaka’s display of psychic power became known among lay people, they would pester him for more displays and he would know no peace. At the same time, he would attract their alms, perhaps to the detriment of the other monks. That’s why he had to leave for good.

See also: AN 6:41

*With Kāmaabhū (On the Cessation of Perception
& Feeling)*

Kāmaabhū Sutta (SN 41:6)

This discourse is a slightly expanded version of a discussion of the same topic given in MN 44.

On one occasion Ven. Kāmabhū was staying near Macchikāsaṇḍa in the Wild Mango Grove. Then Citta the householder went to him and, on arrival, having bowed down to him, sat to one side. As he was sitting there, he said to Ven. Kāmabhū, “Venerable sir, how many (types of) fabrications are there?”

“There are three fabrications, householder: bodily-fabrications, verbal fabrications, & mental fabrications.”

“Very good, venerable sir.” And, delighting in and approving of Ven. Kāmabhū’s answer, Citta asked him a further question: “But what are bodily-fabrications? What are verbal fabrications? What are mental fabrications?”

“In-&-out breaths are bodily fabrications. Directed thought & evaluation are verbal fabrications. Perceptions & feelings are mental fabrications.”

“Very good, venerable sir.” And, delighting in and approving of Ven. Kāmabhū’s answer, Citta asked him a further question: “But why are in-&-out breaths bodily fabrications? Why are directed thought & evaluation verbal fabrications? Why are perceptions & feelings mental fabrications?”

“In-&-out breaths are bodily; these are things tied up with the body. That’s why in-&-out breaths are bodily fabrications. Having first directed one’s thoughts and made an evaluation, one then breaks out into speech. That’s why directed thought & evaluation are verbal fabrications. Perceptions & feelings are mental; these are things tied up with the mind. That’s why perceptions & feelings are mental fabrications.”

“Very good, venerable sir.” And, delighting in and approving of Ven. Kāmabhū’s answer, Citta asked him a further question: “Now, how does the attainment of the cessation of perception & feeling come about?”

“The thought does not occur to a monk as he is attaining the cessation of perception & feeling that ‘I am about to attain the cessation of perception & feeling’ or that ‘I am attaining the cessation of perception & feeling’ or that ‘I have attained the cessation of perception

& feeling.' Instead, the way his mind has previously been developed leads him to that state."

"Very good, venerable sir." And, delighting in and approving of Ven. Kāmaabhū's answer, Citta asked him a further question: "When a monk is attaining the cessation of perception & feeling, which things cease first: bodily fabrications, verbal fabrications, or mental fabrications?"

"When a monk is attaining the cessation of perception & feeling, verbal fabrications cease first, then bodily fabrications, then mental fabrications."¹

"Very good, venerable sir." And, delighting in and approving of Ven. Kāmaabhū's answer, Citta asked him a further question: "What is the difference between a monk who has died & passed away and a monk who has attained the cessation of perception & feeling?"

"In the case of a monk who has died & passed away, his bodily fabrication has ceased & subsided, verbal fabrication has ceased & subsided, mental fabrication has ceased & subsided, his life force is totally ended, his heat is dissipated, and his faculties are shut down. But in the case of a monk who has attained the cessation of perception & feeling, his bodily fabrication has ceased & subsided, verbal fabrication has ceased & subsided, mental fabrication has ceased & subsided, his life force is not ended, his heat is not dissipated, and his faculties are bright & clear. This is the difference between a monk who has died & passed away and a monk who has attained the cessation of perception & feeling."²

"Very good, venerable sir." And, delighting in and approving of Ven. Kāmaabhū's answer, Citta asked him a further question: "Now, how does emergence from the cessation of perception & feeling come about?"

"The thought does not occur to a monk as he is emerging from the cessation of perception & feeling that 'I am about to emerge from the cessation of perception & feeling' or that 'I am emerging from the cessation of perception & feeling' or that 'I have emerged from the cessation of perception & feeling.' Instead, the way his mind has previously been developed leads him to that state."

“Very good, venerable sir.” And, delighting in and approving of Ven. Kāmabhū’s answer, Citta asked him a further question: “When a monk is emerging from the cessation of perception & feeling, which things arise first: bodily fabrications, verbal fabrications, or mental fabrications?”

“When a monk is emerging from the cessation of perception & feeling, mental fabrications arise first, then bodily fabrications, then verbal fabrications.”

“Very good, venerable sir.” And, delighting in and approving of Ven. Kāmabhū’s answer, Citta asked him a further question: “When a monk has emerged from the cessation of perception & feeling, how many contacts make contact?”

“When a monk has emerged from the cessation of perception & feeling, three contacts make contact: contact with emptiness, contact with the themeless, & contact with the undirected.”³

“Very good, venerable sir.” And, delighting in and approving of Ven. Kāmabhū’s answer, Citta asked him a further question: “When a monk has emerged from the cessation of perception & feeling, to what does his mind lean, to what does it tend, to what does it incline?”

“When a monk has emerged from the cessation of perception & feeling, his mind leans to seclusion, tends to seclusion, inclines to seclusion.”⁴

“Very good, venerable sir.” And, delighting in and approving of Ven. Kāmabhū’s answer, Citta asked him a further question: “How many mental qualities are of great help in the attainment of the cessation of perception & feeling?”

“Actually, householder, you have asked last what should have been asked first. Nevertheless, I will answer you. Two qualities are of great help in the attainment of the cessation of perception & feeling: tranquility & insight.”⁵

NOTES

1. According to [SN 36:11](#), verbal fabrication grows still on attaining the second jhāna; bodily fabrication grows still on attaining the fourth jhāna;

mental fabrication grows still on attaining the cessation of perception & feeling.

2. This question and answer are not included in MN 44.

3. Emptiness, the themeless, & the undirected are names for a state of concentration that lies on the threshold of unbinding. They differ only in how they are approached. According to the commentary, they color one's first apprehension of unbinding: a meditator who has been focusing on the theme of inconstancy will first apprehend unbinding as themeless; one who has been focusing on the theme of stress will first apprehend it as undirected; one who has been focusing on the theme of not-self will first apprehend it as emptiness.

4. According to the commentary, "seclusion" here stands for unbinding. On emerging from the cessation of perception & feeling, and having had contact with emptiness/the themeless/the undirected, the mind inclines naturally to a direct experience of unbinding.

5. This question and answer are also not included in MN 44.

To Godatta (On Awareness-release)

Godatta Sutta (SN 41:7)

On one occasion Ven. Godatta was staying near Macchikāsaṇḍa in the Wild Mango Grove. Then Citta the householder went to him and, on arrival, having bowed down to him, sat to one side. As he was sitting there, Ven. Godatta said to him, "Householder, the immeasurable awareness-release, the nothingness awareness-release, the emptiness awareness-release, the themeless awareness-release: Are these phenomena different in meaning and different in name, or are they one in meaning and different only in name?"

"Venerable sir, there is a line of reasoning by which these phenomena are different in meaning and different in name, and there is a line of reasoning by which they are one in meaning and different only in name.

"And what is the line of reasoning by which they are different in meaning and different in name? There is the case where a monk keeps

pervading the first direction [the east] with an awareness imbued with goodwill, likewise the second, likewise the third, likewise the fourth. Thus above, below, & all around, everywhere, in its entirety, he keeps pervading the all-encompassing cosmos with an awareness imbued with goodwill—abundant, enlarged, immeasurable, without hostility, without ill will. He keeps pervading the first direction with an awareness imbued with compassion... empathetic joy... equanimity, likewise the second, likewise the third, likewise the fourth. Thus above, below, & all around, everywhere, in its entirety, he keeps pervading the all-encompassing cosmos with an awareness imbued with equanimity—abundant, enlarged, immeasurable, without hostility, without ill will. This is called the immeasurable awareness-release.

“And what is the nothingness awareness-release? There is the case where a monk, with the complete transcending of the dimension of the infinitude of consciousness, thinking, ‘There is nothing,’ enters & remains in the dimension of nothingness. This is called the nothingness awareness-release.

“And what is the emptiness awareness-release? There is the case where a monk, having gone into the wilderness, to the root of a tree, or into an empty dwelling, considers this: ‘This is empty of self or of anything pertaining to self.’¹ This is called the emptiness awareness-release.

“And what is the themeless awareness-release? There is the case where a monk, not attending to any theme (object of awareness) enters & remains in the themeless concentration of awareness.² This is called the themeless awareness-release.

“This, venerable sir, is the line of reasoning by which these phenomena are different in meaning and different in name.

“And what, venerable sir, is the line of reasoning by which they are one in meaning and different only in name? Passion, venerable sir, is a making of measurement, aversion a making of measurement, delusion a making of measurement. For a monk whose effluents are ended these have been abandoned, their root destroyed, made like a palmyra stump, deprived of the conditions of development, not destined for future arising. To the extent that there are immeasurable awareness-releases, the

unprovokable awareness-release is declared supreme. And that unprovokable awareness-release is empty of passion, empty of aversion, empty of delusion.

“Passion is a something, aversion a something, delusion a something. For a monk whose effluents are ended these have been abandoned, their root destroyed, made like a palmyra stump, deprived of the conditions of development, not destined for future arising. To the extent that there are nothingness awareness-releases, the unprovokable awareness-release is declared supreme. And that unprovokable awareness-release is empty of passion, empty of aversion, empty of delusion.

“Passion is a making of themes, aversion a making of themes, delusion a making of themes. For a monk whose effluents are ended these have been abandoned, their root destroyed, made like a palmyra stump, deprived of the conditions of development, not destined for future arising. To the extent that there are themeless awareness-releases, the unprovokable awareness-release is declared supreme. And that unprovokable awareness-release is empty of passion, empty of aversion, empty of delusion.

“This, venerable sir, is the line of reasoning by which these phenomena are one in meaning and different only in name.”

“It’s a gain for you, householder, a great gain: what your eye of discernment plumbs in the deep word of the Buddha.”

NOTES

1. See MN 106
2. See MN 121.

See also: MN 43

Sick (Citta the Householder’s Last Hours) *Gilāna Sutta (SN 41:10)*

On that occasion Citta the householder was diseased, in pain, severely ill. Then a large number of garden deities, forest deities, tree deities, and

deities inhabiting herbs, grasses, & forest giants assembled and said to him: “Make a wish, householder: ‘In the future, may I become a king, a wheel-turning monarch!’”

When this was said, Citta the householder said to the garden deities, forest deities, tree deities, and deities inhabiting herbs, grasses, & forest giants: “Even that is inconstant; even that is impermanent; one must abandon even that when one passes on.”

When this was said, Citta the householder’s friends & companions, relatives and kinsmen, said to him: “Steady your mindfulness, master. Don’t ramble.”

“What did I say that you say to me: ‘Steady your mindfulness, master. Don’t ramble?’”

“You said: ‘Even that is inconstant; even that is impermanent; one must abandon even that when one passes on.’”

“That was because garden deities, forest deities, tree deities, and deities inhabiting herbs, grasses, & forest giants have assembled and said to me: ‘Make a wish, householder: “In the future, may I become a king, a wheel-turning monarch!”’ And I said to them: ‘Even that is inconstant; even that is impermanent; one must abandon even that when one passes on.’”

“But what compelling reason do those garden deities, forest deities, tree deities, and deities inhabiting herbs, grasses, & forest giants see, master, that they say to you, ‘Make a wish, householder: “In the future, may I become a king, a wheel-turning monarch!”’?”

“It occurs to them: ‘This Citta the householder is virtuous, of admirable character. If he should wish: “In the future, may I become a king, a wheel-turning monarch!”—then, as he is virtuous, this wish of his would succeed because of the purity of his virtue. A righteous one, he will wield righteous power.’¹ Seeing this compelling reason, they assembled and said: ‘Make a wish, householder: “In the future, may I become a king, a wheel-turning monarch!”’ And I said to them: ‘Even that is inconstant; even that is impermanent; one must abandon even that when one passes on.’”

“Then, master, instruct us, too.”

“Then you should train yourselves: ‘We will be endowed with verified confidence in the Buddha: “Indeed, the Blessed One [the Buddha] is worthy & rightly self-awakened, consummate in clear-knowing & conduct, well-gone, an expert with regard to the cosmos, unexcelled trainer of people fit to be tamed, teacher of devas & human beings, awakened, blessed.”

“We will be endowed with verified confidence in the Dhamma: “The Dhamma is well taught by the Blessed One, to be seen here & now, timeless, inviting verification, pertinent, to be experienced by the observant for themselves.”

“We will be possessed of verified confidence in the Saṅgha: “The Saṅgha of the Blessed One’s disciples who have practiced well...who have practiced straight-forwardly...who have practiced methodically...who have practiced masterfully—in other words, the four types (of noble disciples) when taken as pairs, the eight when taken as individual types—they are the Saṅgha of the Blessed One’s disciples: deserving of gifts, deserving of hospitality, deserving of offerings, deserving of respect, the incomparable field of merit for the world.”

“Whatever there may be in our family that can be given away, all that will be shared unstintingly with virtuous ones who are of admirable character.’ That’s how you should train yourselves.”

Then, having enjoined his friends & colleagues, his relatives & kinsmen, to place confidence in the Buddha, Dhamma, & Saṅgha; having exhorted them to undertake generosity, Citta the householder passed away.

NOTE

1. The translation of this sentence follows the reading in the Royal Thai edition of the Canon: *Dhammiko dhammikaṃ balaṃ anuppadassati*.

To Tālapuṭa the Actor

Tālapuṭa Sutta (SN 42:2)

On one occasion the Blessed One was staying near Rājagaha in the Bamboo Forest, the Squirrel Sanctuary. Then Tālapuṭa, the head of an acting troupe, went to the Blessed One and, on arrival, having bowed down to him, sat to one side. As he was sitting there he said to the Blessed One: “Venerable sir, I have heard that it has been passed down by the ancient teaching lineage of actors that ‘When an actor on the stage, in the midst of a festival, makes people laugh & gives them delight with his imitation of reality, then with the breakup of the body, after death, he is reborn in the company of the laughing devas.’ What does the Blessed One have to say about that?”

“Enough, headman, put that aside. Don’t ask me that.”

A second time... A third time Tālapuṭa, the head of an acting troupe, said: “Venerable sir, I have heard that it has been passed down by the ancient teaching lineage of actors that ‘When an actor on the stage, in the midst of a festival, makes people laugh & gives them delight with his imitation of reality, then with the breakup of the body, after death, he is reborn in the company of the laughing devas.’ What does the Blessed One have to say about that?”

“Apparently, headman, I haven’t been able to get past you by saying, ‘Enough, headman, put that aside. Don’t ask me that.’ So I will simply answer you. Any beings who are not devoid of passion to begin with, who are bound by the bond of passion, focus with even more passion on things inspiring passion presented by an actor on stage in the midst of a festival. Any beings who are not devoid of aversion to begin with, who are bound by the bond of aversion, focus with even more aversion on things inspiring aversion presented by an actor on stage in the midst of a festival. Any beings who are not devoid of delusion to begin with, who are bound by the bond of delusion, focus with even more delusion on things inspiring delusion presented by an actor on stage in the midst of a festival. Thus the actor—himself intoxicated & heedless, having made others intoxicated & heedless—with the breakup of the body, after death, is reborn in what is called the hell of laughter. But if he holds such a view as this: ‘When an actor on the stage, in the midst of a festival, makes people laugh & gives them delight with his imitation of reality, then with the breakup of the body, after death, he is reborn in the

company of the laughing devas,’ that is his wrong view. Now, there are two destinations for a person with wrong view, I tell you: either hell or the animal womb.”

When this was said, Tālapuṭa, the head of an acting troupe, sobbed & burst into tears. (The Blessed One said:) “That is what I couldn’t get past you by saying, ‘Enough, headman, put that aside. Don’t ask me that.’”

“I’m not crying, venerable sir, because of what the Blessed One said to me, but simply because I have been deceived, cheated, & fooled for a long time by that ancient teaching lineage of actors who said: ‘When an actor on the stage, in the midst of a festival, makes people laugh & gives them delight with his imitation of reality, then with the breakup of the body, after death, he is reborn in the company of the laughing devas.’

“Magnificent, Master Gotama! Magnificent! Just as if he were to place upright what was overturned, to reveal what was hidden, to show the way to one who was lost, or to carry a lamp into the dark so that those with eyes could see forms, in the same way has Master Gotama—through many lines of reasoning—made the Dhamma clear. I go to Master Gotama for refuge, to the Dhamma, & to the Saṅgha of monks. Let me obtain the Going-forth in Master Gotama’s presence, let me obtain Acceptance (into the Saṅgha of monks).”

Then Tālapuṭa, the head of an acting troupe, received the Going-forth in the Blessed One’s presence, he gained the Acceptance. And not long after his Acceptance—dwelling alone, secluded, heedful, ardent, & resolute—he in no long time entered & remained in the supreme goal of the holy life, for which clansmen rightly go forth from home into homelessness, directly knowing & realizing it for himself in the here & now. He knew: “Birth is ended, the holy life fulfilled, the task done. There is nothing further for the sake of this world.” And so Ven. Tālapuṭa became another one of the arahants.

To Yodhājīva (The Professional Warrior)

Yodhājīva Sutta (SN 42:3)

Then Yodhājīva (Professional Warrior) the headman went to the Blessed One and, on arrival, having bowed down to him, sat to one side. As he was sitting there he said to the Blessed One: “Venerable sir, I have heard that it has been passed down by the ancient teaching lineage of professional warriors that ‘When a professional warrior strives & exerts himself in battle, if others then strike him down & slay him while he is striving & exerting himself in battle, then with the breakup of the body, after death, he is reborn in the company of devas slain in battle.’ What does the Blessed One have to say about that?”

“Enough, headman, put that aside. Don’t ask me that.”

A second time... A third time Yodhājīva the headman said: “Venerable sir, I have heard that it has been passed down by the ancient teaching lineage of professional warriors that ‘When a professional warrior strives & exerts himself in battle, if others then strike him down & slay him while he is striving & exerting himself in battle, then with the breakup of the body, after death, he is reborn in the company of devas slain in battle.’ What does the Blessed One have to say about that?”

“Apparently, headman, I haven’t been able to get past you by saying, ‘Enough, headman, put that aside. Don’t ask me that.’ So I will simply answer you. When a professional warrior strives & exerts himself in battle, his mind is already seized, debased, & misdirected by the thought: ‘May these beings be struck down or slaughtered or annihilated or destroyed. May they not exist.’ If others then strike him down & slay him while he is thus striving & exerting himself in battle, then with the breakup of the body, after death, he is reborn in the hell called the realm of those slain in battle. But if he holds such a view as this: ‘When a professional warrior strives & exerts himself in battle, if others then strike him down & slay him while he is striving & exerting himself in battle, then with the breakup of the body, after death, he is reborn in the company of devas slain in battle,’ that is his wrong view. Now, there are two destinations for a person with wrong view, I tell you: either hell or the animal womb.”

When this was said, Yodhājīva the headman sobbed & burst into tears. (The Blessed One said:) “That is what I couldn’t get past you by saying, ‘Enough, headman, put that aside. Don’t ask me that.’”

“I’m not crying, venerable sir, because of what the Blessed One said to me, but simply because I have been deceived, cheated, & fooled for a long time by that ancient teaching lineage of professional warriors who said: ‘When a professional warrior strives & exerts himself in battle, if others then strike him down & slay him while he is striving & exerting himself in battle, then with the breakup of the body, after death, he is reborn in the company of devas slain in battle.’

“Magnificent, venerable sir! Magnificent! Just as if he were to place upright what was overturned, to reveal what was hidden, to show the way to one who was lost, or to carry a lamp into the dark so that those with eyes could see forms, in the same way has the Blessed One—through many lines of reasoning—made the Dhamma clear. I go to the Blessed One for refuge, to the Dhamma, and to the Saṅgha of monks. May the Blessed One remember me as a lay follower who has gone to him for refuge, from this day forward, for life.”

See also: MN 135; [SN 3:14](#)-15; AN 5:117; Dhṛp 129–134; Sn 4:15

(Brahmans) of the Western Land *Paccha-bhūmika Sutta (SN 42:6)*

On one occasion the Blessed One was staying near Nāḷandā in the Pāvārika Mango Grove. Then Asibandhakaputta the headman went to the Blessed One and on arrival, having bowed down to him, sat to one side. As he was sitting there he said to the Blessed One: “The brahmins of the Western lands, lord—those who carry water pots, wear garlands of water plants, purify with water, & worship fire—can take (the spirit of) a dead person, lift it out, instruct it, & send it to heaven. But the Blessed One, worthy & rightly self-awakened, can arrange it so that all the world, at the break-up of the body, after death, reappears in a good destination, a heavenly world.”

“Very well, then, headman, I will question you on this matter. Answer as you see fit. What do you think? There is the case where a man is one who takes life, steals, indulges in illicit sex; is a liar, one who speaks

divisive speech, harsh speech, & idle chatter; is greedy, bears thoughts of ill-will, & holds to wrong views. Then a great crowd of people, gathering & congregating, would pray, praise, & circumambulate with their hands palm-to-palm over the heart (saying,) ‘May this man, at the break-up of the body, after death, reappear in a good destination, a heavenly world!’ What do you think? Would that man—because of the prayers, praise, & circumambulation of that great crowd of people—at the break-up of the body, after death, reappear in a good destination, a heavenly world?”

“No, lord.”

“Suppose a man were to throw a large boulder into a deep lake of water, and a great crowd of people, gathering & congregating, would pray, praise, & circumambulate with their hands palm-to-palm over the heart (saying,) ‘Rise up, O boulder! Come floating up, O boulder! Come float to the shore, O boulder!’ What do you think? Would that boulder—because of the prayers, praise, & circumambulation of that great crowd of people—rise up, come floating up, or come float to the shore?”

“No, lord.”

“So it is with any man who takes life, steals, indulges in illicit sex; is a liar, one who speaks divisive speech, harsh speech, & idle chatter; is greedy, bears thoughts of ill-will, & holds to wrong views. Even though a great crowd of people, gathering & congregating, would pray, praise, & circumambulate with their hands palm-to-palm over the heart—(saying,) ‘May this man, at the break-up of the body, after death, reappear in a good destination, a heavenly world!’—still, at the break-up of the body, after death, he would reappear in a plane of deprivation, a bad destination, a lower realm, hell.

“Now what do you think? There is the case where a man is one who refrains from taking life, from stealing, & from indulging in illicit sex; he refrains from lying, from speaking divisive speech, from harsh speech, & from idle chatter; he is not greedy, bears no thoughts of ill-will, & holds to right view. Then a great crowd of people, gathering & congregating, would pray, praise, & circumambulate with their hands palm-to-palm over the heart (saying,) ‘May this man, at the break-up of the body, after death, reappear in a plane of deprivation, a bad destination, a lower realm, hell!’ What do you think? Would that man—

because of the prayers, praise, & circumambulation of that great crowd of people—at the break-up of the body, after death, reappear in a plane of deprivation, a bad destination, a lower realm, hell?”

“No, lord.”

“Suppose a man were to throw a jar of ghee or a jar of oil into a deep lake of water, where it would break. There the shards & jar-fragments would go down, while the ghee or oil would come up. Then a great crowd of people, gathering & congregating, would pray, praise, & circumambulate with their hands palm-to-palm over the heart (saying,) ‘Sink, O ghee/oil! Submerge, O ghee/oil! Go down, O ghee/oil!’ What do you think? Would that ghee/oil, because of the prayers, praise, & circumambulation of that great crowd of people sink, submerge, or go down?”

“No, lord.”

“So it is with any man who refrains from taking life, from stealing, & from indulging in illicit sex; refrains from lying, from speaking divisive speech, from harsh speech, & from idle chatter; is not greedy, bears no thoughts of ill-will, & holds to right view. Even though a great crowd of people, gathering & congregating, would pray, praise, & circumambulate with their hands palm-to-palm over the heart—(saying,) ‘May this man, at the break-up of the body, after death, reappear in a plane of deprivation, a bad destination, a lower realm, hell!’—still, at the break-up of the body, after death, he would reappear in a good destination, a heavenly world.”

When this was said, Asibandhakaputta the headman said to the Blessed One: “Magnificent, lord! Magnificent! Just as if he were to place upright what was overturned, to reveal what was hidden, to show the way to one who was lost, or to carry a lamp into the dark so that those with eyes could see forms, in the same way has the Blessed One—through many lines of reasoning—made the Dhamma clear. I go to the Blessed One for refuge, to the Dhamma, & to the Saṅgha of monks. May the Blessed One remember me as a lay follower who has gone for refuge from this day forward, for life.”

See also: MN 126; [SN 22:101](#); AN 5:43; AN 8:40; AN 10:176; Dhṛp 165

Teaching

Desanā Sutta (SN 42:7)

On one occasion the Blessed One was staying near Nālandā in the Pāvārika Mango Grove. Then Asibandhakaputta the headman went to the Blessed One and on arrival, having bowed down to him, sat to one side. As he was sitting there he said to the Blessed One, “Lord, doesn’t the Blessed One dwell with sympathy for the benefit of all beings?”

“Yes, headman, the Tathāgata dwells with sympathy for the benefit of all beings.”

“Then why is it that the Blessed One teaches the Dhamma with full attentiveness to some, and not with full attentiveness to others?”

“Very well then, headman, I will cross-question you on this matter. Answer as you see fit. What do you think? There is the case where a farming householder has three fields: one excellent field, one middling, and one poor—sandy, salty, with bad soil. What do you think? If that farming householder wanted to sow seed, where would he sow the seed first: in the excellent field, in the middling field, or in the poor field—sandy, salty, with bad soil?”

“If that farming householder wanted to sow seed, lord, he would sow the seed first in the excellent field. Having sown it there, he would sow it in the middling field. Having sown it there, he might sow it in the poor field—sandy, salty, with bad soil—or he might not. Why is that? It would at least go toward cattle fodder.”

“In the same way, headman, like the excellent field are the monks & nuns to me. I teach them the Dhamma that is admirable in the beginning, admirable in the middle, admirable in the end. I expound to them the holy life both in its particulars & in its meaning, entirely complete, surpassingly pure. Why is that? Because they live with me as their island, with me as their cave, with me as their shelter, with me as their refuge.¹

“Like the middling field are the male & female lay followers to me. I teach them the Dhamma that is admirable in the beginning, admirable in the middle, admirable in the end. I expound to them the holy life both in its particulars & in its meaning, entirely complete, surpassingly pure. Why is that? Because they live with me as their island, with me as their cave, with me as their shelter, with me as their refuge.

“Like the poor field—sandy, salty, with bad soil—are the followers of other sects to me: contemplatives, brahmans, & wanderers. I teach them the Dhamma that is admirable in the beginning, admirable in the middle, admirable in the end. I expound to them the holy life both in its particulars & in its meaning, entirely complete, surpassingly pure. Why is that? (I think,) ‘Perhaps they might understand even one sentence. That will be for their long-term benefit & happiness.’

“Suppose, headman, that a man had three waterpots: one uncracked that doesn’t let water seep out, one uncracked that lets water seep out, and one cracked that lets water seep out. What do you think? If that man wanted to store water, in which pot would he store it first: the uncracked one that doesn’t let water seep out, the uncracked one that lets water seep out, or the cracked one that lets water seep out?”

“If that man wanted to store water, lord, he would store it first in the uncracked waterpot that doesn’t let water seep out. Having stored it there, he would store it in the uncracked waterpot that lets water seep out. Having stored it there, he might store it in the cracked waterpot that lets water seep out, or he might not. Why is that? At least it could go toward washing dishes.”

“In the same way, headman, like the uncracked waterpot that doesn’t let water seep out are the monks & nuns to me. I teach them the Dhamma that is admirable in the beginning, admirable in the middle, admirable in the end. I expound to them the holy life both in its particulars & in its meaning, entirely complete, surpassingly pure. Why is that? Because they live with me as their island, with me as their cave, with me as their shelter, with me as their refuge.

“Like the uncracked waterpot that lets water seep out are the male & female lay followers to me. I teach them the Dhamma that is admirable in the beginning, admirable in the middle, admirable in the end. I

expound to them the holy life both in its particulars & in its meaning, entirely complete, surpassingly pure. Why is that? Because they live with me as their island, with me as their cave, with me as their shelter, with me as their refuge.

“Like the cracked waterpot that lets water seep out are the followers of other sects to me: contemplatives, brahmans, & wanderers. I teach them the Dhamma that is admirable in the beginning, admirable in the middle, admirable in the end. I expound to them the holy life both in its particulars & in its meaning, entirely complete, surpassingly pure. Why is that? (I think,) ‘Perhaps they might understand even one sentence. That will be for their long-term benefit & happiness.’”

When this was said, Asibandhakaputta the headman said to the Blessed One: “Magnificent, lord! Magnificent! Just as if he were to place upright what was overturned, to reveal what was hidden, to show the way to one who was lost, or to carry a lamp into the dark so that those with eyes could see forms, in the same way has the Blessed One—through many lines of reasoning—made the Dhamma clear. I go to the Blessed One for refuge, to the Dhamma, & to the Saṅgha of monks. May the Blessed One remember me as a lay follower who has gone for refuge from this day forward, for life.”

NOTE

1. On the Buddha’s understanding of his responsibilities as a teacher, see the essay, “Beyond All Directions.”

See also: DN 12; MN 35–36; MN 107; MN 137; AN 3:22; AN 3:62; AN 4:111; AN 4:113; Dhṛp 190–192

The Conch Trumpet *Saṅkha Sutta (SN 42:8)*

Although the Jains, like the Buddhists, teach a doctrine of the moral consequences of actions, the teachings of the two traditions differ in many important details. This discourse points out two of the major points where the

Buddhist teaching is distinctive: its understanding of the complexity of the kammic process, and its application of that understanding to the psychology of teaching. The Buddha shows that a simplistic, fatalistic view of the kammic process is logically inconsistent, and also leads to unfortunate results for any person who, with a background of bad kamma, believes in it. The actual complexity of kamma, however, allows for a way in which past evil deeds can be overcome: through refraining from evil now and into the future, and through developing expansive mind-states of goodwill, compassion, empathetic joy, & equanimity. In such an expansive mind state, the unavoidable consequences of past evil actions count for next to nothing. The Buddha also shows how his method of teaching is better than that of the Jains in that it actually can help free the mind from debilitating feelings of guilt and remorse, and lead to the overcoming of past kamma.

For a fuller discussion of the complexity of the kammic process, see The Wings to awakening, Section I/B.

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On one occasion the Blessed One was staying near Nāḷandā in the Pāvārika Mango Grove. Then Asibandhakaputta the headman, a disciple of the Nigaṇṭhas, went to the Blessed One and on arrival, having bowed down to him, sat to one side. As he was sitting there the Blessed One said to him: “Headman, how does Nigaṇṭha Nāṭaputta teach the Dhamma to his disciples?”

“Nigaṇṭha Nāṭaputta teaches the Dhamma to his disciples in this way, lord: ‘All those who take life are destined for a plane of deprivation, are destined for hell. All those who steal... All those who indulge in illicit sex... All those who tell lies are destined for a plane of deprivation, are destined for hell. Whatever one keeps doing frequently, by that is one led (to a state of rebirth).’ That’s how Nigaṇṭha Nāṭaputta teaches the Dhamma to his disciples.”

“If it’s true that ‘Whatever one keeps doing frequently, by that is one led (to a state of rebirth),’ then no one is destined for a plane of deprivation or destined to hell in line with Nigaṇṭha Nāṭaputta’s words. What do you think, headman? If a man is one who takes life, then taking into consideration time spent doing & not doing, whether by day or by

night, which time is more: the time he spends taking life or the time he spends not taking life?”

“If a man is one who takes life, lord, then taking into consideration time spent doing & not doing, whether by day or by night, then the time he spends taking life is less, and the time he spends not taking life is certainly more. If it’s true that ‘Whatever one keeps doing frequently, by that is one led (to a state of rebirth),’ then no one is destined for a plane of deprivation or destined to hell in line with Nigaṇṭha Nāṭaputta’s words.”

“What do you think, headman? If a man is one who steals... indulges in illicit sex... tells lies, then taking into consideration time spent doing & not doing, whether by day or by night, which time is more: the time he spends telling lies or the time he spends not telling lies?”

“If a man is one who tells lies, lord, then taking into consideration time spent doing & not doing, whether by day or by night, then the time he spends telling lies is less, and the time he spends not telling lies is certainly more. If it’s true that ‘Whatever one keeps doing frequently, by that is one led (to a state of rebirth),’ then no one is destined for a plane of deprivation or destined to hell in line with Nigaṇṭha Nāṭaputta’s words.”

“There’s the case, headman, where a certain teacher holds this doctrine, holds this view: ‘All those who take life are destined for a plane of deprivation, are destined for hell. All those who steal... All those who indulge in illicit sex... All those who tell lies are destined for a plane of deprivation, are destined for hell.’ A disciple has faith in that teacher, and the thought occurs to him, ‘Our teacher holds this doctrine, holds this view: “All those who take life are destined for a plane of deprivation, are destined for hell.” There are living beings that I have killed. I, too, am destined for a plane of deprivation, am destined for hell.’ He fastens onto that view. If he doesn’t abandon that doctrine, doesn’t abandon that state of mind, doesn’t relinquish that view, then as if he were to be carried off, he would thus be placed in hell.

“(The thought occurs to him,) ‘Our teacher holds this doctrine, holds this view: ‘All those who steal... All those who indulge in illicit sex... All those who tell lies are destined for a plane of deprivation, are destined

for hell? There are lies that I have told. I, too, am destined for a plane of deprivation, am destined for hell? He fastens onto that view. If he doesn't abandon that doctrine, doesn't abandon that state of mind, doesn't relinquish that view, then as if he were to be carried off, he would thus be placed in hell.

“There is the case, headman, where a Tathāgata appears in the world, worthy & rightly self-awakened, consummate in clear-knowing & conduct, well-gone, an expert with regard to the cosmos, unexcelled trainer of people fit to be tamed, teacher of devas & human beings, awakened, blessed. He, in various ways, criticizes & censures the taking of life, and says, ‘Abstain from taking life.’ He criticizes & censures stealing, and says, ‘Abstain from stealing.’ He criticizes & censures indulging in illicit sex, and says, ‘Abstain from indulging in illicit sex.’ He criticizes & censures the telling of lies, and says, ‘Abstain from the telling of lies.’

“A disciple has faith in that teacher and reflects: ‘The Blessed One in a variety of ways criticizes & censures the taking of life, and says, “Abstain from taking life.” There are living beings that I have killed, to a greater or lesser extent. That was not right. That was not good. But if I become remorseful for that reason, that evil deed of mine will not be undone.’ So, reflecting thus, he abandons right then the taking of life, and in the future refrains from taking life. This is how there comes to be the abandoning of that evil deed. This is how there comes to be the transcending of that evil deed.

“(He reflects:) ‘The Blessed One in a variety of ways criticizes & censures stealing... indulging in illicit sex... the telling of lies, and says, “Abstain from the telling of lies.” There are lies that I have told, to a greater or lesser extent. That was not right. That was not good. But if I become remorseful for that reason, that evil deed of mine will not be undone.’ So, reflecting thus, he abandons right then the telling of lies, and in the future refrains from telling lies. This is how there comes to be the abandoning of that evil deed. This is how there comes to be the transcending of that evil deed.

“Having abandoned the taking of life, he refrains from taking life. Having abandoned stealing, he refrains from stealing. Having

abandoned illicit sex, he refrains from illicit sex. Having abandoned lies, he refrains from lies. Having abandoned divisive speech, he refrains from divisive speech. Having abandoned harsh speech, he refrains from harsh speech. Having abandoned idle chatter, he refrains from idle chatter. Having abandoned covetousness, he becomes uncovetous. Having abandoned ill will & anger, he becomes one with a mind of no ill will. Having abandoned wrong views, he becomes one who has right views.

“That disciple of the noble ones, headman—thus devoid of covetousness, devoid of ill will, unbewildered, alert, mindful—keeps pervading the first direction [the east] with an awareness imbued with goodwill, likewise the second, likewise the third, likewise the fourth. Thus above, below, & all around, everywhere, in its entirety, he keeps pervading the all-encompassing cosmos with an awareness imbued with goodwill—abundant, enlarged, immeasurable, without hostility, without ill will. Just as a strong conch-trumpet blower can notify the four directions without any difficulty, in the same way, when the awareness-release through goodwill is thus developed, thus pursued, any deed done to a limited extent no longer remains there, no longer stays there.

“That disciple of the noble ones—thus devoid of covetousness, devoid of ill will, unbewildered, alert, mindful—keeps pervading the first direction with an awareness imbued with compassion... empathetic joy... equanimity, likewise the second, likewise the third, likewise the fourth. Thus above, below, & all around, everywhere, in its entirety, he keeps pervading the all-encompassing cosmos with an awareness imbued with equanimity—abundant, enlarged, immeasurable, without hostility, without ill will. Just as a strong conch-trumpet blower can notify the four directions without any difficulty, in the same way, when the awareness-release through equanimity is thus developed, thus pursued, any deed done to a limited extent no longer remains there, no longer stays there.”

When this was said, Asibandhakaputta the headman, the disciple of the Nigaṇṭhas, said to the Blessed One: “Magnificent, lord! Magnificent! Just as if he were to place upright what was overturned, to reveal what was hidden, to show the way to one who was lost, or to carry a lamp into

the dark so that those with eyes could see forms, in the same way has the Blessed One—through many lines of reasoning—made the Dhamma clear. I go to the Blessed One for refuge, to the Dhamma, & to the Saṅgha of monks. May the Blessed One remember me as a lay follower who has gone for refuge from this day forward, for life.”

See also: MN 21; [SN 20:4](#); AN 3:62; AN 3:66; AN 3:101; AN 8:40; AN 8:70; AN 11:16

Families

Kula Sutta (SN 42:9)

On one occasion the Blessed One, while wandering on tour among the Kosalans together with a large Saṅgha of monks, arrived at Nālandā. There he stayed at Nālandā in Pāvārika’s Mango Grove.

Now at that time Nālandā was in the midst of famine, a time of scarcity, the crops white with blight and turned to straw. And at that time Nigaṇṭha Nāṭaputta was staying in Nālandā together with a large following of nigaṇṭhas. Then Asibandhakaputta the headman, a disciple of the nigaṇṭhas, went to Nigaṇṭha Nāṭaputta and, on arrival, having bowed down to him, sat to one side. As he was sitting there, Nigaṇṭha Nāṭaputta said to him, “Come, now, headman. Refute the words of the contemplative Gotama, and this admirable report about you will spread afar: ‘The words of the contemplative Gotama—so mighty, so powerful—were refuted by Asibandhakaputta the headman!’”

“But how, lord, will I refute the words of the contemplative Gotama—so mighty, so powerful?”

“Come now, headman. Go to the contemplative Gotama and on arrival say this: ‘Lord, doesn’t the Blessed One in many ways praise kindness, protection, & sympathy for families?’ If the contemplative Gotama, thus asked, answers, ‘Yes, headman, the Tathāgata in many ways praises kindness, protection, & sympathy for families,’ then you should say, ‘Then why, lord, is the Blessed One, together with a large Saṅgha of monks, wandering on tour around Nālandā in the midst of famine, a

time of scarcity, when the crops are white with blight and turned to straw? The Blessed One is practicing for the ruin of families. The Blessed One is practicing for the demise of families. The Blessed One is practicing for the downfall of families? When the contemplative Gotama is asked this two-pronged question by you, he won't be able to swallow it down or spit it up."

Responding, "As you say, lord," Asibandhakaputta the headman got up from his seat, bowed down to Nigaṇṭha Nātaputta, circumambulated him, and then went to the Blessed One. On arrival, he bowed down to the Blessed One and sat to one side. As he was sitting there, he said to the Blessed One, "Lord, doesn't the Blessed One in many ways praise kindness, protection, & sympathy for families?"

"Yes, headman, the Tathāgata in many ways praises kindness, protection, & sympathy for families."

"Then why, lord, is the Blessed One, together with a large Saṅgha of monks, wandering on tour around Nālandā in the midst of famine, a time of scarcity, when the crops are white with blight and turned to straw? The Blessed One is practicing for the ruin of families. The Blessed One is practicing for the demise of families. The Blessed One is practicing for the downfall of families?"

"Headman, recollecting back over 91 eons, I do not know any family to have been brought to downfall through the giving of cooked alms. On the contrary: Whatever families are rich, with much wealth, with many possessions, with a great deal of money, a great many accoutrements of wealth, a great many commodities, all have become so from giving, from truth, from restraint."

"Headman, there are eight causes, eight reasons for the downfall of families. Families go to their downfall because of kings, or families go to their downfall because of thieves, or families go to their downfall because of fire, or families go to their downfall because of floods, or their stored-up treasure disappears, or their mismanaged undertakings go wrong, or in the family a wastrel is born who squanders, scatters, & shatters its wealth, and inconstancy itself is the eighth. These are the eight causes, the eight reasons for the downfall of families. Now, when these eight causes, these eight reasons are to be found, if anyone should

say of me, ‘The Blessed One is practicing for the ruin of families. The Blessed One is practicing for the demise of families. The Blessed One is practicing for the downfall of families’—without abandoning that statement, without abandoning that intent, without relinquishing that view—then as if he were to be carried off, he would thus be placed in hell.”

When this was said, Asibandhakaputta the headman said to the Blessed One: “Magnificent, lord! Magnificent! Just as if he were to place upright what was overturned, to reveal what was hidden, to show the way to one who was lost, or to carry a lamp into the dark so that those with eyes could see forms, in the same way has the Blessed One—through many lines of reasoning—made the Dhamma clear. I go to the Blessed One for refuge, to the Dhamma, & to the Saṅgha of monks. May the Blessed One remember me as a lay follower who has gone for refuge from this day forward, for life.”

See also: MN 58; AN 4:255

To Maṇicūḷaka

Maṇicūḷaka Sutta (SN 42:10)

On one occasion the Blessed One was staying near Rājagaha at the Squirrels’ Sanctuary. Now at that time, when the king’s assembly had gathered and was sitting together in the royal palace, this topic of conversation arose: “Money [lit: gold & silver] is allowable for the Sakyan-son contemplatives. The Sakyan-son contemplatives consent to money. The Sakyan-son contemplatives accept money.”

At that time Maṇicūḷaka the headman was sitting in that assembly, so he said to them, “Don’t say that, masters. Money is not allowable for the Sakyan-son contemplatives. The Sakyan-son contemplatives do not consent to money. The Sakyan-son contemplatives do not accept money. The Sakyan-son contemplatives have given up gold & jewelry, have renounced money.” And he was able to convince the assembly.

Then he went to the Blessed One and, on arrival, having bowed down to him, sat to one side. As he was sitting there he said to the Blessed One, “Just now, lord, when the king’s assembly had gathered and was sitting together in the royal palace, this topic of conversation arose: ‘Money is allowable for the Sakyan-son contemplatives. The Sakyan-son contemplatives consent to money. The Sakyan-son contemplatives accept money.’ When this was said, I said to them, ‘Don’t say that, masters. Money is not allowable for the Sakyan-son contemplatives. The Sakyan-son contemplatives do not consent to money. The Sakyan-son contemplatives do not accept money. The Sakyan-son contemplatives have given up gold & jewelry, have renounced money.’ And I was able to convince the assembly. Answering in this way, lord, am I speaking in line with what the Blessed One has said, am I not misrepresenting the Blessed One with what is unfactual, am I answering in line with the Dhamma so that no one whose thinking is in line with the Dhamma will have grounds for criticizing me?”

“Yes, headman, in answering in this way you are speaking in line with what I have said, you are not misrepresenting me with what is unfactual, and you are answering in line with the Dhamma so that no one whose thinking is in line with the Dhamma will have grounds for criticizing you. For money is not allowable for the Sakyan-son contemplatives, the Sakyan-son contemplatives do not consent to money, the Sakyan-son contemplatives do not accept money, the Sakyan-son contemplatives have given up gold & jewelry, have renounced money. For anyone for whom money is allowable, the five strings of sensuality are also allowable. For anyone for whom the five strings of sensuality are allowable, money is allowable. That you can unequivocally recognize as not the quality of a contemplative, not the quality of a Sakyan son.¹

“Now I do say that thatch may be sought for by one needing thatch, wood may be sought for by one needing wood, a cart may be sought for by one needing a cart, a workman may be sought for by one needing a workman, but by no means do I say that money may be consented to or sought for in any way at all.”

NOTE

1. This translation follows the Thai edition of the Pali Canon, which seems more idiomatic than other editions here. The version of this passage in the Burmese and Sri Lankan editions would be translated as: “For anyone for whom money is allowable, the five strings of sensuality are also allowable. And with regard to anyone for whom the five strings of sensuality are allowable, you can unequivocally recognize that as not the quality of a contemplative, not the quality of a Sakyan son.”

See also: AN 4:50

To Gandhabhaka

Gandhabhaka Sutta (SN 42:11)

On one occasion the Blessed One was staying among the Mallans in a Mallan town named Uruvelakappa. Then Gandhabhaka the headman went to the Blessed One and, on arrival, having bowed down to him, sat to one side. As he was sitting there he said to the Blessed One: “It would be good, lord, if the Blessed One would teach me the origination & ending of stress.”

“Headman, if I were to teach you the origination & ending of stress with reference to the past, saying, ‘Thus it was in the past,’ you would be doubtful and perplexed. If I were to teach you the origination & ending of stress with reference to the future, saying, ‘Thus it will be in the future,’ you would be doubtful and perplexed. So instead, I—sitting right here—will teach you sitting right there the origination & ending of stress. Listen & pay close attention. I will speak.”

“As you say, lord,” Gandhabhaka the headman responded to him.

The Blessed One said: “Now what do you think, headman? Are there any people in Uruvelakappa who, if they were murdered or imprisoned or fined or censured, would cause sorrow, lamentation, pain, distress, or despair to arise in you?”

“Yes, lord, there are people in Uruvelakappa who, if they were murdered or imprisoned or fined or censured, would cause sorrow, lamentation, pain, distress, or despair to arise in me.”

“And are there any people in Uruvelakappa who, if they were murdered or imprisoned or fined or censured, would cause no sorrow, lamentation, pain, distress, or despair to arise in you?”

“Yes, lord, there are people in Uruvelakappa who, if they were murdered or imprisoned or fined or censured, would cause no sorrow, lamentation, pain, distress, or despair to arise in me.”

“Now what is the cause, what is the reason, why the murder, imprisonment, fining, or censure of some of the people in Uruvelakappa would cause you sorrow, lamentation, pain, distress, or despair, whereas the murder, imprisonment, fining, or censure of others would cause you no sorrow, lamentation, pain, distress, or despair?”

“Those people in Uruvelakappa whose murder, imprisonment, fining, or censure would cause me sorrow, lamentation, pain, distress, or despair are those for whom I feel desire-passion. Those people in Uruvelakappa whose murder, imprisonment, fining, or censure would cause me no sorrow, lamentation, pain, distress, or despair are those for whom I feel no desire-passion.”

“Now, headman, from what you have realized, fathomed, attained right now in the present, without regard to time, you may draw an inference with regard to the past and future: ‘Whatever stress, in arising, arose for me in the past, all of it had desire as its root, had desire as its cause—for desire is the cause of stress. And whatever stress, in arising, will arise for me in the future, all of it will have desire as the root, will have desire as its cause—for desire is the cause of stress.’”

“Amazing, lord! Astounding! How well the Blessed One has put it: ‘Whatever stress, in arising, arose for me in the past, all of it had desire as its root, had desire as its cause—for desire is the cause of stress. And whatever stress, in arising, will arise for me in the future, all of it will have desire as the root, will have desire as its cause—for desire is the cause of stress.’ I have a son, lord, named Ciravāsi, who lives far away from here. When I get up in the morning, I send a man, saying, ‘Go, learn how Ciravāsi is doing.’ And as long as that man has not returned, I am simply beside myself, (thinking,) ‘Don’t let Ciravāsi be sick!’”

“Now, what do you think, headman? If Ciravāsi were to be murdered or imprisoned or fined or censured, would you feel sorrow, lamentation,

pain, distress, & despair?”

“Lord, if my son Ciravāsi were to be murdered or imprisoned or fined or censured, my very life would be altered. So how could I not feel sorrow, lamentation, pain, distress, & despair?”

“Thus, headman, by this line of reasoning it may be realized how stress, when arising, arises: All of it has desire as its root, has desire as its cause—for desire is the cause of stress.”

“Now what do you think, headman? Before you had seen or heard of Ciravāsi’s mother, did you feel desire, passion, or love for her?”

“No, lord.”

“And after you had seen or heard of Ciravāsi’s mother, did you feel desire, passion, or love for her?”

“Yes, lord.”

“What do you think? If Ciravāsi’s mother were to be murdered or imprisoned or fined or censured, would you feel sorrow, lamentation, pain, distress, & despair?”

“Lord, if Ciravāsi’s mother were to be murdered or imprisoned or fined or censured, my very life would be altered. So how could I not feel sorrow, lamentation, pain, distress, & despair?”

“Thus, headman, by this line of reasoning it may be realized how stress, when arising, arises: All of it has desire as its root, has desire as its cause—for desire is the cause of stress.”

See also: MN 87; [SN 35:101](#); AN 3:63; Ud.2:7; Ud.8:8

43. Asaṅkhata Saṃyutta

Unfabricated-Connected

This saṃyutta provides a list of 33 names for the goal of the practice.

* * *

“Monks, I will teach you the unfabricated¹ and the path leading to the unfabricated. Listen & pay close attention. I will speak.”

“As you say, lord,” the monks responded to the Blessed One.

The Blessed One said, “Which, monks, is the unfabricated? Whatever is the ending of passion, the ending of aversion, the ending of delusion: This is called the unfabricated.

“And which is the path leading to the unfabricated? Mindfulness immersed in the body²: This is called the path leading to the unfabricated.

Thus, monks, I have taught you the unfabricated and the path leading to the unfabricated. Whatever a sympathetic teacher should do—seeking the welfare of his disciples, out of sympathy for them—that have I done for you. Over there are the roots of trees; over there, empty dwellings. Practice jhāna, monks. Don’t be heedless. Don’t later fall into remorse. This is our message to you all.”

“And which is the path leading to the unfabricated? Tranquility & insight...

“And which is the path leading to the unfabricated? Concentration with directed thought & evaluation, concentration without directed thought and with a modicum of evaluation, concentration without directed thought and without evaluation...

“And which is the path leading to the unfabricated? Emptiness concentration,³ themeless concentration,⁴ undirected concentration⁵...

“And which is the path leading to the unfabricated? The four establishings of mindfulness⁶... the four right exertions... the four bases of power... the five faculties... the five strengths... the seven factors for awakening...

“And which is the path leading to the unfabricated? The noble eightfold path. This is called the path leading to the unfabricated.

Thus, monks, I have taught you the unfabricated and the path leading to the unfabricated. Whatever a sympathetic teacher should do—seeking the welfare of his disciples, out of sympathy for them—that have I done for you. Over there are the roots of trees; over there, empty dwellings.

Practice jhāna, monks. Don't be heedless. Don't later fall into remorse. This is our message to you all."

II

"Monks, I will teach you the unfabricated and the path leading to the unfabricated. Listen & pay close attention. I will speak."

"As you say, lord," the monks responded to the Blessed One.

The Blessed One said, "Which, monks, is the unfabricated? Whatever is the ending of passion, the ending of aversion, the ending of delusion: This is called the unfabricated.

"And which is the path leading to the unfabricated? Tranquility: This is called the path leading to the unfabricated.

Thus, monks, I have taught you the unfabricated and the path leading to the unfabricated. Whatever a sympathetic teacher should do—seeking the welfare of his disciples, out of sympathy for them—that have I done for you. Over there are the roots of trees; over there, empty dwellings. Practice jhāna, monks. Don't be heedless. Don't later fall into remorse. This is our message to you all."

"And which is the path leading to the unfabricated? Insight..."

"And which is the path leading to the unfabricated? Concentration with directed thought & evaluation..."

"And which is the path leading to the unfabricated? Concentration without directed thought and with a modicum of evaluation..."

"And which is the path leading to the unfabricated? Concentration without directed thought and without evaluation..."

"And which is the path leading to the unfabricated? Emptiness concentration..."

"And which is the path leading to the unfabricated? Themeless concentration..."

"And which is the path leading to the unfabricated? Undirected concentration..."

“And which is the path leading to the unfabricated? There is the case where a monk remains focused on the body in & of itself—ardent, alert, & mindful—subduing greed & distress with reference to the world.⁷ This is called the path leading to the unfabricated...

“And which is the path leading to the unfabricated? There is the case where a monk remains focused on feelings in & of themselves—ardent, alert, & mindful—subduing greed & distress with reference to the world. This is called the path leading to the unfabricated...

“And which is the path leading to the unfabricated? There is the case where a monk remains focused on the mind in & of itself—ardent, alert, & mindful—subduing greed & distress with reference to the world. This is called the path leading to the unfabricated...

“And which is the path leading to the unfabricated? There is the case where a monk remains focused on mental qualities in & of themselves—ardent, alert, & mindful—subduing greed & distress with reference to the world. This is called the path leading to the unfabricated...

“And which is the path leading to the unfabricated? There is the case where a monk generates desire, endeavors, activates persistence, upholds & exerts his intent for the sake of the non-arising of evil, unskillful qualities that have not yet arisen. This is called the path leading to the unfabricated...

“And which is the path leading to the unfabricated? There is the case where a monk generates desire, endeavors, activates persistence, upholds & exerts his intent for the sake of the abandoning of evil, unskillful qualities that have arisen. This is called the path leading to the unfabricated...

“And which is the path leading to the unfabricated? There is the case where a monk generates desire, endeavors, activates persistence, upholds & exerts his intent for the sake of the arising of skillful qualities that have not yet arisen. This is called the path leading to the unfabricated...

“And which is the path leading to the unfabricated? There is the case where a monk generates desire, endeavors, activates persistence, upholds & exerts his intent for the maintenance, non-confusion, increase,

plenitude, development, & culmination of skillful qualities that have arisen. This is called the path leading to the unfabricated...

“And which is the path leading to the unfabricated? There is the case where a monk develops the base of power endowed with concentration founded on desire & the fabrications of exertion. This is called the path leading to the unfabricated...

“And which is the path leading to the unfabricated? There is the case where a monk develops the base of power endowed with concentration founded on persistence & the fabrications of exertion. This is called the path leading to the unfabricated...

“And which is the path leading to the unfabricated? There is the case where a monk develops the base of power endowed with concentration founded on intent & the fabrications of exertion. This is called the path leading to the unfabricated...

“And which is the path leading to the unfabricated? There is the case where a monk develops the base of power endowed with concentration founded on discrimination & the fabrications of exertion. This is called the path leading to the unfabricated...

“And which is the path leading to the unfabricated? There is the case where a monk develops the faculty of conviction dependent on seclusion, dependent on dispassion, dependent on cessation, resulting in letting go. This is called the path leading to the unfabricated...

“And which is the path leading to the unfabricated? There is the case where a monk develops the faculty of persistence... mindfulness... concentration... discernment dependent on seclusion, dependent on dispassion, dependent on cessation, resulting in letting go. This is called the path leading to the unfabricated...

“And which is the path leading to the unfabricated? There is the case where a monk develops the strength of conviction... persistence... mindfulness... concentration... discernment dependent on seclusion, dependent on dispassion, dependent on cessation, resulting in letting go. This is called the path leading to the unfabricated...

“And which is the path leading to the unfabricated? There is the case where a monk develops mindfulness as a factor for awakening... analysis

of qualities as a factor for awakening... persistence as a factor for awakening... rapture as a factor for awakening... calm as a factor for awakening... concentration as a factor for awakening... equanimity as a factor for awakening dependent on seclusion, dependent on dispassion, dependent on cessation, resulting in letting go. This is called the path leading to the unfabricated...

“And which is the path leading to the unfabricated? There is the case where a monk develops right view... right resolve... right speech... right action... right livelihood... right effort... right mindfulness dependent on seclusion, dependent on dispassion, dependent on cessation, resulting in letting go. This is called the path leading to the unfabricated...

“And which is the path leading to the unfabricated? There is the case where a monk develops right concentration dependent on seclusion, dependent on dispassion, dependent on cessation, resulting in letting go. This is called the path leading to the unfabricated.

Thus, monks, I have taught you the unfabricated and the path leading to the unfabricated. Whatever a sympathetic teacher should do—seeking the welfare of his disciples, out of sympathy for them—that have I done for you. Over there are the roots of trees; over there, empty dwellings. Practice *jhāna*, monks. Don’t be heedless. Don’t later fall into regret. This is our message to you.”

“Monks, I will also teach you the unbent⁸ and the path leading to the unbent...

“Monks, I will also teach you the effluent-free and the path leading to the effluent-free...

“Monks, I will also teach you the true and the path leading to the true...

“Monks, I will also teach you the beyond and the path leading to the beyond ...

“Monks, I will also teach you the subtle and the path leading to the subtle ...

“Monks, I will also teach you the very-hard-to-see and the path leading to the very-hard-to-see ...

“Monks, I will also teach you the ageless and the path leading to the ageless ...

“Monks, I will also teach you permanence and the path leading to permanence ...

“Monks, I will also teach you the undecaying and the path leading to the undecaying ...

“Monks, I will also teach you the surfaceless² and the path leading to the surfaceless ...

“Monks, I will also teach you non-objectification¹⁰ and the path leading to non-objectification ...

“Monks, I will also teach you peace and the path leading to peace ...

“Monks, I will also teach you the deathless and the path leading to the deathless ...

“Monks, I will also teach you the exquisite and the path leading to the exquisite ...

“Monks, I will also teach you bliss and the path leading to bliss ...

“Monks, I will also teach you rest and the path leading to rest ...

“Monks, I will also teach you the ending of craving and the path leading to the ending of craving ...

“Monks, I will also teach you the amazing and the path leading to the amazing ...

“Monks, I will also teach you the astounding and the path leading to the astounding ...

“Monks, I will also teach you the secure and the path leading to the secure ...

“Monks, I will also teach you security and the path leading to security ...

“Monks, I will also teach you unbinding and the path leading to unbinding ...

“Monks, I will also teach you the unafflicted and the path leading to the unafflicted ...

“Monks, I will also teach you dispassion and the path leading to dispassion ...

“Monks, I will also teach you purity and the path leading to purity ...

“Monks, I will also teach you release and the path leading to release ...

“Monks, I will also teach you the attachment-free and the path leading to the attachment-free ...

“Monks, I will also teach you the island and the path leading to the island ...

“Monks, I will also teach you shelter and the path leading to shelter ...

“Monks, I will also teach you the harbor and the path leading to the harbor ...

“Monks, I will also teach you refuge and the path leading to refuge ...

“Monks, I will also teach you the ultimate and the path leading to the ultimate. Listen & pay close attention. I will speak.”

“As you say, lord,” the monks responded to the Blessed One.

The Blessed One said, “Which, monks, is the ultimate? Whatever is the ending of passion, the ending of aversion, the ending of delusion: This is called the ultimate.

“And which is the path leading to the ultimate? Mindfulness immersed in the body: This is called the path leading to the ultimate.

Thus, monks, I have taught you the ultimate and the path leading to the ultimate. Whatever a sympathetic teacher should do—seeking the welfare of his disciples, out of sympathy for them—that have I done for you. Over there are the roots of trees; over there, empty dwellings. Practice jhāna, monks. Don’t be heedless. Don’t later fall into remorse. This is our message to you all.” ¹¹

NOTES

1. “Now, these three are unfabricated characteristics of what is unfabricated. Which three? No arising is discernable, no passing away is discernable, no alteration while staying is discernable.” — AN 3:47

2. See MN 119.

3. See MN 43, MN 121, and [SN 41:7](#).
4. See MN 43 and [SN 41:7](#).
5. See [SN 47:10](#).
6. Beginning here, the various paths to the unfabricated correspond to the seven sets of qualities that form the 37 wings to awakening. See DN 16; [SN 45–51](#).
7. Beginning here, the various paths to the unfabricated correspond to the 37 wings to awakening in detail.
8. Reading *anatañca* with the Thai and Burmese editions. The Sri Lankan and PTS editions read *anantañca*, the unending/infinite. The prior reading seems preferable in that it relates to a passage in MN 19 that describes how the ordinary mind is “bent” by the results of its habitual thinking, whether in a skillful or unskillful direction. The goal, because it lies beyond the influence of any kind of kamma—physical, verbal, or mental—would thus be unbent.
9. Consciousness without surface. See DN 11 and MN 49.
10. See AN 4:173.
11. The transcribers of the Canon note that all the synonyms for the goal should be understood in full in line with the treatment of the unfabricated. CDB thus counts 44 suttas in this saṃyutta.

44. *Abyākata Saṃyutta* *Undeclared-Connected*

INTRODUCTION

This saṃyutta is organized around questions that the Buddha left unanswered. Most of the discourses here focus on questions in a standard list of ten that were apparently the hot issues for philosophers in the Buddha’s day: Is the cosmos eternal? Is it not eternal? Is it finite? Is it infinite? Is the body the same as the soul? Is the body one thing and the soul another? Does the Tathāgata exist after death? Does he not exist after death? Both? Neither?

MN 72 lists the reasons why the Buddha does not take a position on any of these questions. In each case he says that such a position “is a thicket of views, a wilderness of views, a contortion of views, a writhing of views, a fetter of views. It is accompanied by suffering, distress, despair, & fever, and it does not lead to disenchantment, dispassion, cessation; to calm, direct knowledge, full awakening, unbinding.”

These reasons fall into two categories. The first concerns the present drawbacks of taking such a position: It is accompanied by suffering, distress, despair, and fever. The second category concerns the effects of such a position over time: It does not lead to awakening or unbinding. AN 10:93 further explores the first category of reasons. MN 63 further explores the second.

Some of the discourses in this *saṃyutta* explore a third category of reasons for why the Buddha does not take a position on any of these questions: Such a position is based on attachment to and misunderstanding of the aggregates and sense media. When one sees these things for what they are, as they have come to be, the idea of forming them into any of these positions simply does not occur to one. (Similar reasons are also listed in AN 7:51.)

Of the discourses here, [SN 44:1](#) and [SN 44:10](#) are special cases. [SN 44:1](#) focuses specifically on the questions that try to describe the status of the Tathāgata after death, and explains that, having been released from the classification of the aggregates, the Tathāgata defies description, in the same way that the sands of the river Ganges cannot be numbered, and the waters of the oceans cannot be calculated in gallons. The Commentary to this passage tries to fathom the Tathāgata’s infathomability, but its attempt is controversial. See the note to that sutta.

Even more controversial is [SN 44:10](#), which addresses an issue not included in the standard list of ten undeclared questions: Is there a self? Is there no self? Many scholars have been uncomfortable with the fact that the Buddha leaves this question unanswered, believing that his statement that “all phenomena are not-self” implicitly states that there is no self. Thus they have tried to explain away the Buddha’s silence on the existence or non-existence of the self, usually by pointing to the fourth of his reasons for not answering the question: his bewildered interlocutor, Vacchagotta, would have become even more bewildered. Had the Buddha been asked by someone less bewildered, these

commentators say, he would have given the straight answer that there is no self.

However, these commentators ignore two points. (1) The Buddha's first two reasons for not answering the questions have nothing to do with Vacchagotta. To say that there is a self, he says, would be siding with the wrong views of the eternalists. To say that there is no self would be siding with the wrong views of the annihilationists. (2) Immediately after Vacchagotta leaves, Ven. Ānanda asks the Buddha to explain his silence. Had the Buddha really meant to declare that there is no self, this would have been the perfect time to do so, for bewildered people were now out of the way. But, again, he did not take that position.

One peculiarity of this approach to the Buddha's silence on this issue is that many commentators, noting the Buddha's desire not to bewilder Vacchagotta, assume somehow that their readers and listeners at present would not be bewildered by a doctrine that there is no self, and feel free to jump into the breach, stating baldly what they believe the Buddha was simply too reticent to say.

Another attempt to explain the Buddha's silence on this issue focuses on the second reason for his silence, saying that the annihilationists had laid claim to the slogan that there is no self, so—because the Buddha did not want his own doctrine of no self to be confused with theirs—he avoided their slogan. This explanation, however, is not supported by the Canon. The doctrines of the annihilationists are presented in a fair amount of detail in the Canon, and nowhere are they quoted as saying outright that there is no self. Thus there is no basis for saying that it was their slogan. Second, there are many instances where the Buddha, when asked a categorical question concerning an issue where he wanted to give a nuanced answer, showed himself perfectly capable of rephrasing the question in more nuanced terms before giving his reply. Had he held a nuanced doctrine that there is no self, he could have easily rephrased Vacchagotta's question before answering it. The fact that he chose not to do so, either in Vacchagotta's or Ven. Ānanda's presence, indicates that he felt that this issue, too, was a thicket of views based on a misunderstanding, accompanied by suffering, and not leading to awakening.

In addition, MN 2 indicates that the questions asked by Vacchagotta should be avoided across the board. There the Buddha tells the monks that they should

avoid asking such questions as “Do I exist?” or “Do I not exist?” or “What am I?” as these lead to such entangling views as “I have a self” or “I have no self.” Thus the need to avoid such questions and views applies not only to Vacchagotta. It applies to anyone who wants to reach the freedom offered by the path.

So how is the statement “all phenomena are not self” to be taken? As a path to awakening. According to Dhṛp 279, when one sees this fact with discernment to the point of becoming disenchanted with stress, it forms the path to purity. Here the term “phenomena” covers fabricated and unfabricated phenomena. The fabricated phenomena encountered along the path include the aggregates, properties, and sense media. The unfabricated phenomenon, encountered when these fabricated phenomena cease, is the deathless. AN 9:96, however, points out that it is possible, on encountering the deathless, to feel a dhamma-passion and dhamma-delight for it, thus preventing full awakening. At this point the realization that all phenomena are not-self would be needed to overcome this last obstacle to total release. And once there is release, one becomes, like the Tathāgata, indescribable: “deep, boundless, hard to fathom, like the ocean.” At that point, the path is abandoned, like a raft after it has been used to cross a river, and positions that “there is a self” and “there is no self” would not apply.

For more on this topic, see the books, Selves & Not-self and Skill in Questions: How the Buddha Taught, and the articles, “The Not-Self Strategy” and “The Limits of Description.”

With Khemā

Khema Sutta (SN 44:1)

On one occasion the Blessed One was staying near Sāvattṥī at Jeta’s Grove, Anāthapiṇḍika’s monastery. And on that occasion Khemā the nun, wandering on tour among the Kosalans, had taken up residence between Sāvattṥī and Sāketa at Torāṇavatthu. Then King Pasenadi Kosala, while traveling from Sāketa to Sāvattṥī, took up a one-night residence between Sāvattṥī and Sāketa at Torāṇavatthu. Then he

addressed a certain man, “Come, now, my good man. Find out if in Toraṇavatthu there’s the sort contemplative or brahman I might visit today.”

“As you say, sire,” the man responded to the king, but having roamed all over Toraṇavatthu he did not see the sort of contemplative or brahman the king might visit. But he did see Khemā the nun residing in Toraṇavatthu. On seeing her, he went to King Pasenadi Kosala and on arrival said to him, “Sire, in Toraṇavatthu there is no contemplative or brahman of the sort your majesty might visit. But there is, however, a nun named Khemā, a disciple of the Blessed One, worthy & rightly self-awakened. And of this lady, this admirable report has spread about: ‘She is wise, competent, intelligent, learned, a fluent speaker, admirable in her ingenuity.’ Let your majesty visit her.”

Then King Pasenadi Kosala went to the Khemā the nun and, on arrival, having bowed down to her, sat to one side. As he was sitting there he said to her, “Now then, lady, does the Tathāgata exist after death?”

“That, great king, has not been declared by the Blessed One: ‘The Tathāgata exists after death.’”

“Well then, lady, does the Tathāgata not exist after death?”

“Great king, that too has not been declared by the Blessed One: ‘The Tathāgata does not exist after death.’”

“Then does the Tathāgata both exist and not exist after death?”

“That has not been declared by the Blessed One: ‘The Tathāgata both exists and does not exist after death.’”

“Well then, does the Tathāgata neither exist nor not exist after death?”

“That too has not been declared by the Blessed One: ‘The Tathāgata neither exists nor does not exist after death.’”

“Now, lady, when asked if the Tathāgata exists after death, you say, ‘That has not been declared by the Blessed One: “The Tathāgata exists after death.”’ When asked if the Tathāgata does not exist after death... both exists and does not exist after death... neither exists nor does not exist after death, you say, ‘That too has not been declared by the Blessed One: “The Tathāgata neither exists nor does not exist after death.”’ Now,

what is the cause, what is the reason, why that has not been declared by the Blessed One?”

“Very well, then, great king, I will question you in return about this very same matter. Answer as you see fit. What do you think, great king? Do you have an accountant or calculator or mathematician who can count the grains of sand in the river Ganges as ‘so many grains of sand’ or ‘so many hundreds of grains of sand’ or ‘so many thousands of grains of sand’ or ‘so many hundreds of thousands of grains of sand’?”

“No, lady.”

“Then do you have an accountant or calculator or mathematician who can count the water in the great ocean as ‘so many buckets of water’ or ‘so many hundreds of buckets of water’ or ‘so many thousands of buckets of water’ or ‘so many hundreds of thousands of buckets of water’?”

“No, lady. Why is that? The great ocean is deep, boundless, hard to fathom.”

“Even so, great king, any physical form by which one describing the Tathāgata would describe him: That the Tathāgata has abandoned, its root destroyed, made like a palmyra stump, deprived of the conditions of development, not destined for future arising. Freed from the classification of form, great king, the Tathāgata is deep, boundless, hard to fathom, like the ocean. ‘The Tathāgata exists after death’ doesn’t apply. ‘The Tathāgata doesn’t exist after death’ doesn’t apply. ‘The Tathāgata both exists and doesn’t exist after death’ doesn’t apply. ‘The Tathāgata neither exists nor doesn’t exist after death’ doesn’t apply.

“Any feeling... Any perception... Any fabrications...

“Any consciousness by which one describing the Tathāgata would describe him: That the Tathāgata has abandoned, its root destroyed, made like a palmyra stump, deprived of the conditions of development, not destined for future arising. Freed from the classification of consciousness, great king, the Tathāgata is deep, boundless, hard to fathom, like the ocean. ‘The Tathāgata exists after death’ doesn’t apply. ‘The Tathāgata doesn’t exist after death’ doesn’t apply. ‘The Tathāgata

both exists and doesn't exist after death' doesn't apply. 'The Tathāgata neither exists nor doesn't exist after death' doesn't apply."¹

Then King Pasenadi Kosala, delighting in & approving of Khemā the nun's words, got up from his seat, bowed down to her and—keeping her to his right—departed.

Then at another time he went to the Blessed One and, on arrival, having bowed down to the Blessed One, sat to one side. As he was sitting there [he asked the Blessed One the same questions he had asked Khemā the nun, and received precisely the same responses and analogies. Then he exclaimed:]

“Amazing, lord! Astounding! How the meaning and phrasing of the teacher and disciple agree, coincide, and do not diverge from one another with regard to the supreme teaching! Recently, lord, I went to Khemā the nun and, on arrival, asked her about this matter, and she answered me with the same words, the same phrasing, as the Blessed One. Amazing, lord! Astounding! How the meaning and phrasing of the teacher and disciple agree, coincide, and do not diverge from one another with regard to the supreme teaching!

“Now, lord, we must go. Many are our duties, many our responsibilities.”

“Then do, great king, what you think it is now time to do.”

So King Pasenadi Kosala, delighting in and approving of the Blessed One's words, got up from his seat, bowed down to the Blessed One and—keeping him to his right—departed.

NOTE

1. The Commentary and Sub-commentary are not satisfied to let this passage stand, and try to describe the Tathāgata's indescribability. To paraphrase: He is freed from the classification of form, etc., because for him there will be no arising of form, etc., in the future (i.e., after death). He is deep in the depth of his character and the depth of his qualities. As for any description in terms of 'a being' that might be used in relation to the Tathāgata with such deep qualities, when one sees the non-existence of the description 'being,' owing to the (future) non-existence of the aggregates,

one sees that the four statements with regard to the Tathāgata after death are invalid.

This explanation, which borrows from Sister Vajirā’s verse in [SN 5:10](#), misses an important point raised in [SN 22:36](#) and [SN 23:2](#). In [SN 22:36](#) the Buddha states that one is measured and classified by what one is obsessed with. If one is not obsessed with anything, then one is not measured or classified by it in the here and now. In [SN 23:2](#) the Buddha points out that the term “being” applies only where there is craving and passion. The Tathāgata, freed from craving and passion, is thus not a “being,” and so is indescribable in the present, even though he obviously still functions in the present. [SN 22:86](#) elaborates on this point in great detail.

Another problem raised by the Commentary’s explanation for this sutta is how it would define the Tathāgata’s qualities and character, for what are they composed of aside from aggregates?

See also: MN 63; MN 72

SN 44:2 = [SN 22:86](#)

Sāriputta and Koṭṭhita (1)

Sāriputta-Koṭṭhita Sutta (SN 44:3)

On one occasion Ven. Sāriputta and Ven. Mahā Koṭṭhita were staying near Vārāṇasī in the Deer Park at Isipatana. Then Ven. Mahā Koṭṭhita, emerging from his seclusion in the evening, went to Ven. Sāriputta and exchanged courteous greetings with him. After an exchange of friendly greetings & courtesies, he sat to one side. As he was sitting there, he said to Ven. Sāriputta, “Now then, friend Sāriputta, does the Tathāgata exist after death?”

“That, friend, has not been declared by the Blessed One: ‘The Tathāgata exists after death.’”

“Well then, friend Sāriputta, does the Tathāgata not exist after death?”

“Friend, that too has not been declared by the Blessed One: ‘The Tathāgata does not exist after death.’”

“Then does the Tathāgata both exist and not exist after death?”

“That has not been declared by the Blessed One: ‘The Tathāgata both exists and does not exist after death.’”

“Well then, does the Tathāgata neither exist nor not exist after death?”

“That too has not been declared by the Blessed One: ‘The Tathāgata neither exists nor does not exist after death.’”

“Now, friend Sāriputta, when asked if the Tathāgata exists after death, you say, ‘That has not been declared by the Blessed One: “The Tathāgata exists after death.”’ When asked if the Tathāgata does not exist after death... both exists and does not exist after death... neither exists nor does not exist after death, you say, ‘That too has not been declared by the Blessed One: “The Tathāgata neither exists nor does not exist after death.”’ Now, what is the cause, what is the reason, why that has not been declared by the Blessed One?”

“‘The Tathāgata exists after death’ is immersed in form. ‘The Tathāgata does not exist after death’ is immersed in form. ‘The Tathāgata both exists and does not exist after death’ is immersed in form. ‘The Tathāgata neither exists nor does not exist after death’ is immersed in form.

“‘The Tathāgata exists after death’ is immersed in feeling...

“‘The Tathāgata exists after death’ is immersed in perception...

“‘The Tathāgata exists after death’ is immersed in fabrication...

“‘The Tathāgata exists after death’ is immersed in consciousness. ‘The Tathāgata does not exist after death’ is immersed in consciousness. ‘The Tathāgata both exists and does not exist after death’ is immersed in consciousness. ‘The Tathāgata neither exists nor does not exist death’ is immersed in consciousness.

“This is the cause, this is the reason, why that has not been declared by the Blessed One.”

Sāriputta and Koṭṭhita (2)

Sāriputta-Koṭṭhita Sutta (SN 44:4)

On one occasion Ven. Sāriputta and Ven. Mahā Koṭṭhita were staying near Vārāṇasī in the Deer Park at Isipatana. Then Ven. Mahā Koṭṭhita, emerging from his seclusion in the evening, went to Ven. Sāriputta and exchanged courteous greetings with him. After an exchange of friendly greetings & courtesies, he sat to one side. As he was sitting there, he said to Ven. Sāriputta, “Now then, friend Sāriputta, does the Tathāgata exist after death?”

“That, friend, has not been declared by the Blessed One: ‘The Tathāgata exists after death.’”

“Well then, friend Sāriputta, does the Tathāgata not exist after death?”

“Friend, that too has not been declared by the Blessed One: ‘The Tathāgata does not exist after death.’”

“Then does the Tathāgata both exist and not exist after death?”

“That has not been declared by the Blessed One: ‘The Tathāgata both exists and does not exist after death.’”

“Well then, does the Tathāgata neither exist nor not exist after death?”

“That too has not been declared by the Blessed One: ‘The Tathāgata neither exists nor does not exist after death.’”

“Now, friend Sāriputta, when asked if the Tathāgata exists after death, you say, ‘That has not been declared by the Blessed One: “The Tathāgata exists after death.”’ When asked if the Tathāgata does not exist after death... both exists and does not exist after death... neither exists nor does not exist after death, you say, ‘That too has not been declared by the Blessed One: “The Tathāgata neither exists nor does not exist after death.”’ Now, what is the cause, what is the reason, why that has not been declared by the Blessed One?”

“For one who doesn't know & see form as it has come to be, who doesn't know & see the origination of form... the cessation of form...

the path of practice leading to the cessation of form, as it has come to be, there occurs the thought, ‘The Tathāgata exists after death’ or ‘The Tathāgata does not exist after death’ or ‘The Tathāgata both exists and does not exist after death’ or ‘The Tathāgata neither exists nor does not exist after death.’

“For one who doesn't know & see feeling as it has come to be...

“For one who doesn't know & see perception as it has come to be...

“For one who doesn't know & see fabrications as they have come to be...

“For one who doesn't know & see consciousness as it has come to be, who doesn't know & see the origination of consciousness... the cessation of consciousness... the path of practice leading to the cessation of consciousness, as it has come to be, there occurs the thought, ‘The Tathāgata exists after death’ or ‘The Tathāgata does not exist after death’ or ‘The Tathāgata both exists and does not exist after death’ or ‘The Tathāgata neither exists nor does not exist after death.’

“But for one who knows & sees form as it has come to be, who knows & sees the origination of form... the cessation of form... the path of practice leading to the cessation of form, as it has come to be, the thought, ‘The Tathāgata exists after death’ or ‘The Tathāgata does not exist after death’ or ‘The Tathāgata both exists and does not exist after death’ or ‘The Tathāgata neither exists nor does not exist after death’ doesn’t occur.

“For one who knows & sees feeling as it has come to be...

“For one who knows & sees perception as it has come to be...

“For one who knows & sees fabrications as they have come to be...

“For one who knows & sees consciousness as it has come to be, who knows & sees the origination of consciousness... the cessation of consciousness... the path of practice leading to the cessation of consciousness, as it has come to be, the thought, ‘The Tathāgata exists after death’ or ‘The Tathāgata does not exist after death’ or ‘The Tathāgata both exists and does not exist after death’ or ‘The Tathāgata neither exists nor does not exist after death’ doesn’t occur.

“This is the cause, this is the reason, why that has not been declared by the Blessed One.”

Sāriputta and Koṭṭhita (3)

Sāriputta-Koṭṭhita Sutta (SN 44:5)

On one occasion Ven. Sāriputta and Ven. Mahā Koṭṭhita were staying near Vārāṇasī in the Deer Park at Isipatana. Then Ven. Mahā Koṭṭhita, emerging from his seclusion in the evening, went to Ven. Sāriputta and exchanged courteous greetings with him. After an exchange of friendly greetings & courtesies, he sat to one side. As he was sitting there, he said to Ven. Sāriputta, “Now then, friend Sāriputta, does the Tathāgata exist after death?”

“That, friend, has not been declared by the Blessed One: ‘The Tathāgata exists after death.’”

“Well then, friend Sāriputta, does the Tathāgata not exist after death?”

“Friend, that too has not been declared by the Blessed One: ‘The Tathāgata does not exist after death.’”

“Then does the Tathāgata both exist and not exist after death?”

“That has not been declared by the Blessed One: ‘The Tathāgata both exists and does not exist after death.’”

“Well then, does the Tathāgata neither exist nor not exist after death?”

“That too has not been declared by the Blessed One: ‘The Tathāgata neither exists nor does not exist after death.’”

“Now, friend Sāriputta, when asked if the Tathāgata exists after death, you say, ‘That has not been declared by the Blessed One: “The Tathāgata exists after death.”’ When asked if the Tathāgata does not exist after death... both exists and does not exist after death... neither exists nor does not exist after death, you say, ‘That too has not been declared by the Blessed One: “The Tathāgata neither exists nor does not exist after death.”’ Now, what is the cause, what is the reason, why that has not been declared by the Blessed One?”

“For one whose passion for form has not been removed, whose desire... affection... thirst... fever... craving for form has not been removed, there occurs the thought, ‘The Tathāgata exists after death’ or ‘The Tathāgata does not exist after death’ or ‘The Tathāgata both exists and does not exist after death’ or ‘The Tathāgata neither exists nor does not exist after death.’

“For one whose passion for feeling has not been removed....

“For one whose passion for perception has not been removed....

“For one whose passion for fabrication has not been removed....

“For one whose passion for consciousness has not been removed, whose desire... affection... thirst... fever... craving for consciousness has not been removed, there occurs the thought, ‘The Tathāgata exists after death’ or ‘The Tathāgata does not exist after death’ or ‘The Tathāgata both exists and does not exist after death’ or ‘The Tathāgata neither exists nor does not exist after death.’

“But for one whose passion for form has been removed, whose desire... affection... thirst... fever... craving for form has been removed, the thought, ‘The Tathāgata exists after death’ or ‘The Tathāgata does not exist after death’ or ‘The Tathāgata both exists and does not exist after death’ or ‘The Tathāgata neither exists nor does not exist after death’ doesn’t occur.

“For one whose passion for feeling has been removed....

“For one whose passion for perception has been removed....

“For one whose passion for fabrication has been removed....

“For one whose passion for consciousness has been removed, whose desire... affection... thirst... fever... craving for consciousness has been removed, the thought, ‘The Tathāgata exists after death’ or ‘The Tathāgata does not exist after death’ or ‘The Tathāgata both exists and does not exist after death’ or ‘The Tathāgata neither exists nor does not exist after death’ doesn’t occur.

“This is the cause, this is the reason, why that has not been declared by the Blessed One.”

Sāriputta and Koṭṭhita (4)

Sāriputta-Koṭṭhita Sutta (SN 44:6)

On one occasion Ven. Sāriputta and Ven. Mahā Koṭṭhita were staying near Vārāṇasī in the Deer Park at Isipatana. Then Ven. Sāriputta, emerging from his seclusion in the evening, went to Ven. Mahā Koṭṭhita and exchanged courteous greetings with him. After an exchange of friendly greetings & courtesies, he sat to one side. As he was sitting there, he said to Ven. Mahā Koṭṭhita, “Now then, friend Koṭṭhita, does the Tathāgata exist after death?”

“That, friend, has not been declared by the Blessed One: ‘The Tathāgata exists after death.’”

“Well then, friend Koṭṭhita, does the Tathāgata not exist after death?”

“Friend, that too has not been declared by the Blessed One: ‘The Tathāgata does not exist after death.’”

“Then does the Tathāgata both exist and not exist after death?”

“That has not been declared by the Blessed One: ‘The Tathāgata both exists and does not exist after death.’”

“Well then, does the Tathāgata neither exist nor not exist after death?”

“That too has not been declared by the Blessed One: ‘The Tathāgata neither exists nor does not exist after death.’”

“Now, friend Koṭṭhita, when asked if the Tathāgata exists after death, you say, ‘That has not been declared by the Blessed One: “The Tathāgata exists after death.”’ When asked if the Tathāgata does not exist after death... both exists and does not exist after death... neither exists nor does not exist after death, you say, ‘That too has not been declared by the Blessed One: “The Tathāgata neither exists nor does not exist after death.”’ Now, what is the cause, what is the reason, why that has not been declared by the Blessed One?”

“For one who loves form, who is fond of form, who cherishes form, who does not know or see, as it has come to be, the cessation of form,

there occurs the thought, ‘The Tathāgata exists after death’ or ‘The Tathāgata does not exist after death’ or ‘The Tathāgata both exists and does not exist after death’ or ‘The Tathāgata neither exists nor does not exist after death.’

“For one who loves feeling....

“For one who loves perception....

“For one who loves fabrication....

“For one who loves consciousness, who is fond of consciousness, who cherishes consciousness, who does not know or see, as it has come to be, the cessation of consciousness, there occurs the thought, ‘The Tathāgata exists after death’ or ‘The Tathāgata does not exist after death’ or ‘The Tathāgata both exists and does not exist after death’ or ‘The Tathāgata neither exists nor does not exist after death.’

“But for one who doesn’t love form, who isn’t fond of form, who doesn’t cherish form, who knows & sees, as it has come to be, the cessation of form, the thought, ‘The Tathāgata exists after death’ or ‘The Tathāgata does not exist after death’ or ‘The Tathāgata both exists and does not exist after death’ or ‘The Tathāgata neither exists nor does not exist after death’ doesn’t occur.

“For one who doesn’t love feeling....

“For one who doesn’t love perception....

“For one who doesn’t love fabrication....

“For one who doesn’t love consciousness, who isn’t fond of consciousness, who doesn’t cherish consciousness, who knows & sees, as it has come to be, the cessation of consciousness, the thought, ‘The Tathāgata exists after death’ or ‘The Tathāgata does not exist after death’ or ‘The Tathāgata both exists and does not exist after death’ or ‘The Tathāgata neither exists nor does not exist after death’ doesn’t occur.

“This is the cause, this is the reason, why that has not been declared by the Blessed One.”

“But, my friend, would there another line of reasoning, in line with which that has not been declared by the Blessed One?”

“There would, my friend. “For one who loves becoming, who is fond of becoming, who cherishes becoming, who does not know or see, as it

has come to be, the cessation of becoming, there occurs the thought, ‘The Tathāgata exists after death’ or ‘The Tathāgata does not exist after death’ or ‘The Tathāgata both exists and does not exist after death’ or ‘The Tathāgata neither exists nor does not exist after death.’

“But for one who doesn’t love becoming, who isn’t fond of becoming, who doesn’t cherish becoming, who knows & sees, as it has come to be, the cessation of becoming, the thought, ‘The Tathāgata exists after death’ or ‘The Tathāgata does not exist after death’ or ‘The Tathāgata both exists and does not exist after death’ or ‘The Tathāgata neither exists nor does not exist after death’ doesn’t occur.

“This, too, is a line of reasoning in line with which that has not been declared by the Blessed One.”

“But, my friend, would there another line of reasoning, in line with which that has not been declared by the Blessed One?”

“There would, my friend. “For one who loves clinging/sustenance, who is fond of clinging/sustenance, who cherishes clinging/sustenance, who does not know or see, as it has come to be, the cessation of clinging/sustenance, there occurs the thought, ‘The Tathāgata exists after death’ or ‘The Tathāgata does not exist after death’ or ‘The Tathāgata both exists and does not exist after death’ or ‘The Tathāgata neither exists nor does not exist after death.’

“But for one who doesn’t love clinging/sustenance, who isn’t fond of clinging/sustenance, who doesn’t cherish clinging/sustenance, who knows & sees, as it has come to be, the cessation of clinging/sustenance, the thought, ‘The Tathāgata exists after death’ or ‘The Tathāgata does not exist after death’ or ‘The Tathāgata both exists and does not exist after death’ or ‘The Tathāgata neither exists nor does not exist after death’ doesn’t occur.

“This, too, is a line of reasoning in line with which that has not been declared by the Blessed One.”

“But, my friend, would there another line of reasoning, in line with which that has not been declared by the Blessed One?”

“There would, my friend. “For one who loves craving, who is fond of craving, who cherishes craving, who does not know or see, as it has come

to be, the cessation of craving, there occurs the thought, ‘The Tathāgata exists after death’ or ‘The Tathāgata does not exist after death’ or ‘The Tathāgata both exists and does not exist after death’ or ‘The Tathāgata neither exists nor does not exist after death.’

“But for one who doesn’t love craving, who isn’t fond of craving, who doesn’t cherish craving, who knows & sees, as it has come to be, the cessation of craving, the thought, ‘The Tathāgata exists after death’ or ‘The Tathāgata does not exist after death’ or ‘The Tathāgata both exists and does not exist after death’ or ‘The Tathāgata neither exists nor does not exist after death’ doesn’t occur.

“This, too, is a line of reasoning in line with which that has not been declared by the Blessed One.”

“But, my friend, would there another line of reasoning, in line with which that has not been declared by the Blessed One?”

“Now, what more do you want, friend Sāriputta? When a monk has been freed from the classification of craving, there exists no cycle for describing him.”

With Moggallāna

Moggallāna Sutta (SN 44:7)

Then Vacchagotta the wanderer went to Ven. Mahā Moggallāna and, on arrival, exchanged courteous greetings with him. After an exchange of friendly greetings & courtesies, he sat to one side. As he was sitting there, he said to Ven. Mahā Moggallāna, “Now then, Master Moggallāna, is the cosmos eternal?”

“That has not been declared by the Blessed One, Vaccha: ‘The cosmos is eternal.’”

“Well then, Master Moggallāna, is the cosmos not eternal?”

“Vaccha, that too has not been declared by the Blessed One: ‘The cosmos is not eternal.’”

“Then is the cosmos finite?” ... “Is the cosmos infinite?” ... “Is the body the same as the soul?” ... “Is the body one thing, and the soul another?” ... “Does the Tathāgata exist after death?” ... “Does the Tathāgata not exist after death?” ... “Does the Tathāgata both exist and not exist after death?” ... “Does the Tathāgata neither exist nor not exist after death?”

“Vaccha, that too has not been declared by the Blessed One: ‘The Tathāgata neither exists nor does not exist after death.’”

“Now, Master Moggallāna, what is the cause, what is the reason why—when wanderers of other sects are asked in this way, they answer that ‘The cosmos is eternal’ or ‘The cosmos is not eternal’ or ‘The cosmos is finite’ or ‘The cosmos is infinite’ or ‘The body is the same as the soul’ or ‘The body is one thing and the soul another’ or ‘The Tathāgata exists after death’ or ‘The Tathāgata does not exist after death’ or ‘The Tathāgata both exists and does not exist after death’ or ‘The Tathāgata neither exists nor does not exist after death,’ yet when Gotama the contemplative is asked in this way, he does not answer that ‘The cosmos is eternal’ or ‘The cosmos is not eternal’ or ‘The cosmos is finite’ or ‘The cosmos is infinite’ or ‘The body is the same as the soul’ or ‘The body is one thing and the soul another’ or ‘The Tathāgata exists after death’ or ‘The Tathāgata does not exist after death’ or ‘The Tathāgata both exists and does not exist after death’ or ‘The Tathāgata neither exists nor does not exist after death?’”

“Vaccha, the members of other sects assume of the eye that ‘This is mine, this is my self, this is what I am.’ They assume of the ear... the nose... the tongue... the body... the intellect that ‘This is mine, this is my self, this is what I am.’ That is why, when asked in this way, they answer that ‘The cosmos is eternal?... or that ‘The Tathāgata neither exists nor does not exist after death.’ But the Tathāgata, worthy & rightly self-awakened, doesn’t assume of the eye that ‘This is mine, this is my self, this is what I am.’ He doesn’t assume of the ear... the nose... the tongue... the body... the intellect that ‘This is mine, this is my self, this is what I am.’ That is why, when asked in this way, he does not answer that ‘The cosmos is eternal?... or that ‘The Tathāgata neither exists nor does not exist after death.’”

The Vacchagotta the wanderer, getting up from his seat, went to the Blessed One and, on arrival, exchanged courteous greetings with him. After an exchange of friendly greetings & courtesies, he sat to one side. As he was sitting there, he (addressed the same questions to the Blessed One and received exactly the same explanation).

“Amazing, Master Gotama! Astounding! How the meaning and phrasing of the teacher and disciple agree, coincide, and do not diverge from one another with regard to the supreme teaching! Just now, Master Gotama, I went to the contemplative Moggallāna and, on arrival, asked him about this matter, and he answered me with the same words, the same phrasing, as Master Gotama. Amazing, Master Gotama! Astounding! How the meaning and phrasing of the teacher and disciple agree, coincide, and do not diverge from one another with regard to the supreme teaching!”

With Vacchagotta

Vacchagotta Sutta (SN 44:8)

Then Vacchagotta the wanderer went to the Blessed One and, on arrival, exchanged courteous greetings with him. After an exchange of friendly greetings & courtesies, he sat to one side. As he was sitting there, he said to the Blessed One, “Now then, Master Gotama, is the cosmos eternal?”

“That has not been declared by me, Vaccha: ‘The cosmos is eternal.’”

“Well then, Master Gotama, is the cosmos not eternal?”

“Vaccha, that too has not been declared by me: ‘The cosmos is not eternal.’”

“Then is the cosmos finite?” ... “Is the cosmos infinite?” ... “Is the body the same as the soul?” ... “Is the body one thing, and the soul another?” ... “Does the Tathāgata exist after death?” ... “Does the Tathāgata not exist after death?” ... “Does the Tathāgata both exist and not exist after death?” ... “Does the Tathāgata neither exist nor not exist after death?”

“Vaccha, that too has not been declared by me: ‘The Tathāgata neither exists nor does not exist after death.’

“Now, Master Gotama, what is the cause, what is the reason why—when wanderers of other sects are asked in this way, they answer that ‘The cosmos is eternal’ or ‘The cosmos is not eternal’ or ‘The cosmos is finite’ or ‘The cosmos is infinite’ or ‘The body is the same as the soul’ or ‘The body is one thing and the soul another’ or ‘The Tathāgata exists after death’ or ‘The Tathāgata does not exist after death’ or ‘The Tathāgata both exists and does not exist after death’ or ‘The Tathāgata neither exists nor does not exist after death,’ yet when Master Gotama is asked in this way, he does not answer that ‘The cosmos is eternal’ or ‘The cosmos is not eternal’ or ‘The cosmos is finite’ or ‘The cosmos is infinite’ or ‘The body is the same as the soul’ or ‘The body is one thing and the soul another’ or ‘The Tathāgata exists after death’ or ‘The Tathāgata does not exist after death’ or ‘The Tathāgata both exists and does not exist after death’ or ‘The Tathāgata neither exists nor does not exist after death?’”

“Vaccha, the members of other sects assume form to be the self, or the self as possessing form, or form as in the self, or the self as in form.

“They assume feeling to be the self...

“They assume perception to be the self...

“They assume fabrications to be the self...

“They assume consciousness to be the self, or the self as possessing consciousness, or consciousness as in the self, or the self as in consciousness. That is why, when asked in this way, they answer that ‘The cosmos is eternal’ ... or that ‘The Tathāgata neither exists nor does not exist after death.’

“But the Tathāgata, worthy & rightly self-awakened, doesn’t assume form to be the self, or the self as possessing form, or form as in the self, or the self as in form.

“He doesn’t assume feeling to be the self...

“He doesn’t assume perception to be the self...

“He doesn’t assume fabrications to be the self...

“He doesn’t assume consciousness to be the self, or the self as possessing consciousness, or consciousness as in the self, or the self as in consciousness. That is why, when asked in this way, he does not answer that ‘The cosmos is eternal’ ... or that ‘The Tathāgata neither exists nor does not exist after death.’”

The Vacchagotta the wanderer, getting up from his seat, went to Ven. Mahā Moggallāna and, on arrival, and, on arrival, exchanged courteous greetings with him. After an exchange of friendly greetings & courtesies, he sat to one side. As he was sitting there, he (addressed the same questions to Ven. Mahā Moggallāna and received exactly the same explanation).

“Amazing, Master Moggallāna! Astounding! How the meaning and phrasing of the teacher and disciple agree, coincide, and do not diverge from one another with regard to the supreme teaching! Just now, Master Moggallāna, I went to the contemplative Gotama and, on arrival, asked him about this matter, and he answered me with the same words, the same phrasing, as Master Moggallāna. Amazing, Master Moggallāna! Astounding! How the meaning and phrasing of the teacher and disciple agree, coincide, and do not diverge from one another with regard to the supreme teaching!”

The Debating Hall

Kutūhalasālā Sutta (SN 44:9)

Then Vacchagotta the wanderer went to the Blessed One and, on arrival, exchanged courteous greetings with him. After an exchange of friendly greetings & courtesies, he sat to one side. As he was sitting there, he said to the Blessed One, “Master Gotama, a few days ago a large number of contemplatives, brahmans, and wanderers of various sects were sitting together in the Debating Hall when this conversation arose among them: ‘This Pūraṇa Kassapa—the leader of a community, the leader of a group, the teacher of a group, honored and famous, esteemed as holy by the mass of people—describes a disciple who has died and

passed on in terms of places of rebirth: “That one is reborn there; that one is reborn there.” Even when the disciple is an ultimate person, a foremost person, attained to the foremost attainment, Pūraṇa Kassapa describes him, when he has died and passed on, in terms of places of rebirth: “That one is reborn there; that one is reborn there.”

“This Makkhali Gosāla... This Nigaṇṭha Nāṭaputta... This Saṇjaya Velatṭhaputta... This Pakudha Kaccāna... This Ajita Kesakambala—the leader of a community, the leader of a group, the teacher of a group, honored and famous, esteemed as holy by the mass of people—describes a disciple who has died and passed on in terms of places of rebirth: “That one is reborn there; that one is reborn there.” Even when the disciple is an ultimate person, a foremost person, attained to the foremost attainment, Ajita Kesakambala describes him, when he has died and passed on, in terms of places of rebirth: “That one is reborn there; that one is reborn there.”

“This contemplative Gotama—the leader of a community, the leader of a group, the teacher of a group, honored and famous, esteemed as holy by the mass of people—describes a disciple who has died and passed on in terms of places of rebirth: “That one is reborn there; that one is reborn there.” But when the disciple is an ultimate person, a foremost person, attained to the foremost attainment, the contemplative Gotama does not describe him, when he has died and passed on, in terms of places of rebirth: “That one is reborn there; that one is reborn there.” Instead, he describes him thus: “He has cut through craving, severed the fetter, and by rightly breaking through conceit has made an end of suffering & stress.”

“So I was simply befuddled. I was uncertain: How is the teaching of Gotama the contemplative to be understood?”

“Of course you are befuddled, Vaccha. Of course you are uncertain. When there is a reason for befuddlement in you, uncertainty arises. I designate the rebirth of one who has sustenance, Vaccha, and not of one without sustenance. Just as a fire burns with sustenance and not without sustenance, even so I designate the rebirth of one who has sustenance and not of one without sustenance.”

“But, Master Gotama, at the moment a flame is being swept on by the wind and goes a far distance, what do you designate as its sustenance then?”

“Vaccha, when a flame is being swept on by the wind and goes a far distance, I designate it as wind-sustained, for the wind is its sustenance at that time.”

“And at the moment when a being sets this body aside and is not yet reborn in another body, what do you designate as its sustenance then?”

“Vaccha, when a being sets this body aside and is not yet reborn in another body, I designate it as craving-sustained, for craving is its sustenance at that time.”

To Ānanda

Ānanda Sutta (SN 44:10)

Then the wanderer Vacchagotta went to the Blessed One and, on arrival, exchanged courteous greetings with him. After an exchange of friendly greetings & courtesies, he sat to one side. As he was sitting there he asked the Blessed One: “Now then, Master Gotama, is there a self?”

When this was said, the Blessed One was silent.

“Then is there no self?”

A second time, the Blessed One was silent.

Then Vacchagotta the wanderer got up from his seat and left.

Then, not long after Vacchagotta the wanderer had left, Ven. Ānanda said to the Blessed One, “Why, lord, did the Blessed One not answer when asked a question by Vacchagotta the wanderer?”

“Ānanda, if I—being asked by Vacchagotta the wanderer if there is a self—were to answer that there is a self, that would be conforming with those contemplatives & brahmans who are exponents of eternalism [the view that there is an eternal, unchanging soul]. If I—being asked by Vacchagotta the wanderer if there is no self—were to answer that there is no self, that would be conforming with those contemplatives &

brahmans who are exponents of annihilationism [the view that death is the annihilation of consciousness]. If I—being asked by Vacchagotta the wanderer if there is a self—were to answer that there is a self, would that be in keeping with the arising of knowledge that all phenomena are not-self?”

“No, lord.”

“And if I—being asked by Vacchagotta the wanderer if there is no self—were to answer that there is no self, the bewildered Vacchagotta would become even more bewildered: ‘Does the self I used to have now not exist?’”

See also: MN 2; MN 72; MN 109; [SN 12:35](#); [SN 22:59](#); AN 4:42; AN 10:93–96

With Sabhiya

Sabhiya Sutta (SN 44:11)

On one occasion Ven. Sabhiya Kaccāna was staying at Ñātika in the Brick Hall. Then Vacchagotta the wanderer went to him and, on arrival, exchanged courteous greetings with him. After an exchange of friendly greetings & courtesies, he sat to one side. As he was sitting there, he said to Ven. Sabhiya Kaccāna, “Now then, Master Kaccāna, does the Tathāgata exist after death?”

“Vaccha, that has not been declared by the Blessed One: ‘The Tathāgata exists after death.’”

“Well then, Master Kaccāna, does the Tathāgata not exist after death?”

“Vaccha, that too has not been declared by the Blessed One: ‘The Tathāgata does not exist after death.’”

“Then does the Tathāgata both exist and not exist after death?”

“That has not been declared by the Blessed One: ‘The Tathāgata both exists and does not exist after death.’”

“Well then, does the Tathāgata neither exist nor not exist after death?”

“That too has not been declared by the Blessed One: ‘The Tathāgata neither exists nor does not exist after death.’”

“Now, Master Kaccāna, when asked if the Tathāgata exists after death, you say, ‘That has not been declared by the Blessed One: “The Tathāgata exists after death.”’ When asked if the Tathāgata does not exist after death, you say, ‘That too has not been declared by the Blessed One: “The Tathāgata does not exist after death.”’ When asked if the Tathāgata both exists and does not exist after death, you say, ‘That has not been declared by the Blessed One: “The Tathāgata both exists and does not exist after death.”’ When asked if the Tathāgata neither exists nor does not exist after death, you say, ‘That too has not been declared by the Blessed One: “The Tathāgata neither exists nor does not exist after death.”’ Now, what is the cause, what is the reason, why that has not been declared by the contemplative Gotama?”

“Vaccha, whatever cause, whatever reason there would be for describing him as ‘possessed of form’ or ‘formless’ or ‘percipient’ or ‘non-percipient’ or ‘neither percipient nor non-percipient’: If that cause, that reason, were to cease totally everywhere, totally in every way without remainder, then describing him by what means would one describe him as ‘possessed of form’ or ‘formless’ or ‘percipient’ or ‘non-percipient’ or ‘neither percipient nor non-percipient’?”

“How long has it been since you went forth, Master Kaccāna?”

“Not long, my friend. Three years.”

“Whoever has gained just this much in this much time has gained a great deal, my friend—to say nothing of what he has thus gone beyond.”

See also: DN 15; [SN 23:2](#)

Ignorance

Avijjā Sutta (SN 45:1)

I have heard that on one occasion the Blessed One was staying near Sāvattthī in Jeta’s Grove, Anāthapiṇḍika’s monastery. There he addressed the monks, “Monks!”

“Yes, lord,” the monks responded to him.

The Blessed One said, “Monks, ignorance is the leader in the attainment of unskillful qualities, followed by lack of shame & lack of compunction. In an unknowledgeable person, immersed in ignorance, wrong view arises. In one of wrong view, wrong resolve arises. In one of wrong resolve, wrong speech.... In one of wrong speech, wrong action.... In one of wrong action, wrong livelihood.... In one of wrong livelihood, wrong effort.... In one of wrong effort, wrong mindfulness.... In one of wrong mindfulness, wrong concentration arises.

“Clear knowing is the leader in the attainment of skillful qualities, followed by shame & compunction. In a knowledgeable person, immersed in clear knowing, right view arises. In one of right view, right resolve arises. In one of right resolve, right speech.... In one of right speech, right action.... In one of right action, right livelihood.... In one of right livelihood, right effort.... In one of right effort, right mindfulness.... In one of right mindfulness, right concentration arises.”

See also: MN 117; [SN 22:126–127](#); [SN 22:131–132](#); AN 10:61; AN 10:103

Half (of the Holy Life)

Upaddha Sutta (SN 45:2)

I have heard that on one occasion the Blessed One was staying among the Sakyans. Now there is a Sakyan town named Sakkara. There Ven. Ānanda went to the Blessed One and, on arrival, having bowed down to the Blessed One, sat to one side. As he was sitting there, Ven. Ānanda said to the Blessed One, “This is half of the holy life, lord: having admirable people as friends, companions, & colleagues.”¹

“Don’t say that, Ānanda. Don’t say that. Having admirable people as friends, companions, & colleagues is actually the whole of the holy life. When a monk has admirable people as friends, companions, & colleagues, he can be expected to develop & pursue the noble eightfold path.

“And how does a monk who has admirable people as friends, companions, & colleagues, develop & pursue the noble eightfold path? There is the case where a monk develops right view dependent on seclusion, dependent on dispassion, dependent on cessation, resulting in relinquishment. He develops right resolve... right speech... right action... right livelihood... right effort... right mindfulness... right concentration dependent on seclusion, dependent on dispassion, dependent on cessation, resulting in relinquishment. This is how a monk who has admirable people as friends, companions, & colleagues, develops & pursues the noble eightfold path.

“And through this line of reasoning one may know how having admirable people as friends, companions, & colleagues is actually the whole of the holy life: It is in dependence on me as an admirable friend that beings subject to birth have gained release from birth, that beings subject to aging have gained release from aging, that beings subject to death have gained release from death, that beings subject to sorrow, lamentation, pain, distress, & despair have gained release from sorrow, lamentation, pain, distress, & despair. It is through this line of reasoning that one may know how having admirable people as friends, companions, & colleagues is actually the whole of the holy life.”

NOTE

1. As AN 8:54 points out, this means not only associating with good people, but also learning from them and emulating their good qualities.

See also: MN 95; AN 4:192; AN 8:54; AN 9:1; Ud 4:1; Iti 17

The Brahman

Brāhmaṇa Sutta (SN 45:4)

At Sāvattḥī. Then Ven. Ānanda early in the morning adjusted his under robe and—carrying his bowl & outer robes—went into Sāvattḥī for alms. He saw the brahman Jāṇussoṇin leaving Sāvattḥī in an all-white chariot drawn by mares.¹ White were the yoked horses, white the ornaments, white the chariot, white the upholstery, white the reins, white the goad, white the canopy, white his turban, white his clothes, white his sandals, and with a white yak-tail fan he was fanned. Seeing him, people were saying, “What a sublime vehicle! What a sublime-looking vehicle!”

Then Ven. Ānanda, having gone for alms in Sāvattḥī, after the meal, returning from his alms round, went to the Blessed One and, on arrival, having bowed down to him, sat to one side. As he was sitting there, he said to the Blessed One, “Just now, lord, early in the morning, I adjusted my under robe and—carrying my bowl & outer robes—went into Sāvattḥī for alms. I saw the brahman Jāṇussoṇin leaving Sāvattḥī in an all-white chariot drawn by mares. White were the yoked horses, white the ornaments, white the chariot, white the upholstery, white the reins, white the goad, white the canopy, white his turban, white his clothes, white his sandals, and with a white yak-tail fan he was fanned. Seeing him, people were saying, ‘What a sublime vehicle! What a sublime-looking vehicle!’ Is it possible to designate a sublime vehicle in this Dhamma-Vinaya?”

“It is possible, Ānanda,” said the Blessed One. “That is a synonym for this very same noble eightfold path: ‘sublime vehicle,’ ‘Dhamma-vehicle,’ ‘unexcelled victory in battle.’”

“Right view, Ānanda, when developed & pursued, has the subduing of passion as its end-point, the subduing of aversion as its end-point, the subduing of delusion as its end-point.

“Right resolve... Right speech... Right action... Right livelihood... Right effort... Right mindfulness... Right concentration, when developed & pursued, has the subduing of passion as its end-point, the subduing of aversion as its end-point, the subduing of delusion as its end-point.

“It is by this sequence of reasons that one can know how that is a synonym for this very same noble eightfold path: ‘sublime vehicle,’ ‘Dhamma-vehicle,’ ‘unexcelled victory in battle.’”

That is what the Blessed One said. Having said that, the One Well-Gone, the Teacher, said further:

One with the qualities
of conviction & discernment
always yoked to its shaft,
shame its pole, the heart its yoke-tie,
mindfulness the protective charioteer,
virtue the chariot-accessories,
jhāna the axle, persistence the wheels,
equanimity the balance of the yoke,
hungerless-ness its upholstery,
non-ill will, harmlessness, & seclusion its weapons,
patience its armor & shield:

It rolls to security from bondage.

Coming into play
from within oneself:

the sublime vehicle unsurpassed.

They, the enlightened, leave the world.

They, absolutely, win victory.

NOTE

1. Jāṇussoṇin and his all-white chariot also appear in MN 27 and MN 99.

An Analysis of the Path

Magga-Vibhaṅga Sutta (SN 45:8)

I have heard that at one time the Blessed One was staying near Sāvattthī in Jeta’s Grove, Anāthapiṇḍika’s monastery. There he addressed the monks, “Monks!”

“Yes, lord,” the monks responded to him.

The Blessed One said, “I will teach & analyze for you the noble eightfold path. Listen & pay close attention. I will speak.”

“As you say, lord,” the monks responded to him.

The Blessed One said, “Now what, monks, is the noble eightfold path? Right view, right resolve, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness, right concentration.

“And what, monks, is right view? Knowledge with regard to [or: in terms of] stress, knowledge with regard to the origination of stress, knowledge with regard to the stopping of stress, knowledge with regard to the way of practice leading to the stopping of stress: This, monks, is called right view.¹

“And what, monks, is right resolve? Resolve for renunciation, resolve for non-ill will, resolve for harmlessness: This, monks, is called right resolve.

“And what, monks, is right speech? Abstaining from lying, abstaining from divisive speech, abstaining from harsh speech, abstaining from idle chatter: This, monks, is called right speech.²

“And what, monks, is right action? Abstaining from taking life, abstaining from stealing, abstaining from sexual intercourse³: This, monks, is called right action.

“And what, monks, is right livelihood? There is the case where a disciple of the noble ones, having abandoned dishonest livelihood, keeps his life going with right livelihood. This, monks, is called right livelihood.

“And what, monks, is right effort? (i) There is the case where a monk generates desire, endeavors, activates persistence, upholds & exerts his intent for the sake of the non-arising of evil, unskillful qualities that have not yet arisen. (ii) He generates desire, endeavors, activates persistence, upholds & exerts his intent for the sake of the abandoning of evil, unskillful qualities that have arisen. (iii) He generates desire, endeavors, activates persistence, upholds & exerts his intent for the sake of the arising of skillful qualities that have not yet arisen. (iv) He generates desire, endeavors, activates persistence, upholds & exerts his intent for the maintenance, non-confusion, increase, plenitude, development, & culmination of skillful qualities that have arisen. This, monks, is called right effort.⁴

“And what, monks, is right mindfulness? (i) There is the case where a monk remains focused on the body in & of itself—ardent, alert, & mindful—subduing greed & distress with reference to the world. (ii) He remains focused on feelings in & of themselves—ardent, alert, & mindful—subduing greed & distress with reference to the world. (iii) He remains focused on the mind in & of itself—ardent, alert, & mindful—subduing greed & distress with reference to the world. (iv) He remains focused on mental qualities in & of themselves—ardent, alert, & mindful—subduing greed & distress with reference to the world. This, monks, is called right mindfulness.⁵

“And what, monks, is right concentration? (i) There is the case where a monk—quite secluded from sensuality,⁶ secluded from unskillful qualities⁷—enters & remains in the first jhāna: rapture & pleasure born of seclusion, accompanied by directed thought & evaluation. (ii) With the stilling of directed thoughts & evaluations, he enters & remains in the second jhāna: rapture & pleasure born of concentration, unification of awareness free from directed thought & evaluation—internal assurance. (iii) With the fading of rapture, he remains equanimous, mindful, & alert, and senses pleasure with the body. He enters & remains in the third jhāna, of which the noble ones declare, ‘Equanimous & mindful, he has a pleasant abiding.’ (iv) With the abandoning of pleasure & pain—as with the earlier disappearance of elation & distress—he enters & remains in the fourth jhāna: purity of

equanimity & mindfulness, neither pleasure nor pain. This, monks, is called right concentration.”⁸

That is what the Blessed One said. Gratified, the monks delighted in the Blessed One’s words.

NOTES

1. For further explanation of right view, see MN 2, MN 117, [SN 12:15](#), and AN 10:93.
 2. For more on right speech, see MN 58, [SN 11:5](#), AN 4:183, AN 5:198, AN 10:176, and Sn 3:3.
 3. DN 22 and MN 141, when analyzing right action, replace “abstaining from sexual intercourse” with “abstaining from sexual misconduct.”
 4. For more on right effort, see MN 101 and AN 6:55.
 5. For further explanation of right mindfulness, see DN 22 and the book, *Right Mindfulness*.
 6. For the meaning of “sensuality,” here, see AN 6:63.
 7. “And what, monks, are unskillful qualities? Wrong view, wrong resolve, wrong speech, wrong action, wrong livelihood, wrong effort, wrong mindfulness, wrong concentration.” — *SN 45:22*
 8. For further explanation of right concentration, see MN 44, MN 111, AN 4:41, AN 5:28, and AN 9:36.
- MN 44 explains why pain is not abandoned until pleasure is abandoned on entering the fourth jhāna:

[Visākha:] “In what way is pleasant feeling pleasant, lady, and in what way painful?”

[Sister Dhammadinnā:] “Pleasant feeling is pleasant in remaining, & painful in changing, friend Visākha. Painful feeling is painful in remaining & pleasant in changing. Neither-pleasant-nor-painful feeling is pleasant in occurring together with knowledge, and painful in occurring without knowledge.”

See also: MN 117; MN 126; [SN 12:65](#); [SN 35:197](#); AN 10:108; *Iti* 90

Admirable Friendship

Kalyāṇa-mittatā Sutta (SN 45:56–62)

“Monks, this is the forerunner, the harbinger of the rising of the sun, i.e., dawnrise. In the same way, this is the forerunner, the harbinger of the arising of the noble eightfold path in a monk, i.e., admirable friendship. It can be expected of a monk who has an admirable friend that he will develop the noble eightfold path, that he will pursue the noble eightfold path

“And how does a monk with admirable friendship develop the noble eightfold path, pursue the noble eightfold path?

“There is the case where a monk develops right view ending in the subduing of passion, ending in the subduing of aversion, ending in the subduing of delusion. He develops right resolve... right speech... right action... right livelihood... right effort... right mindfulness... right concentration ending in the subduing of passion, ending in the subduing of aversion, ending in the subduing of delusion.

“This, monks, is how a monk with admirable friendship develops the noble eightfold path, pursues the noble eightfold path.”

“Monks, this is the forerunner, the harbinger of the rising of the sun, i.e., dawnrise. In the same way, this is the forerunner, the harbinger of the arising of the noble eightfold path in a monk, i.e., virtue-consummation... desire-consummation... self-consummation [according to the Commentary, this means being consummate in the training of the mind]... view-consummation... heedfulness-consummation... appropriate attention. It can be expected of a monk who has appropriate attention that he will develop the noble eightfold path, that he will pursue the noble eightfold path.

“And how does a monk with appropriate attention develop the noble eightfold path, pursue the noble eightfold path?

“There is the case where a monk develops right view ending in the subduing of passion, ending in the subduing of aversion, ending in the subduing of delusion. He develops right resolve... right speech... right action... right livelihood... right effort... right mindfulness... right concentration ending in the subduing of passion, ending in the subduing of aversion, ending in the subduing of delusion.

“This, monks, is how a monk with appropriate attention develops the noble eightfold path, pursues the noble eightfold path.”

See also: MN 2; [SN 9:11](#); [SN 22:122](#); [SN 35:97](#); [SN 48:56](#); AN 5:25; AN 5:180; AN 9:1; Ud 4:1, Iti 16–17

The Spike

Suka Sutta (SN 45:154)

“It’s possible, monks, that a well-aimed spike of bearded wheat or bearded barley, when pressed by a hand or foot, will cut into the hand or foot and draw blood. Why is that? Because of the well-aimed-ness of the spike. In the same way, it is possible that a monk, through well-aimed view, through a well-aimed development of the path, will cut into ignorance, give rise to clear knowing, and realize unbinding. Why is that? Because of the well-aimed-ness of the view.

“And how does a monk, through well-aimed view, through a well-aimed development of the path, cut into ignorance, give rise to clear knowing, and realize unbinding? There is the case where a monk develops right view dependent on seclusion, dependent on dispassion, dependent on cessation, resulting in letting go. He develops right resolve... right speech... right action... right livelihood... right effort... right mindfulness... right concentration dependent on seclusion... dispassion... cessation, resulting in letting go. This is how a monk, through well-aimed view, through a well-aimed development of the path, cuts into ignorance, gives rise to clear knowing, and realizes unbinding.”

The Air

Ākāsa Sutta (SN 45:155)

“Monks, just as many kinds of wind blow in the air—east winds, west winds, north winds, south winds, dusty winds, dustless winds, cold winds, warm winds, gentle winds, & strong winds—in the same way, when the noble eightfold path is developed by a monk, is pursued by a monk, the four establishing of mindfulness go to the culmination of their development, the four right exertions... the four bases of power... the five faculties... the five strengths... the seven factors for awakening go to the culmination of their development.

“And how is it that when the noble eightfold path is developed by a monk, is pursued by a monk, the four establishing of mindfulness go to the culmination of their development, the four right exertions... the four bases of power... the five faculties... the five strengths... the seven factors for awakening go to the culmination of their development? There is the case where a monk develops right view dependent on seclusion, dependent on dispassion, dependent on cessation, resulting in letting go. He develops right resolve... right speech... right action... right livelihood... right effort... right mindfulness... right concentration dependent on seclusion... dispassion... cessation, resulting in letting go. This is how—when the noble eightfold path is developed by a monk, is pursued by a monk—the four establishing of mindfulness go to the culmination of their development, the four right exertions... the four bases of power... the five faculties... the five strengths... the seven factors for awakening go to the culmination of their development.”

Guests

Āgantukā Sutta (SN 45:159)

“Monks, suppose there is a guest house, and there people come from the east to take up residence, from the west... the north... the south to take up residence; noble warriors come to take up residence, brahmans... merchants... workers come to take up residence. In the same way, when a monk develops the noble eightfold path, pursues the noble eightfold path, he comprehends through direct knowledge whatever phenomena are to be comprehended through direct knowledge, abandons through direct knowledge whatever phenomena are to be abandoned through direct knowledge, realizes through direct knowledge whatever phenomena are to be realized through direct knowledge, and develops through direct knowledge whatever phenomena are to be developed through direct knowledge.

“And which phenomena are to be comprehended through direct knowledge? ‘The five clinging-aggregates,’ should be the reply. Which five? The form clinging-aggregate... the feeling clinging-aggregate... the perception clinging-aggregate... the fabrication clinging-aggregate... the consciousness clinging-aggregate. These are the phenomena that are to be comprehended through direct knowledge.

“And which phenomena are to be abandoned through direct knowledge? Ignorance & craving for becoming. These are the phenomena that are to be abandoned through direct knowledge.

“And which phenomena are to be realized through direct knowledge? Clear knowing & release. These are the phenomena that are to be realized through direct knowledge.

“And which phenomena are to be developed through direct knowledge? Tranquility & insight. These are the phenomena that are to be developed through direct knowledge.¹

“And how is it that when a monk develops the noble eightfold path, pursues the noble eightfold path, he comprehends through direct knowledge whatever phenomena are to be comprehended through direct knowledge, abandons through direct knowledge whatever phenomena are to be abandoned through direct knowledge, realizes through direct knowledge whatever phenomena are to be realized through direct knowledge, and develops through direct knowledge whatever phenomena are to be developed through direct knowledge?

“There is the case where a monk develops right view dependent on seclusion, dependent on dispassion, dependent on cessation, resulting in letting go. He develops right resolve... right speech... right action... right livelihood... right effort... right mindfulness... right concentration dependent on seclusion... dispassion... cessation, resulting in letting go. This is how—when a monk develops the noble eightfold path, pursues the noble eightfold path—he comprehends through direct knowledge whatever phenomena are to be comprehended through direct knowledge, abandons through direct knowledge whatever phenomena are to be abandoned through direct knowledge, realizes through direct knowledge whatever phenomena are to be realized through direct knowledge, and develops through direct knowledge whatever phenomena are to be developed through direct knowledge.”

NOTE

1. These four categories correspond roughly to the four noble truths and their respective duties. See [SN 56:11](#). These same four categories, listed in a different order, are also found in MN 149. Some scholars have interpreted MN 149 as an explanation of the path that does not include the practice of jhāna, but the explanation here shows that all eight factors of the path need to be developed in order to properly fulfill the duties with regard to these four categories.

Floods

Ogha Sutta (SN 45:171)

Near Sāvattthī. “Monks, there are these four floods. Which four? The flood of sensuality, the flood of becoming, the flood of views, & the flood of ignorance. These are the four floods.

“Now, this noble eightfold path is to be developed for direct knowledge of, comprehension of, the total ending of, & the abandoning of these four floods. Which noble eightfold path? There is the case where a monk develops right view dependent on seclusion, dependent on dispassion, dependent on cessation, resulting in relinquishment. He

develops right resolve... right speech... right action... right livelihood... right effort... right mindfulness... right concentration dependent on seclusion, dependent on dispassion, dependent on cessation, resulting in relinquishment. This noble eightfold path is to be developed for direct knowledge of, for comprehension of, for the total ending of, & for the abandoning of these four floods.”

See also: [SN 1:1](#); AN 4:10; AN 6:63; Sn 5

The Himalayas (On the Factors for awakening) *Himavanta Sutta (SN 46:1)*

“Monks, it is in dependence on the Himalayas, the king of mountains, that serpents [*nāgas*] grow in body and gain in strength. Having grown in body and gained strength there, they descend to the small lakes. Having descended to the small lakes, they descend to the large lakes... the small rivers... the large rivers... to the great ocean. There they attain greatness & prosperity in terms of the body.

“In the same way, it is in dependence on virtue, established on virtue, having developed & pursued the seven factors for awakening, that a monk attains to greatness & prosperity in terms of mental qualities. And how is it that a monk—in dependence on virtue, established on virtue, having developed & pursued the seven factors for awakening—attains to greatness & prosperity in terms of mental qualities?

“There is the case where a monk develops *mindfulness* as a factor for awakening dependent on seclusion, dependent on dispassion, dependent on cessation, resulting in relinquishment. He develops *analysis of qualities* as a factor for awakening... *persistence* as a factor for awakening... *rapture* as a factor for awakening... *calm* as a factor for awakening... *concentration* as a factor for awakening... *equanimity* as a factor for awakening dependent on seclusion, dependent on dispassion, dependent on cessation, resulting in relinquishment. This is how a monk—in dependence on virtue, established on virtue, having

developed & pursued the seven factors for awakening—attains to greatness & prosperity in terms of mental qualities.”

Clothes

Vattha Sutta (SN 46:4)

This sutta and the following one make the point that the factors for awakening are not factors of awakening. In other words, they lead to the experience of awakening, but they do not constitute the features of the awakened state. In this sutta, Ven. Sāriputta, an arahant, notes that he can observe the factors for awakening arising and passing away within him. If they were features of the awakened state, they would not pass away, as the awakened state is deathless. In the next sutta, the Buddha clearly states that the factors for awakening—or, in the Pali formulation, awakening-factors—are called that because they lead to awakening. Nowhere does he say that they constitute the features of the awakened state.

On one occasion Ven. Sāriputta was staying near Sāvattthī in Jeta’s Grove, Anāthapiṇḍika’s monastery. There he addressed the monks, “Friend monks!”

“Yes, friend,” the monks responded to him.

Ven. Sāriputta said, “Friends, there are these seven factors for awakening. Which seven? Mindfulness as a factor for awakening, analysis of qualities as a factor for awakening, persistence as a factor for awakening, rapture as a factor for awakening, calm as a factor for awakening, concentration as a factor for awakening, & equanimity as a factor for awakening. These are the seven factors for awakening.

“Whichever factor for awakening among these seven factors for awakening I want to dwell in during the morning, I dwell in that factor for awakening during the morning. Whichever factor for awakening I want to dwell in during the middle of the day, I dwell in that factor for awakening during the middle of the day. Whichever factor for

awakening I want to dwell in during the late afternoon, I dwell in that factor for awakening during the late afternoon.

“If the thought occurs to me, ‘mindfulness as a factor for awakening,’ the thought occurs to me, ‘It is immeasurable’; the thought occurs to me, ‘It is well-mastered.’ While it remains, I discern, ‘It remains.’ If it falls away from me, I discern, ‘It has fallen away from me because of this condition.’

[Similarly with analysis of qualities as a factor for awakening, persistence as a factor for awakening, rapture as a factor for awakening, calm as a factor for awakening, and concentration as a factor for awakening.]

“If the thought occurs to me, ‘equanimity as a factor for awakening,’ the thought occurs to me, ‘It is immeasurable’; the thought occurs to me, ‘It is well-mastered.’ While it remains, I discern, ‘It remains.’ If it falls away from me, I discern, ‘It has fallen away from me because of this condition.’

“Suppose, friends, that a king or king’s minister had a wardrobe full of many-colored clothes. Whichever set of clothes he might want to wear during the morning, he would wear that set of clothes during the morning. Whichever set of clothes he might want to wear during the middle of the day, he would wear that set of clothes during the middle of the day. Whichever set of clothes he might want to wear during the late afternoon, he would wear that set of clothes during the late afternoon.

“In the same way, whichever factor for awakening among these seven factors for awakening I want to dwell in during the morning, I dwell in that factor for awakening during the morning. Whichever factor for awakening I want to dwell in during the middle of the day, I dwell in that factor for awakening during the middle of the day. Whichever factor for awakening I want to dwell in during the late afternoon, I dwell in that factor for awakening during the late afternoon.

“If the thought occurs to me, ‘mindfulness as a factor for awakening,’ the thought occurs to me, ‘It is immeasurable’; the thought occurs to me, ‘It is well-mastered.’ While it remains, I discern, ‘It remains.’ If it falls away from me, I discern, ‘It has fallen away from me because of this condition.’

[Similarly with analysis of qualities as a factor for awakening, persistence as a factor for awakening, rapture as a factor for awakening, calm as a factor for awakening, and concentration as a factor for awakening.]

“If the thought occurs to me, ‘equanimity as a factor for awakening,’ the thought occurs to me, ‘It is immeasurable’; the thought occurs to me, ‘It is well-mastered.’ While it remains, I discern, ‘It remains.’ If it falls away from me, I discern, ‘It has fallen away from me because of this condition.’”

See also: [SN 22:122](#); [SN 52:9](#); [SN 52:10](#); [SN 54:11](#)

To a Monk

Bhikkhu Sutta (SN 46:5)

Then a certain monk approached the Blessed One and, on arrival, bowed down to him and sat to one side. As he was sitting there, he said to the Blessed One, “Lord, ‘factors for awakening, factors for awakening,’ it is said. To what extent are they said to be factors for awakening?”

“They lead to awakening, monk. Therefore they are said to be factors for awakening.

“There is the case where a monk develops *mindfulness* as a factor for awakening dependent on seclusion, dependent on dispassion, dependent on cessation, resulting in letting go. He develops *analysis of qualities* as a factor for awakening... *persistence* as a factor for awakening... *rapture* as a factor for awakening... *calm* as a factor for awakening... *concentration* as a factor for awakening... *equanimity* as a factor for awakening dependent on seclusion, dependent on dispassion, dependent on cessation, resulting in letting go.

“When these factors for awakening are developed, the mind is released from the effluent of sensuality, the mind is released from the effluent of becoming, the mind is released from the effluent of ignorance. With release, there is the knowledge, ‘Released.’ One discerns

that ‘Birth is ended, the holy life fulfilled, the task done. There is nothing further for the sake of this world.’

“They lead to awakening, monk. Therefore they are said to be factors for awakening.”

Upavāṇa

Upavāṇa Sutta (SN 46:8)

On one occasion Ven. Upavāṇa & Ven. Sāriputta were staying near Kosambī at Ghosita’s Monastery. Then, having left his seclusion in the late afternoon, Ven. Sāriputta went to Ven. Upavāṇa and, on arrival, exchanged courteous greetings with him. After an exchange of friendly greetings & courtesies, he sat to one side. As he was sitting there he said to Ven. Upavāṇa, “Friend Upavāṇa, would a monk know for himself that ‘Through appropriate attention, the seven factors for awakening, mastered in me in such a way, lead to a pleasant abiding?’”

“Friend Sāriputta, a monk would know for himself that ‘Through appropriate attention, the seven factors for awakening, mastered in me in such a way, lead to a pleasant abiding.’

“When arousing mindfulness as a factor for awakening, the monk discerns, ‘My mind is well released; sloth & drowsiness are well uprooted in me; restlessness & anxiety are well subdued in me; my persistence is aroused; I attend (to it) in a focused way, not sluggishly.’

“When arousing analysis of qualities as a factor for awakening... persistence as a factor for awakening... rapture as a factor for awakening... calm as a factor for awakening... concentration as a factor for awakening...”

“When arousing equanimity as a factor for awakening, the monk discerns, ‘My mind is well released; sloth & drowsiness are well uprooted in me; restlessness & anxiety are well subdued in me; my persistence is aroused; I attend (to it) in a focused way, not sluggishly.’

“It’s in this way, friend Sāriputta, that a monk would know for himself that ‘Through appropriate attention, the seven factors for

awakening, mastered in me in such a way, lead to a pleasant abiding.”

See also: [SN 46:51](#)

Living Beings

Pāṇa Sutta (SN 46:11)

“Monks, just as the living beings that assume the four postures—at times walking, at times standing, at times sitting down, at times lying down—all assume the four postures in dependence on the earth, established on the earth; in the same way, it’s in dependence on virtue, established on virtue, that a monk develops the seven factors for awakening & pursues the seven factors for awakening.

“And how is it that a monk—in dependence on virtue, established on virtue—develops the seven factors for awakening & pursues the seven factors for awakening?

“There is the case where a monk develops *mindfulness* as a factor for awakening dependent on seclusion, dependent on dispassion, dependent on cessation, resulting in letting go. He develops *analysis of qualities* as a factor for awakening... *persistence* as a factor for awakening... *rapture* as a factor for awakening... *calm* as a factor for awakening... *concentration* as a factor for awakening... *equanimity* as a factor for awakening dependent on seclusion, dependent on dispassion, dependent on cessation, resulting in letting go.

“It’s in this way that a monk—in dependence on virtue, established on virtue—develops the seven factors for awakening & pursues the seven factors for awakening.”

See also: [SN 46:1](#)

Ill

Gilāna Sutta (SN 46:14)

I have heard that on one occasion the Blessed One was staying near Rājagaha in the Bamboo Forest, the Squirrels' Sanctuary. And on that occasion Ven. Mahā Kassapa was staying in the Pepper Tree Cave: diseased, in pain, severely ill. Then the Blessed One, emerging from his seclusion in the evening, went to Ven. Mahā Kassapa and, on arrival, sat down on a seat made ready. Having sat down, he said to Ven. Mahā Kassapa, "I hope you are getting better, Kassapa. I hope you are comfortable. I hope that your pains are lessening and not increasing. I hope that there are signs of their lessening, and not of their increasing."

"I am not getting better, lord. I am not comfortable. My extreme pains are increasing, not lessening. There are signs of their increasing, and not of their lessening."

"Kassapa, these seven factors for awakening rightly taught by me, when developed and pursued, lead to direct knowledge, to self-awakening, to unbinding. Which seven?"

"Mindfulness as a factor for awakening rightly taught by me, when developed and pursued, leads to direct knowledge, to self-awakening, to unbinding."

"Analysis of qualities as a factor for awakening, rightly taught by me, when developed and pursued, leads to direct knowledge, to self-awakening, to unbinding."

"Persistence as a factor for awakening...."

"Rapture as a factor for awakening...."

"Calm as a factor for awakening...."

"Concentration as a factor for awakening...."

"Equanimity as a factor for awakening rightly taught by me, when developed and pursued, leads to direct knowledge, to self-awakening, to unbinding."

"Kassapa, these are the seven factors for awakening rightly taught by me that—when developed and pursued—lead to direct knowledge, to self-awakening, to unbinding."

"They are indeed factors for awakening, O Blessed One. They are indeed factors for awakening, O One Well-Gone."

That is what the Blessed One said. Gratified, Ven. Mahā Kassapa delighted in the Blessed One’s words. And Ven. Mahā Kassapa recovered from his disease. That was how Ven. Mahā Kassapa’s disease was abandoned.

See also: MN 146; [SN 22:88](#); [SN 36:7](#); [SN 52:10](#); AN 10:60; Thag 5:8

Neglected

Viraddha Sutta (SN 46:18)

“Monks, those in whom the seven factors for awakening are neglected, in them the noble path leading to the right ending of suffering & stress is neglected. Those in whom the seven factors for awakening are aroused, in them the noble path leading to the right ending of suffering & stress is aroused.

“Which seven? Mindfulness as a factor for awakening, analysis of qualities as a factor for awakening, persistence as a factor for awakening, rapture as a factor for awakening, calm as a factor for awakening, concentration as a factor for awakening, & equanimity as a factor for awakening. These are the seven factors for awakening.

“Those in whom these seven factors for awakening are neglected, in them the noble path leading to the right ending of suffering & stress is neglected. Those in whom these seven factors for awakening are aroused, in them the noble path leading to the right ending of suffering & stress is aroused.”

See also: [SN 47:33](#)

Ending

Khaya Sutta (SN 46:26)

“Monks, develop the path & practice leading to the ending of craving. And which is the path, which is the practice, leading to the ending of

craving? The seven factors for awakening: mindfulness as a factor for awakening, analysis of qualities as a factor for awakening, persistence as a factor for awakening, rapture as a factor for awakening, calm as a factor for awakening, concentration as a factor for awakening, & equanimity as a factor for awakening.

“When this was said, Ven. Udāyin said to the Blessed One, “How are the seven factors for awakening developed, how are they pursued, so as to lead to the ending of craving?”

“There is the case, Udāyin, where a monk develops mindfulness as a factor for awakening dependent on seclusion, dependent on dispassion, dependent on cessation,¹ abundant, enlarged, immeasurable, without ill will. In him—as mindfulness as a factor for awakening is developed dependent on seclusion, dependent on dispassion, dependent on cessation, abundant, enlarged, immeasurable, without ill will—craving is abandoned.

[Similarly with the remaining factors for awakening.]

“From the abandoning of craving, action [*kamma*] is abandoned. From the abandoning of action, stress is abandoned.

“Thus, Udāyin, from the ending of craving comes the ending of action; from the ending of action, the ending of stress.”

NOTE

1. Here the Burmese and Sri Lankan editions add, “resulting in letting go.”

One Quality

Ekadhamma Sutta (SN 46:29)

“Monks, I don’t envision any one other quality that, when thus developed & pursued, leads to the abandoning of things conducive to the fetters,¹ aside from the seven factors for awakening. Which seven?

“There is the case where a monk develops *mindfulness* as a factor for awakening dependent on seclusion, dependent on dispassion, dependent on cessation, resulting in letting go. He develops *analysis of qualities* as a factor for awakening... *persistence* as a factor for awakening... *rapture* as a factor for awakening... *calm* as a factor for awakening... *concentration* as a factor for awakening... *equanimity* as a factor for awakening dependent on seclusion, dependent on dispassion, dependent on cessation, resulting in letting go.

“When thus developed & pursued, the seven factors for awakening lead to the abandoning of things conducive to the fetters.

“And what are the things conducive to the fetters? The eye is a thing conducive to the fetters. It is here that these fetters, shackles, & graspings arise.

“The ear... the nose... the tongue... the body... the intellect is a thing conducive to the fetters. It is here that these fetters, shackles, & graspings arise. These are called the things conducive to the fetters.”

NOTE

1. *Saññojanīyā dhammā*. NDB mistakenly translates this as “things that fetter.” But as [SN 35:191](#) makes clear, the senses are not fetters. The fetter lies in the desire-passion that arises in dependence on each sense organ and its appropriate object.

See also: [SN 4:19](#); [SN 35:117](#)

To Udāyin

Udāyin Sutta (SN 46:30)

I have heard that on one occasion the Blessed One was staying among the Sumbhas. Now there is a Sumbhan town named Sedaka. Then Ven. Udāyin went to the Blessed One and, on arrival, bowed down to him and sat to one side. As he was sitting there, he said to the Blessed One, “It’s amazing, lord. It’s astounding, how much they have done for me—my love & respect for the Blessed One, my sense of shame &

compunction. Before, when I was a householder, I wasn't appreciative of the Dhamma or the Saṅgha, but contemplating my love & respect for the Blessed One, my sense of shame & compunction, I went forth from home life into homelessness. The Blessed One taught me the Dhamma: 'Such is form, such the origination of form, such the disappearance of form. Such is feeling... Such is perception... Such are fabrications... Such is consciousness, such the origination of consciousness, such the disappearance of consciousness.'

"Then, lord, when I was staying in an empty dwelling, turning over (in my mind) the setting upright & toppling over of these five clinging-aggregates, I directly knew as it had come to be, 'This is stress... This is the origination of stress... This is the cessation of stress... This is the way of practice leading to the cessation of stress.'

"I have broken through to the Dhamma, lord, and have gained the path that—when I have developed & cultivated it—will lead me to such a state that, dwelling by means of it, I will discern, 'Birth is ended, the holy life fulfilled, the task done. There is nothing further for the sake of this world.'

"I have gained mindfulness as a factor for awakening that—when I have developed & cultivated it—will lead me to such a state that, dwelling by means of it, I will discern, 'Birth is ended, the holy life fulfilled, the task done. There is nothing further for the sake of this world.'

"I have gained analysis of qualities as a factor for awakening... persistence as a factor for awakening... rapture as a factor for awakening... calm as a factor for awakening... concentration as a factor for awakening...

"I have gained equanimity as a factor for awakening that—when I have developed & cultivated it—will lead me to such a state that, dwelling by means of it, I will discern, 'Birth is ended, the holy life fulfilled, the task done. There is nothing further for the sake of this world.'

"This, lord, is the path I have gained that—when I have developed & cultivated it—will lead me to such a state that, dwelling by means of it, I

will discern, ‘Birth is ended, the holy life fulfilled, the task done. There is nothing further for the sake of this world.’”

“Excellent, Udāyin, excellent. For this *is* the path that you have gained that—when you have developed & cultivated it—will lead you to such as a state that, dwelling by means of it, you will discern, ‘Birth is ended, the holy life fulfilled, the task done. There is nothing further for the sake of this world.’”

See also: AN 3:87–88

Food (for the Factors for awakening) *Āhāra Sutta (SN 46:51)*

“Monks, I will teach you the feeding & starving of the five hindrances & of the seven factors for awakening. Listen & pay close attention. I will speak....

FEEDING THE HINDRANCES

“And what is the food for the arising of unarisen *sensual desire*, or for the growth & increase of sensual desire once it has arisen? There is the theme of beauty. To foster inappropriate attention to it: This is the food for the arising of unarisen sensual desire, or for the growth & increase of sensual desire once it has arisen.

“And what is the food for the arising of unarisen *ill will*, or for the growth & increase of ill will once it has arisen? There is the theme of irritation. To foster inappropriate attention to it: This is the food for the arising of unarisen ill will, or for the growth & increase of ill will once it has arisen.

“And what is the food for the arising of unarisen *sloth & drowsiness*, or for the growth & increase of sloth & drowsiness once it has arisen? There are boredom, weariness, yawning, drowsiness after a meal, & sluggishness of awareness. To foster inappropriate attention to them:

This is the food for the arising of unarisen sloth & drowsiness, or for the growth & increase of sloth & drowsiness once it has arisen.

“And what is the food for the arising of unarisen *restlessness & anxiety*, or for the growth & increase of restlessness & anxiety once it has arisen? There is non-stillness of awareness. To foster inappropriate attention to that: This is the food for the arising of unarisen restlessness & anxiety, or for the growth & increase of restlessness & anxiety once it has arisen.

“And what is the food for the arising of unarisen *uncertainty*, or for the growth & increase of uncertainty once it has arisen? There are phenomena that act as a foothold for uncertainty. To foster inappropriate attention to them: This is the food for the arising of unarisen uncertainty, or for the growth & increase of uncertainty once it has arisen.

FEEDING THE FACTORS FOR AWAKENING

“Now, what is the food for the arising of unarisen *mindfulness* as a factor for awakening, or for the growth & increase of mindfulness as a factor for awakening once it has arisen? There are mental qualities that act as a foothold for mindfulness as a factor for awakening [well-purified virtue & views made straight]. To foster appropriate attention to them: This is the food for the arising of unarisen mindfulness as a factor for awakening, or for the growth & increase of mindfulness as a factor for awakening once it has arisen.

“And what is the food for the arising of unarisen *analysis of qualities* as a factor for awakening, or for the growth & increase of analysis of qualities... once it has arisen? There are mental qualities that are skillful & unskillful, blameworthy & blameless, gross & refined, siding with darkness & with light. To foster appropriate attention to them: This is the food for the arising of unarisen analysis of qualities as a factor for awakening, or for the growth & increase of analysis of qualities... once it has arisen.

“And what is the food for the arising of unarisen *persistence* as a factor for awakening, or for the growth & increase of persistence... once it has arisen? There is the potential for effort, the potential for exertion, the

potential for striving. To foster appropriate attention to them: This is the food for the arising of unarisen persistence as a factor for awakening, or for the growth & increase of persistence... once it has arisen.

“And what is the food for the arising of unarisen *rapture* as a factor for awakening, or for the growth & increase of rapture... once it has arisen? There are mental qualities that act as a foothold for rapture as a factor for awakening. To foster appropriate attention to them: This is the food for the arising of unarisen rapture as a factor for awakening, or for the growth & increase of rapture... once it has arisen.

“And what is the food for the arising of unarisen *calm* as a factor for awakening, or for the growth & increase of calm... once it has arisen? There is physical calm & there is mental calm. To foster appropriate attention to them: This is the food for the arising of unarisen calm as a factor for awakening, or for the growth & increase of calm... once it has arisen.

“And what is the food for the arising of unarisen *concentration* as a factor for awakening, or for the growth & increase of concentration... once it has arisen? There are themes for tranquility, themes for non-distraction [these are the four establishings of mindfulness—see MN 44]. To foster appropriate attention to them: This is the food for the arising of unarisen concentration as a factor for awakening, or for the growth & increase of concentration... once it has arisen.

“And what is the food for the arising of unarisen *equanimity* as a factor for awakening, or for the growth & increase of equanimity... once it has arisen? There are mental qualities that act as a foothold for equanimity as a factor for awakening. To foster appropriate attention to them: This is the food for the arising of unarisen equanimity as a factor for awakening, or for the growth & increase of equanimity as a factor for awakening once it has arisen.

STARVING THE HINDRANCES

“Now, what is lack of food for the arising of unarisen sensual desire, or for the growth & increase of sensual desire once it has arisen? There is the theme of unattractiveness. To foster appropriate attention to it: This

is lack of food for the arising of unarisen sensual desire, or for the growth & increase of sensual desire once it has arisen.

“And what is lack of food for the arising of unarisen *ill will*, or for the growth & increase of ill will once it has arisen? There is awareness-release [through goodwill, compassion, empathetic joy, or equanimity]. To foster appropriate attention to that: This is lack of food for the arising of unarisen ill will, or for the growth & increase of ill will once it has arisen.

“And what is lack of food for the arising of unarisen *sloth & drowsiness*, or for the growth & increase of sloth & drowsiness once it has arisen? There is the potential for effort, the potential for exertion, the potential for striving. To foster appropriate attention to them: This is lack of food for the arising of unarisen sloth & drowsiness, or for the growth & increase of sloth & drowsiness once it has arisen.

“And what is lack of food for the arising of unarisen *restlessness & anxiety*, or for the growth & increase of restlessness & anxiety once it has arisen? There is stillness of awareness. To foster appropriate attention to that: This is lack of food for the arising of unarisen restlessness & anxiety, or for the growth & increase of restlessness & anxiety once it has arisen.

“And what is lack of food for the arising of unarisen *uncertainty*, or for the growth & increase of uncertainty once it has arisen? There are mental qualities that are skillful & unskillful, blameworthy & blameless, gross & refined, siding with darkness & with light. To foster appropriate attention to them: This is lack of food for the arising of unarisen uncertainty, or for the growth & increase of uncertainty once it has arisen.

STARVING THE FACTORS FOR AWAKENING

“Now, what is lack of food for the arising of unarisen *mindfulness* as a factor for awakening, or for the growth & increase of mindfulness as a factor for awakening once it has arisen? There are mental qualities that act as a foothold for mindfulness as a factor for awakening. Not fostering attention to them: This is lack of food for the arising of unarisen

mindfulness as a factor for awakening, or for the growth & increase of mindfulness as a factor for awakening once it has arisen.

“And what is lack of food for the arising of unarisen *analysis of qualities* as a factor for awakening, or for the growth & increase of analysis of qualities... once it has arisen? There are mental qualities that are skillful & unskillful, blameworthy & blameless, gross & refined, siding with darkness & with light. Not fostering attention to them: This is lack of food for the arising of unarisen analysis of qualities as a factor for awakening, or for the growth & increase of analysis of qualities... once it has arisen.

“And what is lack of food for the arising of unarisen *persistence* as a factor for awakening, or for the growth & increase of persistence... once it has arisen? There is the potential for effort, the potential for exertion, the potential for striving. Not fostering attention to them: This is lack of food for the arising of unarisen persistence as a factor for awakening, or for the growth & increase of persistence... once it has arisen.

“And what is lack of food for the arising of unarisen *rapture* as a factor for awakening, or for the growth & increase of rapture... once it has arisen? There are mental qualities that act as a foothold for rapture as a factor for awakening. Not fostering attention to them: This is lack of food for the arising of unarisen rapture as a factor for awakening, or for the growth & increase of rapture... once it has arisen.

“And what is lack of food for the arising of unarisen *calm* as a factor for awakening, or for the growth & increase of calm... once it has arisen? There is physical calm & there is mental calm. Not fostering attention to them: This is lack of food for the arising of unarisen calm as a factor for awakening, or for the growth & increase of calm... once it has arisen.

“And what is lack of food for the arising of unarisen *concentration* as a factor for awakening, or for the growth & increase of concentration... once it has arisen? There are the themes for tranquility, themes for non-distraction. Not fostering attention to them: This is lack of food for the arising of unarisen concentration as a factor for awakening, or for the growth & increase of concentration... once it has arisen.

“And what is lack of food for the arising of unarisen *equanimity* as a factor for awakening, or for the growth & increase of equanimity as a

factor for awakening once it has arisen? There are mental qualities that act as a foothold for equanimity as a factor for awakening. Not fostering attention to them: This is lack of food for the arising of unarisen equanimity as a factor for awakening, or for the growth & increase of equanimity as a factor for awakening once it has arisen.”

See also: MN 2; [SN 22:122](#); AN 5:51

An Exposition

Pariyāya Sutta (SN 46:52)

Then, early in the morning, a large number of monks adjusted their lower robes and, taking their bowls & outer robes, went into Sāvattthī for alms. Then the thought occurred to them, “It’s still too early to go for alms in Sāvattthī. Why don’t we go to the park of the wanderers of other sects?”

So the monks went to the park of the wanderers of other sects. On arrival, they exchanged courteous greetings with the wanderers of other sects. After an exchange of friendly greetings & courtesies, they sat to one side.

As they were sitting there, the wanderers of other sects said to them, “Friends, Gotama the contemplative teaches the Dhamma to his disciples in this way: ‘Come, monks—abandoning the five hindrances, the corruptions of awareness that weaken discernment—develop the seven factors for awakening as they have come to be.’

“Now, friends, we too teach our disciples in this way: ‘Come, you friends—abandoning the five hindrances, the corruptions of awareness that weaken discernment—develop the seven factors for awakening as they have come to be.’

“So, friends, what difference, what distinction, what distinguishing factor is there here between Gotama the contemplative and us, when comparing Dhamma teaching with Dhamma teaching, instruction with instruction?”

Then the monks neither delighted in the words of the wanderers of other sects, nor did they reject them. Without delighting or rejecting, they got up from their seats and left, (thinking,) “We will learn the meaning of these words in the presence of the Blessed One.”

So, having gone for alms in Sāvattihī, after the meal, returning from their alms round, the monks went to the Blessed One and, on arrival, having bowed down to him, sat to one side. As they were sitting there they [told him what had happened].

“Monks, when wanderers of other sects speak in that way, they should be addressed in this way: ‘But friends, is there an exposition, following which, the five hindrances become ten, and the seven factors for awakening fourteen?’

“Being asked in this way, the wanderers of other sects will be unable to respond and, on top of that, will fall into vexation. Why is that? Because it lies beyond their range. Monks, I don’t see anyone in this cosmos with its devas, Māras, & Brahmās, in this generation with its contemplatives & brahmans, its royalty & commonfolk, who would satisfy the mind with their answer to these questions, aside from the Tathāgata, a disciple of the Tathāgata, or one who had heard it from them.

“And which, monks, is the exposition, following which, the five hindrances become ten?

“Any sensual desire for what is internal is a hindrance. Any sensual desire for what is external is a hindrance. Thus what comes under the heading of ‘the hindrance of sensual desire’ becomes, by means of this exposition, twofold.

“Any ill will for what is internal is a hindrance. Any ill will for what is external is a hindrance. Thus what comes under the heading of ‘the hindrance of ill will’ becomes, by means of this exposition, twofold.

“Any sloth is a hindrance. Any drowsiness is a hindrance. Thus what comes under the heading of ‘the hindrance of sloth & drowsiness’ becomes, by means of this exposition, twofold.

“Any restlessness is a hindrance. Any anxiety is a hindrance. Thus what comes under the heading of ‘the hindrance of restlessness &

anxiety' becomes, by means of this exposition, twofold.

"Any uncertainty over what is internal is a hindrance. Any uncertainty over what is external is a hindrance. Thus what comes under the heading of 'the hindrance of uncertainty' becomes, by means of this exposition, twofold.

"This, monks, is the exposition, following which, the five hindrances become ten.

"And which is the exposition, following which, the seven factors for awakening become fourteen?

"Any mindfulness concerning internal qualities is mindfulness as a factor for awakening. Any mindfulness concerning external qualities is mindfulness as a factor for awakening. Thus what comes under the heading of 'mindfulness as a factor for awakening' becomes, by means of this exposition, twofold.

"Whenever one, with discernment, investigates, carefully attends to, and makes an examination of internal qualities, that is analysis of qualities as a factor for awakening. Whenever one, with discernment, investigates, carefully attends to, and makes an examination of external qualities, that is analysis of qualities as a factor for awakening. Thus what comes under the heading of 'analysis of qualities as a factor for awakening' becomes, by means of this exposition, twofold.

"Any bodily persistence is persistence as a factor for awakening. Any mental persistence is persistence as a factor for awakening. Thus what comes under the heading of 'persistence as a factor for awakening' becomes, by means of this exposition, twofold.

"Any rapture accompanied by directed thought & evaluation is rapture as a factor for awakening. Any rapture unaccompanied by directed thought & evaluation is rapture as a factor for awakening. Thus what comes under the heading of 'rapture as a factor for awakening' becomes, by means of this exposition, twofold.

"Any bodily calm is calm as a factor for awakening. Any mental calm is calm as a factor for awakening. Thus what comes under the heading of 'calm as a factor for awakening' becomes, by means of this exposition, twofold.

“Any concentration accompanied by directed thought & evaluation is concentration as a factor for awakening. Any concentration unaccompanied by directed thought & evaluation is concentration as a factor for awakening. Thus what comes under the heading of ‘concentration as a factor for awakening’ becomes, by means of this exposition, twofold.

“Any equanimity concerning internal qualities is equanimity as a factor for awakening. Any equanimity concerning external qualities is equanimity as a factor for awakening. Thus what comes under the heading of ‘equanimity as a factor for awakening’ becomes, by means of this exposition, twofold.

“This, monks, is the exposition, following which, the seven factors for awakening are fourteen.”

See also: DN 22; MN 137; [SN 45:8](#)

Fire

Aggi Sutta (SN 46:53)

Then, early in the morning, a large number of monks adjusted their lower robes and, taking their bowls & outer robes, went into Sāvatthī for alms. Then the thought occurred to them, “It’s still too early to go for alms in Sāvatthī. Why don’t we go to the park of the wanderers of other sects?”

So the monks went to the park of the wanderers of other sects. On arrival, they exchanged courteous greetings with the wanderers of other sects. After an exchange of friendly greetings & courtesies, they sat to one side.

As they were sitting there, the wanderers of other sects said to them, “Friends, Gotama the contemplative teaches the Dhamma to his disciples in this way: ‘Come, monks—abandoning the five hindrances, the corruptions of awareness that weaken discernment—develop the seven factors for awakening as they have come to be.’

“Now, friends, we too teach our disciples in this way: ‘Come, you friends—abandoning the five hindrances, the corruptions of awareness that weaken discernment—develop the seven factors for awakening as they have come to be.’

“So, friends, what difference, what distinction, what distinguishing factor is there here between Gotama the contemplative and us, when comparing Dhamma teaching with Dhamma teaching, instruction with instruction?”

Then the monks neither delighted in the words of the wanderers of other sects, nor did they reject them. Without delighting or rejecting, they got up from their seats and left, (thinking,) “We will learn the meaning of these words in the presence of the Blessed One.”

So, having gone for alms in Sāvattthī, after the meal, returning from their alms round, the monks went to the Blessed One and, on arrival, having bowed down to him, sat to one side. As they were sitting there they [told him what had happened].

“Monks, when wanderers of other sects speak in that way, they should be addressed in this way: ‘Friends, on any occasion when the mind is sluggish, which of the factors of awakening is that the wrong time to develop? Which of the factors of awakening is that the right time to develop? And on any occasion when the mind is restless, which of the factors of awakening is that the wrong time to develop? Which of the factors of awakening is that the right time to develop?’

“Being asked in this way, the wanderers of other sects will be unable to respond and, on top of that, will fall into vexation. Why is that? Because it lies beyond their range. Monks, I don’t see anyone in this cosmos with its devas, Māras, & Brahmās, in this generation with its contemplatives & brahmans, its royalty & commonfolk, who would satisfy the mind with their answer to these questions, aside from the Tathāgata, a disciple of the Tathāgata, or one who had heard it from them.

“Now, monks, on any occasion when the mind is sluggish, that is the wrong time to develop calm as a factor for awakening, concentration as a factor for awakening, equanimity as a factor for awakening. Why is that? The sluggish mind is hard to raise up by those mental qualities. Just as if

a man, wanting to make a small fire blaze up, were to place wet grass in it, wet cow dung, & wet sticks; were to give it a spray of water and smother it with dust. Is it possible that he would make the small fire blaze up?”

“No, lord.”

“In the same way, monks, on any occasion the mind is sluggish, that is the wrong time to develop calm as a factor for awakening, concentration as a factor for awakening, equanimity as a factor for awakening. Why is that? The sluggish mind is hard to raise up by those mental qualities.

“Now, on any occasion when the mind is sluggish, that is the right time to develop analysis of qualities as a factor for awakening, persistence as a factor for awakening, rapture as a factor for awakening. Why is that? The sluggish mind is easy to raise up by those mental qualities. Just as if a man, wanting to make a small fire blaze up, were to place dry grass in it, dry cow dung, & dry sticks; were to blow on it with his mouth and not smother it with dust. Is it possible that he would make the small fire blaze up?

“Yes, lord.

“In the same way, monks, on any occasion when the mind is sluggish, that is the right time to develop analysis of qualities as a factor for awakening, persistence as a factor for awakening, rapture as a factor for awakening. Why is that? The sluggish mind is easy to raise up by those mental qualities.

“Now, on any occasion when the mind is restless, that is the wrong time to develop analysis of qualities as a factor for awakening, persistence as a factor for awakening, rapture as a factor for awakening. Why is that? The restless mind is hard to still with those mental qualities. Just as if a man, wanting to put out a large fire, were to place dry grass in it, dry cow dung, & dry sticks; were to blow on it with his mouth and not smother it with dust. Is it possible that he would put it out?”

“No, lord.”

“In the same way, monks, on any occasion when the mind is restless, that is the wrong time to develop analysis of qualities as a factor for

awakening, persistence as a factor for awakening, rapture as a factor for awakening. Why is that? The restless mind is hard to still with those mental qualities.

“Now, on occasions when the mind is restless, that is the right time to develop calm as a factor for awakening, concentration as a factor for awakening, equanimity as a factor for awakening. Why is that? The restless mind is easy to still with those mental qualities. Just as if a man, wanting to put out a large fire, were to place wet grass in it, wet cow dung, & wet sticks; were to give it a spray of water and smother it with dust. Is it possible that he would put it out?”

“Yes, lord.”

“In the same way, monks, when the mind is restless, that is the right time to develop calm as a factor for awakening, concentration as a factor for awakening, equanimity as a factor for awakening. Why is that? The restless mind is easy to still with those mental qualities.

“As for mindfulness, I tell you, that serves every purpose.”

See also: MN 101; [SN 47:8](#); [SN 51:20](#); AN 3:103

Goodwill

Mettā Sutta (SN 46:54)

On one occasion the Blessed One was staying among the Koliyans. Now there is a Koliyan town named Haliddavasana. Then, early in the morning, a large number of monks adjusted their lower robes and, taking their bowls & outer robes, went into Haliddavasana for alms. Then the thought occurred to them, “It’s still too early to go for alms in Haliddavasana. Why don’t we go to the park of the wanderers of other sects?”

So the monks went to the park of the wanderers of other sects. On arrival, they exchanged courteous greetings with the wanderers of other sects. After an exchange of friendly greetings & courtesies, they sat to one side.

As they were sitting there, the wanderers of other sects said to them, “Friends, Gotama the contemplative teaches the Dhamma to his disciples in this way: ‘Come, monks—abandoning the five hindrances, the corruptions of awareness that weaken discernment—keep pervading the first direction [the east] with an awareness imbued with goodwill, likewise the second, likewise the third, likewise the fourth. Thus above, below, & all around, everywhere, in its entirety, keep pervading the all-encompassing cosmos with an awareness imbued with goodwill—abundant, enlarged, immeasurable, without hostility, without ill will.

“Keep pervading the first direction with an awareness imbued with compassion....

“Keep pervading the first direction with an awareness imbued with empathetic joy....

“Keep pervading the first direction with an awareness imbued with equanimity, likewise the second, likewise the third, likewise the fourth. Thus above, below, & all around, everywhere, in its entirety, keep pervading the all-encompassing cosmos with an awareness imbued with equanimity—abundant, enlarged, immeasurable, without hostility, without ill will?

“Now, friends, we too teach our disciples in this way: ‘Come, you friends—abandoning the five hindrances, the corruptions of awareness that weaken discernment—keep pervading the first direction [the east] with an awareness imbued with goodwill, likewise the second, likewise the third, likewise the fourth. Thus above, below, & all around, everywhere, in its entirety, keep pervading the all-encompassing cosmos with an awareness imbued with goodwill—abundant, enlarged, immeasurable, without hostility, without ill will.

“Keep pervading the first direction with an awareness imbued with compassion....

“Keep pervading the first direction with an awareness imbued with empathetic joy....

“Keep pervading the first direction with an awareness imbued with equanimity, likewise the second, likewise the third, likewise the fourth. Thus above, below, & all around, everywhere, in its entirety, keep

pervading the all-encompassing cosmos with an awareness imbued with equanimity—abundant, enlarged, immeasurable, without hostility, without ill will.

“So, friends, what difference, what distinction, what distinguishing factor is there here between Gotama the contemplative and us, when comparing Dhamma teaching with Dhamma teaching, instruction with instruction?”

Then the monks neither delighted in the words of the wanderers of other sects, nor did they reject them. Without delighting or rejecting, they got up from their seats and left, (thinking,) “We will learn the meaning of these words in the presence of the Blessed One.”

So, having gone for alms in Haliddavasana, after the meal, returning from their alms round, the monks went to the Blessed One and, on arrival, having bowed down to him, sat to one side. As they were sitting there they [told him what had happened].

“Monks, when wanderers of other sects speak in that way, they should be addressed in this way: ‘But how, friends, is awareness-release¹ through goodwill developed, what is its destination, what is its excellence, its fruit, & its consummation? How is awareness-release through compassion developed, what is its destination, what is its excellence, its fruit, & its consummation? How is awareness-release through empathetic joy developed, what is its destination, what is its excellence, its fruit, & its consummation? How is awareness-release through equanimity developed, what is its destination, what is its excellence, its fruit, & its consummation?’

“Being asked in this way, the wanderers of other sects will be unable to respond and, on top of that, will fall into vexation. Why is that? Because it lies beyond their range. Monks, I don’t see anyone in this cosmos with its devas, Māras, & Brahmās, in this generation with its contemplatives & brahmans, its royalty & commonfolk, who would satisfy the mind with their answer to these questions, aside from the Tathāgata, a disciple of the Tathāgata, or one who had heard it from them.

“And how, monks, is awareness-release through goodwill developed, what is its destination, what is its excellence, its fruit, & its consummation?

“There is the case where a monk develops *mindfulness* as a factor for awakening accompanied by goodwill, dependent on seclusion, dependent on dispassion, dependent on cessation, resulting in letting go. He develops *analysis of qualities* as a factor for awakening... *persistence* as a factor for awakening... *rapture* as a factor for awakening... *calm* as a factor for awakening... *concentration* as a factor for awakening... *equanimity* as a factor for awakening accompanied by goodwill, dependent on seclusion, dependent on dispassion, dependent on cessation, resulting in letting go. If he wants, he remains percipient of loathsomeness in the presence of what is not loathsome. If he wants, he remains percipient of unloathsomeness in the presence of what is loathsome. If he wants, he remains percipient of loathsomeness in the presence of what is not loathsome & what is. If he wants, he remains percipient of unloathsomeness in the presence of what is loathsome & what is not. If he wants—in the presence of what is loathsome & what is not—cutting himself off from both, he remains equanimous, alert, & mindful. Or he may enter & remain in the beautiful liberation. I tell you, monks, awareness-release through goodwill has the beautiful as its excellence—in the case of one who has penetrated to no higher release.²

“And how is awareness-release through *compassion* developed, what is its destination, what is its excellence, its fruit, & its consummation?

“There is the case where a monk develops mindfulness as a factor for awakening accompanied by compassion, dependent on seclusion, dependent on dispassion, dependent on cessation, resulting in letting go. He develops analysis of qualities as a factor for awakening... persistence as a factor for awakening... rapture as a factor for awakening... calm as a factor for awakening... concentration as a factor for awakening... equanimity as a factor for awakening accompanied by compassion, dependent on seclusion, dependent on dispassion, dependent on cessation, resulting in letting go. If he wants, he remains percipient of loathsomeness in the presence of what is not loathsome. If he wants, he remains percipient of unloathsomeness in the presence of

what is loathsome. If he wants, he remains percipient of loathsomeness in the presence of what is not loathsome & what is. If he wants, he remains percipient of unloathsomeness in the presence of what is loathsome & what is not. If he wants—in the presence of what is loathsome & what is not—cutting himself off from both, he remains equanimous, alert, & mindful. Or, with the complete transcending of perceptions of (physical) form, with the disappearance of perceptions of resistance, and not attending to perceptions of multiplicity, (perceiving,) ‘Infinite space,’ he enters & remains in the sphere of the infinitude of space. I tell you, monks, awareness-release through compassion has the sphere of the infinitude of space as its excellence—in the case of one who has penetrated to no higher release.³

“And how is awareness-release through *empathetic joy* developed, what is its destination, what is its excellence, its fruit, & its consummation?

“There is the case where a monk develops mindfulness as a factor for awakening accompanied by empathetic joy, dependent on seclusion, dependent on dispassion, dependent on cessation, resulting in letting go. He develops analysis of qualities as a factor for awakening... persistence as a factor for awakening... rapture as a factor for awakening... calm as a factor for awakening... concentration as a factor for awakening... equanimity as a factor for awakening accompanied by empathetic joy, dependent on seclusion, dependent on dispassion, dependent on cessation, resulting in letting go. If he wants, he remains percipient of loathsomeness in the presence of what is not loathsome. If he wants, he remains percipient of unloathsomeness in the presence of what is loathsome. If he wants, he remains percipient of loathsomeness in the presence of what is not loathsome & what is. If he wants, he remains percipient of unloathsomeness in the presence of what is loathsome & what is not. If he wants—in the presence of what is loathsome & what is not—cutting himself off from both, he remains equanimous, alert, & mindful. Or, with the complete transcending of the sphere of the infinitude of space, (perceiving,) ‘Infinite consciousness,’ he enters & remains in the sphere of the infinitude of consciousness. I tell you, monks, awareness-release through empathetic

joy has the sphere of the infinitude of consciousness as its excellence—in the case of one who has penetrated to no higher release.

“And how is awareness-release through *equanimity* developed, what is its destination, what is its excellence, its fruit, & its consummation?

“There is the case where a monk develops mindfulness as a factor for awakening accompanied by equanimity, dependent on seclusion, dependent on dispassion, dependent on cessation, resulting in letting go. He develops analysis of qualities as a factor for awakening...

persistence as a factor for awakening... rapture as a factor for awakening... calm as a factor for awakening... concentration as a factor for awakening... equanimity as a factor for awakening accompanied by equanimity, dependent on seclusion, dependent on dispassion, dependent on cessation, resulting in letting go. If he wants, he remains percipient of loathsomeness in the presence of what is not loathsome. If he wants, he remains percipient of unloathsomeness in the presence of what is loathsome. If he wants, he remains percipient of loathsomeness in the presence of what is not loathsome & what is. If he wants, he remains percipient of unloathsomeness in the presence of what is loathsome & what is not. If he wants—in the presence of what is loathsome & what is not—cutting himself off from both, he remains equanimous, alert, & mindful. Or, with the complete transcending of the sphere of the infinitude of consciousness, (perceiving,) ‘There is nothing,’ he enters & remains in the sphere of nothingness. I tell you, monks, awareness-release through equanimity has the sphere of nothingness as its excellence—in the case of one who has penetrated to no higher release.”

NOTES

1. “Awareness-release” (*ceto-vimutti*) is a state of mind released from passion. This can either be the temporary release found in concentration (as here) or the arahant’s full release from passion. See AN 2:30.

2. The “beautiful” (*subha*) is a state of concentration that plays a role equivalent to that of the fourth jhāna in leading to the formless jhānas. See MN 137 and [SN 14:11](#) (also in *The Wings to awakening*, passages §163 and §164).

3. AN 4:125, when read in conjunction with AN 4:123, gives the impression that the development of goodwill as an immeasurable state can lead only to the first jhāna, and that the remaining immeasurable states can lead, respectively, only to the second, third, and fourth jhānas. AN 8:70, on the other hand, states that all four immeasurable states can lead all the way to the fourth jhāna, without saying that they can go no higher. The difference between AN 4:125 on the one hand, and AN 8:70 and this discourse on the other, apparently lies in how the person practicing these immeasurable states relates to them. In AN 4:125, the person simply enjoys the immeasurable states as a pleasurable abiding. In AN 8:70, the person deliberately uses the states as a basis for developing all the jhānas. Similarly, in this sutta, the person develops these states in conjunction with all the factors for awakening.

See also: MN 21; MN 152; [SN 54:8](#); AN 4:126; AN 11:16

At Sālā

Sālā Sutta (SN 47:4)

On one occasion the Blessed One was staying among the Kosalans near the brahman village called Sālā. There he addressed the monks, “Monks!”

“Yes, lord,” the monks responded to the Blessed One.

The Blessed One said, “Monks, the new monks—those who have not long gone forth, who are newcomers in this Dhamma & Vinaya—should be encouraged, exhorted, & established by you in the four establishings of mindfulness.

“Which four? ‘Come, friends. Remain focused on the body in & of itself—being ardent, alert, unified, clear-minded, concentrated, & single-minded¹ for knowledge of the body as it has come to be.

“Remain focused on feelings in & of themselves—being ardent, alert, unified, clear-minded, concentrated, & single-minded for knowledge of feelings as they have come to be.

“Remain focused on the mind in & of itself—being ardent, alert, unified, clear-minded, concentrated, & single-minded for knowledge of the mind as it has come to be.

“Remain focused on mental qualities in & of themselves—being ardent, alert, unified, clear-minded, concentrated, & single-minded for knowledge of mental qualities as they have come to be.’

“Monks, even those who are in training,²—who have not attained the heart’s goal but remain intent on the unsurpassed safety from bondage—even they remain focused on the body in & of itself—being ardent, alert, unified, clear-minded, concentrated, & single-minded for comprehension of the body. They remain focused on feelings in & of themselves... the mind in & of itself... mental qualities in & of themselves—being ardent, alert, unified, clear-minded, concentrated, & single-minded for comprehension of mental qualities.

“Monks, even those who are arahants—whose effluents are ended, who have reached fulfillment, done the task, laid down the burden, attained the true goal, totally destroyed the fetter of becoming, and who are released through right gnosis—even they remain focused on the body in & of itself—being ardent, alert, unified, clear-minded, concentrated, & single-minded, disjoined from the body. They remain focused on feelings in & of themselves... the mind in & of itself... mental qualities in & of themselves—being ardent, alert, unified, clear-minded, concentrated, & single-minded, disjoined from mental qualities.”

“Monks, the new monks, too—those who have not long gone forth, who are newcomers in this Dhamma & Vinaya—should be encouraged, exhorted, and established by you in these four establishing of mindfulness.”

NOTES

1. *Ekagga-citta*. For the meaning of this term, see AN 5:151, note 1. Notice that this sutta does not make a sharp distinction between mindfulness practice and concentration practice. See also MN 44 and AN 8:70.

2. A person in training (sekha) is one who has attained at least the first level of awakening, but not yet the final level.

See also: [SN 22:122](#); [SN 46:4](#); [SN 52:9](#); [SN 52:10](#); [SN 54:11](#); AN 5:114

The Hawk

Sakunagghi Sutta (SN 47:6)

“Once a hawk suddenly swooped down on a quail and seized it. Then the quail, as it was being carried off by the hawk, lamented, ‘O, just my bad luck and lack of merit that I was wandering out of my proper range and into the territory of others! If only I had kept to my proper range today, to my own ancestral territory, this hawk would have been no match for me in battle.’

“‘But what is your proper range?’ the hawk asked. ‘What is your own ancestral territory?’

“‘A newly plowed field with clumps of earth all turned up.’

“So the hawk, without bragging about its own strength, without mentioning its own strength, let go of the quail. ‘Go, quail, but even when you have gone there you won’t escape me.’

“Then the quail, having gone to a newly plowed field with clumps of earth all turned up and climbing up on top of a large clump of earth, stood taunting the hawk, ‘Now come and get me, you hawk! Now come and get me, you hawk!’

“So the hawk, without bragging about its own strength, without mentioning its own strength, folded its two wings and suddenly swooped down toward the quail. When the quail knew, ‘The hawk is coming at me full speed,’ it slipped behind the clump of earth, and right there the hawk shattered its own breast.

“This is what happens to anyone who wanders into what is not his proper range and is the territory of others.

“For this reason, you should not wander into what is not your proper range and is the territory of others. In one who wanders into what is not

his proper range and is the territory of others, Māra gains an opening, Māra gains a foothold. And what, for a monk, is not his proper range and is the territory of others? The five strings of sensuality. Which five? Forms cognizable by the eye—agreeable, pleasing, charming, endearing, enticing, linked to sensual desire. Sounds cognizable by the ear... Aromas cognizable by the nose... Flavors cognizable by the tongue... Tactile sensations cognizable by the body—agreeable, pleasing, charming, endearing, enticing, linked to sensual desire. These, for a monk, are not his proper range and are the territory of others.

“Wander, monks, in what is your proper range, your own ancestral territory. In one who wanders in what is his proper range, his own ancestral territory, Māra gains no opening, Māra gains no foothold. And what, for a monk, is his proper range, his own ancestral territory? The four establishings of mindfulness. Which four? There is the case where a monk remains focused on the body in & of itself—ardent, alert, & mindful—subduing greed & distress with reference to the world. He remains focused on feelings in & of themselves... mind in & of itself... mental qualities in & of themselves—ardent, alert, & mindful—subduing greed & distress with reference to the world. This, for a monk, is his proper range, his own ancestral territory.”

See also: [*SN 35:189*](#); [*SN 35:199*](#)

The Monkey

Makkāṭṭa Sutta (SN 47:7)

“There are in the Himalayas, the king of mountains, difficult, uneven areas where neither monkeys nor human beings wander. There are difficult, uneven areas where monkeys wander, but not human beings. There are level stretches of land, delightful, where both monkeys and human beings wander. In such spots hunters set a tar trap in the monkeys’ tracks, in order to catch some monkeys. Those monkeys who are not foolish or careless by nature, when they see the tar trap, will keep their distance. But any monkey who is foolish & careless by nature

comes up to the tar trap and grabs it with its paw, which then gets stuck there. Thinking, ‘I’ll free my paw,’ he grabs it with his other paw. That too gets stuck. Thinking, ‘I’ll free both of my paws,’ he grabs it with his foot. That too gets stuck. Thinking, ‘I’ll free both of my paws and my foot,’ he grabs it with his other foot. That too gets stuck. Thinking, ‘I’ll free both of my paws and my feet as well,’ he grabs it with his mouth. That too gets stuck. So the monkey, snared in five ways, lies there whimpering, having fallen on misfortune, fallen on ruin, a prey to whatever the hunter wants to do with him. Then the hunter, without releasing the monkey, skewers him right there, picks him up, and goes off as he likes.

“This is what happens to anyone who wanders into what is not his proper range and is the territory of others.

“For this reason, you should not wander into what is not your proper range and is the territory of others. In one who wanders into what is not his proper range and is the territory of others, Māra gains an opening, Māra gains a foothold. And what, for a monk, is not his proper range and is the territory of others? The five strings of sensuality. Which five? Forms cognizable by the eye—agreeable, pleasing, charming, endearing, enticing, linked to sensual desire. Sounds cognizable by the ear... Aromas cognizable by the nose... Flavors cognizable by the tongue... Tactile sensations cognizable by the body—agreeable, pleasing, charming, endearing, enticing, linked to sensual desire. These, for a monk, are not his proper range and are the territory of others.

“Wander, monks, in what is your proper range, your own ancestral territory. In one who wanders in what is his proper range, his own ancestral territory, Māra gains no opening, Māra gains no foothold. And what, for a monk, is his proper range, his own ancestral territory? The four establishings of mindfulness. Which four? There is the case where a monk remains focused on the body in & of itself—ardent, alert, & mindful—subduing greed & distress with reference to the world. He remains focused on feelings in & of themselves... mind in & of itself... mental qualities in & of themselves—ardent, alert, & mindful—subduing greed & distress with reference to the world. This, for a monk, is his proper range, his own ancestral territory.”

The Cook

Sūda Sutta (SN 47:8)

“Suppose that there is a foolish, incompetent, unskillful cook who has presented a king or a king’s minister with various kinds of curry: mainly sour, mainly bitter, mainly peppery, mainly sweet, alkaline or non-alkaline, salty or non-salty. He doesn’t take note of his master, thinking, ‘Today my master likes this curry, or he reaches out for that curry, or he takes a lot of this curry, or he praises that curry. Today my master likes mainly sour curry.... Today my master likes mainly bitter curry... mainly peppery curry... mainly sweet curry... alkaline curry... non-alkaline curry... salty curry... Today my master likes non-salty curry, or he reaches out for non-salty curry, or he takes a lot of non-salty curry, or he praises non-salty curry.’ As a result, he is not rewarded with clothing or wages or gifts. Why is that? Because the foolish, incompetent, unskillful cook doesn’t take note of his own master.

“In the same way, there is the case where a foolish, incompetent, unskillful monk remains focused on the body in & of itself—ardent, alert, & mindful—subduing greed & distress with reference to the world. As he remains thus focused on the body in & of itself, his mind doesn’t become concentrated, his defilements [Commentary: the five hindrances] are not abandoned. He doesn’t take note of that fact. He remains focused on feelings in & of themselves... the mind in & of itself... mental qualities in & of themselves—ardent, alert, & mindful—subduing greed & distress with reference to the world. As he remains thus focused on mental qualities in & of themselves, his mind doesn’t become concentrated, his defilements are not abandoned. He doesn’t take note of that fact. As a result, he is not rewarded with a pleasant abiding here & now, nor with mindfulness & alertness. Why is that? Because the foolish, incompetent, unskillful monk doesn’t take note of his own mind.

“Now suppose that there is a wise, competent, skillful cook who has presented a king or a king’s minister with various kinds of curry: mainly

sour, mainly bitter, mainly peppery, mainly sweet, alkaline or non-alkaline, salty or non-salty. He takes note of his master, thinking, ‘Today my master likes this curry, or he reaches out for that curry, or he takes a lot of this curry or he praises that curry. Today my master likes mainly sour curry.... Today my master likes mainly bitter curry... mainly peppery curry... mainly sweet curry... alkaline curry... non-alkaline curry... salty curry... Today my master likes non-salty curry, or he reaches out for non-salty curry, or he takes a lot of non-salty curry, or he praises non-salty curry.’ As a result, he is rewarded with clothing, wages, & gifts. Why is that? Because the wise, competent, skillful cook takes note of his own master.

“In the same way, there is the case where a wise, competent, skillful monk remains focused on the body in & of itself... feelings in & of themselves... the mind in & of itself... mental qualities in & of themselves—ardent, alert, & mindful—subduing greed & distress with reference to the world. As he remains thus focused on mental qualities in & of themselves, his mind becomes concentrated, his defilements are abandoned. He takes note of that fact. As a result, he is rewarded with a pleasant abiding here & now, together with mindfulness & alertness. Why is that? Because the wise, competent, skillful monk takes note of his own mind.”

See also: MN 101; [SN 46:53](#); [SN 51:20](#); AN 3:103; AN 8:70

At the Nuns’ Residence

Bhikkhun’upassaya Sutta (SN 47:10)

The Blessed One was staying in Sāvattthī. Then Ven. Ānanda, early in the morning—having adjusted his lower robe and taking his bowl & outer robe—went to a certain nuns’ residence. On arrival, he sat down on a seat laid out. Then a large number of nuns went to Ven. Ānanda and, on arrival, having bowed down to him, sat to one side. As they were sitting there, they said to him, “Here, Ven. Ānanda, a large number of

nuns dwelling with their minds well-established in the four establishing of mindfulness are perceiving grand, successive distinctions.”

“That’s the way it is, sisters. That’s the way it is. Any monk or nun who dwells with mind well-established in the four establishing of mindfulness may be expected to perceive grand, successive distinctions.”

Then Ven. Ānanda, having gone for alms in Sāvattthī, after the meal, returning from his alms round, went to the Blessed One. On arrival, having bowed down to him, he sat to one side. As he was sitting there he (reported his conversation with the nuns.)

“That’s the way it is, Ānanda. That’s the way it is. Any monk or nun who dwells with mind well-established in the four establishing of mindfulness, he/she may be expected to perceive grand, successive distinctions.

“There is the case where a monk remains focused on the body in & of itself—ardent, alert, & mindful—subduing greed & distress with reference to the world. As he remains thus focused on the body in & of itself, a fever based on the body arises within his body, or there is sluggishness in his awareness, or his mind becomes scattered externally. He should then direct his mind to any inspiring theme. As his mind is directed to any inspiring theme, gladness is born within him. In one who is gladdened, rapture is born. In one whose heart is enraptured, the body grows calm. His body calm, he feels pleasure. Feeling pleasure, his mind grows concentrated. He reflects, ‘I have attained the aim to which my mind was directed. Let me withdraw (my mind from the inspiring theme).’ He withdraws & engages neither in directed thought nor in evaluation. He discerns that ‘I am not thinking or evaluating. I am inwardly mindful & at ease.’

“And further, he remains focused on feelings... mind... mental qualities in & of themselves—ardent, alert, & mindful—subduing greed & distress with reference to the world. As he remains thus focused on mental qualities in & of themselves, a fever based on mental qualities arises within his body, or there is sluggishness in his awareness, or his mind becomes scattered externally. He should then direct his mind to any inspiring theme. As his mind is directed to any inspiring theme, gladness is born within him. In one who is gladdened, rapture is born.

In one whose heart is enraptured, the body grows calm. His body calm, he feels pleasure. Feeling pleasure, his mind grows concentrated. He reflects, ‘I have attained the aim to which my mind was directed. Let me withdraw? He withdraws & engages neither in directed thought nor in evaluation. He discerns that ‘I am not thinking or evaluating. I am inwardly mindful & at ease.’

“This, Ānanda, is development based on directing. And what is development based on not directing? A monk, when not directing his mind to external things, discerns that ‘My mind is not directed to external things. It is unconstricted [*asāṅkhitta*] front & back—released & undirected. And then, I remain focused on the body in & of itself. I am ardent, alert, mindful, & at ease.’

“When not directing his mind to external things, he discerns, ‘My mind is not directed to external things. It is unconstricted front & back—released & undirected. And then, I remain focused on feelings... mind... mental qualities in & of themselves. I am ardent, alert, mindful, & at ease.’

“This, Ānanda, is development based on not directing.¹

“Now, Ānanda, I have taught you development based on directing and development based on not directing. What a teacher should do out of compassion for his disciples, seeking their welfare, that have I done for you. Over there are (places to sit at) the roots of trees; over there, empty dwellings. Practice jhāna, Ānanda. Don’t be heedless. Don’t later fall into remorse. That is our message to you all.”

That is what the Blessed One said. Gratified, Ven. Ānanda delighted in the Blessed One’s words.

NOTE

1. There is a controversy over how to understand the distinction drawn here between directing and not-directing the mind.

One interpretation, assuming that jhāna and the establishing of mindfulness are two radically different practices, argues that directing the mind refers to jhāna practice; and not-directing the mind, to mindfulness practice: the former inducing a narrow range of awareness; the latter, a broader, unconstricted one.

However, *unconstricted* doesn't mean a broad range of awareness. According to [SN 51:20](#), *constricted* simply means slothful or drowsy. So *unconstricted* means free of sloth and drowsiness. And the Buddha never drew a radical distinction between mindfulness and jhāna: The four establishings are the themes of jhāna (MN 44) and are themselves counted as a type of concentration (AN 8:70).

Thus it is more likely that this discourse is addressing a different issue entirely: how to deal with the mind both when it is amenable to settling down with any of the four frames of reference used in establishing mindfulness and when it is not.

When the mind is not amenable, the meditator can follow the instructions for directing it. Call to mind a subsidiary theme that will gladden it or chasten it and allow it to settle down. When it's firmly settled, drop any thinking connected with the subsidiary theme, and this will bring the mind to a state of mindful ease equivalent to the second jhāna, free from directed thought and evaluation.

On other occasions, when the mind settles down easily—when it drops thoughts about external preoccupations and at the same time isn't slothful or drowsy—the meditator can follow the instructions for non-directing the mind. Simply note that the mind is released from distraction and drowsiness, and it will naturally settle into the activities of any one of the establishings of mindfulness. This in turn will provide a theme for the practice of jhāna.

In this way, the instructions here parallel the observation in MN 101 that there are times when problems in the mind respond to simple on-looking equanimity, and other times when they require conscious fabrication.

About Cunda (Ven. Sāriputta's Passing Away)

Cunda Sutta (SN 47:13)

On one occasion the Blessed One was staying near Sāvattthī in Jeta's Grove, Anāthapiṇḍika's monastery. Now at that time Ven. Sāriputta was staying among the Māgadhans in Nālaka village—diseased, in pain,

severely ill. Cunda the novice was his attendant. Then, because of that illness, Ven. Sāriputta totally unbound.

So Cunda the novice, taking Ven. Sāriputta's bowl & robes, went to Ven. Ānanda in Jeta's Grove, Anāthapiṇḍika's monastery, near Sāvattihī, and on arrival, having bowed down to him, sat to one side. As he was sitting there he said to Ven. Ānanda: "Venerable sir, Ven. Sāriputta has totally unbound. Here are his bowl & robes."

"Cunda, my friend, this news is reason for seeing the Blessed One. Come, let's go to the Blessed One and report this matter to him."

"Yes, venerable sir," Cunda the novice responded to him.

So Ven. Ānanda & Cunda the novice went to the Blessed One and, on arrival, having bowed down to him, sat to one side. As they were sitting there, Ven. Ānanda said to the Blessed One, "Lord, just now Cunda the novice said to me, 'Venerable sir, Ven. Sāriputta has totally unbound. Here are his bowl & robes.' It was as if my body were drugged, I lost my bearings, things weren't clear to me, on hearing that Ven. Sāriputta had totally unbound."

"But, Ānanda, when he totally unbound, did Sāriputta take the aggregate of virtue along with him? Did he take the aggregate of concentration... discernment... release... the aggregate of knowledge & vision of release along with him?"

"No, lord, when he totally unbound, Ven. Sāriputta didn't take the aggregate of virtue... concentration... discernment... release... the aggregate of knowledge & vision of release along with him. It's just that he was my instructor & counselor, one who exhorted, urged, roused, & encouraged me. He was tireless in teaching the Dhamma, a help to his companions in the holy life. We miss the nourishment of his Dhamma, the wealth of his Dhamma, his help in the Dhamma."

"But, Ānanda, haven't I already taught you the state of growing different with regard to all things dear & appealing, the state of becoming separate, the state of becoming otherwise? What else is there to expect? It's impossible that one could forbid anything born, existent, fabricated, & subject to disintegration from disintegrating."

“Just as if the largest limb were to fall off of a great tree composed of heartwood, standing firm; in the same way, Sāriputta has totally unbound from this great Saṅgha of monks composed of heartwood, standing firm. What else is there to expect? It’s impossible that one could forbid anything born, existent, fabricated, & subject to disintegration from disintegrating.

“Therefore, Ānanda, each of you should remain with your self as an island, your self as your refuge, without anything else as a refuge. Remain with the Dhamma as an island, the Dhamma as your refuge, without anything else as a refuge. And how does a monk remain with his self as an island, his self as his refuge, without anything else as a refuge? How does he remain with the Dhamma as an island, the Dhamma as his refuge, without anything else as a refuge? There is the case where a monk remains focused on the body in & of itself—ardent, alert, & mindful—subduing greed & distress with reference to the world. He remains focused on feelings... mind... mental qualities in & of themselves—ardent, alert, & mindful—subduing greed & distress with reference to the world. This is how a monk remains with his self as an island, his self as his refuge, without anything else as a refuge, with the Dhamma as an island, the Dhamma as his refuge, without anything else as a refuge. For those who—now or after I am gone—remain with their self as an island, their self as their refuge, without anything else as a refuge, with the Dhamma as an island, the Dhamma as their refuge, without anything else as a refuge, they will be the foremost of the monks: those who are desirous of training.”

See also: DN 16; MN 44; [SN 21:2](#); [SN 22:84](#); AN 5:49; AN 5:57

To Uttijya

Uttiya Sutta (SN 47:16)

At Sāvattihī. Then Ven. Uttiya went to the Blessed One and, on arrival, having bowed down to him, sat to one side. As he was sitting there, he said to the Blessed One, “It would be good, lord, if the Blessed One

would teach me the Dhamma in brief so that, having heard the Dhamma from the Blessed One, I might dwell alone, secluded, heedful, ardent, & resolute.”

“In that case, Uttiya, purify the very basis with regard to skillful mental qualities. And what is the basis of skillful mental qualities? Well-purified virtue & views made straight. Then, when your virtue is well purified and your views made straight, in dependence on virtue, established in virtue, you should develop the four establishing of mindfulness. Which four? There is the case where a monk remains focused on the body in & of itself—ardent, alert, & mindful—subduing greed & distress with reference to the world. He remains focused on feelings in & of themselves... mind in & of itself... mental qualities in & of themselves—ardent, alert, & mindful—subduing greed & distress with reference to the world. When, in dependence on virtue, established in virtue, you develop these four establishing of mindfulness in this way, you will go beyond Māra’s realm.”

Then Ven. Uttiya, delighting in & approving of the Blessed One’s words, got up from his seat, bowed down to the Blessed One, circled around him, keeping the Blessed One to his right side, and left. Then, dwelling alone, secluded, heedful, ardent, & resolute, he in no long time entered & remained in the supreme goal of the holy life for which clansmen rightly go forth from home into homelessness, directly knowing & realizing it for himself in the here & now. He knew: “Birth is ended, the holy life fulfilled, the task done. There is nothing further for the sake of this world.” And thus Ven. Uttiya became another one of the arahants.

See also: DN 2; [SN 45:8](#); AN 10:165

At Sedaka (The Acrobat)

Sedaka Sutta (1) (SN 47:19)

I have heard that on one occasion the Blessed One was staying among the Sumbhas. Now there is a Sumbhan town named Sedaka. There the

Blessed One addressed the monks, “Monks!”

“Yes, lord,” the monks responded to him.

The Blessed One said, “Once upon a time, monks, a bamboo acrobat, having erected a bamboo pole, addressed his assistant, Frying Pan: ‘Come, my dear Frying Pan. Climb up the bamboo pole and stand on my shoulders.’

“‘As you say, Master,’ Frying Pan answered the bamboo acrobat and, climbing the bamboo pole, stood on his shoulders.

“So then the bamboo acrobat said to his assistant, ‘Now you watch after me, my dear Frying Pan, and I’ll watch after you. Thus, protecting each other, watching after each other, we’ll show off our skill, receive our reward, and come down safely from the bamboo pole.’

“When he had said this, Frying Pan said to him, ‘But that won’t do at all, Master. You watch after yourself, and I’ll watch after myself, and thus with each of us protecting ourselves, watching after ourselves, we’ll show off our skill, receive our reward, and come down safely from the bamboo pole.’

“What Frying Pan, the assistant, said to her Master was the right way in that case.

“Monks, the establishing of mindfulness is to be practiced with the thought, ‘I’ll watch after myself.’ The establishing of mindfulness is to be practiced with the thought, ‘I’ll watch after others.’ When watching after yourself, you watch after others. When watching after others, you watch after yourself.

“And how do you watch after others when watching after yourself? Through cultivating (the practice), through developing it, through pursuing it. This is how you watch after others when watching after yourself.

“And how do you watch after yourself when watching after others? Through endurance, through harmlessness, through a mind of goodwill, & through sympathy. This is how you watch after yourself when watching after others.

“The establishing of mindfulness is to be practiced with the thought, ‘I’ll watch after myself.’ The establishing of mindfulness is to be practiced

with the thought, ‘I’ll watch after others.’ When watching after yourself, you watch after others. When watching after others, you watch after yourself.”

See also: MN 61; [SN 10:4](#); AN 4:96; AN 4:99; AN 5:20

At Sedaka (The Beauty Queen)

Sedaka Sutta (2) (SN 47:20)

I have heard that on one occasion the Blessed One was staying among the Sumbhas. Now there is a Sumbhan town named Sedaka. There the Blessed One addressed the monks, “Monks!”

“Yes, lord,” the monks responded to him.

The Blessed One said, “Suppose, monks, that a large crowd of people were to come thronging together, saying, ‘The beauty queen! The beauty queen!’ And suppose that the beauty queen were highly accomplished at singing & dancing, so that an even greater crowd would come thronging, saying, ‘The beauty queen is singing! The beauty queen is dancing!’ Then a man would come along, desiring life & shrinking from death, desiring pleasure & abhorring pain. They would say to him, ‘Now look here, mister. You must take this bowl filled to the brim with oil and carry it on your head in between the great crowd & the beauty queen. A man with a raised sword will follow right behind you, and wherever you spill even a drop of oil, right there will he cut off your head.’ Now what do you think, monks? Would that man, not paying attention to the bowl of oil, let himself get distracted outside?”

“No, lord.”

“I have given you this parable to convey a meaning. The meaning is this: The bowl filled to the brim with oil stands for mindfulness immersed in the body. Thus you should train yourselves: ‘We will develop mindfulness immersed in the body. We will pursue it, hand it the reins, take it as a basis, steady it, consolidate it, and undertake it well.’ That is how you should train yourselves.”

See also: MN 119; [SN 35:115](#); [SN 35:206](#)

To a Brahman

Brāhmaṇa Sutta (SN 47:25)

I have heard that on one occasion the Blessed One was staying near Sāvattthī in Jeta’s Grove, Anāthapiṇḍika’s monastery. Then a certain brahman went to the Blessed One and, on arrival, exchanged courteous greetings with him. After an exchange of friendly greetings & courtesies, he sat to one side. As he was sitting there, he said to the Blessed One, “What is the cause, Master Gotama, what is the reason why, when the Tathāgata has totally unbound, the True Dhamma does not last long? And what is the cause, what is the reason why, when the Tathāgata has totally unbound, the True Dhamma does last long?”

“Brahman, it’s from the non-development & non-pursuit of the four establishings of mindfulness that, when the Tathāgata has totally unbound, the True Dhamma does not last long. And it’s from the development & pursuit of the four establishings of mindfulness that, when the Tathāgata has totally unbound, the True Dhamma does last long.

“Which four? There is the case, brahman, where a monk remains focused on the body in & of itself—ardent, alert, & mindful—subduing greed & distress with reference to the world. He remains focused on feelings in & of themselves... the mind in & of itself... mental qualities in & of themselves—ardent, alert, & mindful—subduing greed & distress with reference to the world.

“It’s from the non-development & non-pursuit of these four establishings of mindfulness, brahman, that, when the Tathāgata has totally unbound, the True Dhamma does not last long. And it’s from the development & pursuit of these four establishings of mindfulness that, when the Tathāgata has totally unbound, the True Dhamma does last long.”

When this was said, the brahman said to the Blessed One, “Magnificent, Master Gotama! Magnificent! Just as if he were to place upright what was overturned, to reveal what was hidden, to show the way to one who was lost, or to carry a lamp into the dark so that those with eyes could see forms, in the same way has Master Gotama—through many lines of reasoning—made the Dhamma clear. I go to Master Gotama for refuge, to the Dhamma, & to the Saṅgha of monks. May Master Gotama remember me as a lay follower who has gone for refuge from this day forward, for life.”

See also: [SN 16:13](#); [SN 20:7](#); AN 1:140; AN 1:141; AN 5:79; AN 7:21; AN 7:56

Neglected

Viraddha Sutta (SN 47:33)

“Monks, those in whom the four establishing of mindfulness are neglected, in them the noble eightfold¹ path leading to the right ending of suffering & stress is neglected. Those in whom the four establishing of mindfulness are aroused, in them the noble eightfold path leading to the right ending of suffering & stress is aroused.

“Which four? There is the case where a monk remains focused on the body in & of itself—ardent, alert, & mindful—subduing greed & distress with reference to the world. He remains focused on feelings in & of themselves... mind in & of itself... mental qualities in & of themselves—ardent, alert, & mindful—subduing greed & distress with reference to the world.

“Those in whom these four establishing of mindfulness are neglected, in them the noble eightfold path leading to the right ending of suffering & stress is neglected. Those in whom these four establishing of mindfulness are aroused, in them the noble eightfold path leading to the right ending of suffering & stress is aroused.”

NOTE

1. The word “eightfold (*aṭṭhaṅgiko*)” appears in the Thai version of this sutta, but in none of the others.

See also: [*SN 46:18*](#)

Mindful

Sata Sutta (SN 47:35)

Near Sāvatthī. “Stay mindful, monks, and alert. This is our instruction to you all.

“And how is a monk mindful? There is the case where a monk remains focused on the body in & of itself—ardent, alert, & mindful—subduing greed & distress with reference to the world. He remains focused on feelings... mind... mental qualities in & of themselves—ardent, alert, & mindful—subduing greed & distress with reference to the world. This is how a monk is mindful.

“And how is a monk alert? There is the case where feelings are known to the monk as they arise, known as they persist, known as they subside. Thoughts are known to him as they arise, known as they persist, known as they subside. Perceptions are known to him as they arise, known as they persist, known as they subside. This is how a monk is alert.

“So stay mindful, monks, and alert. This is our instruction to you all.”

See also: [*SN 36:7*](#)

Desire

Chanda Sutta (SN 47:37)

Near Sāvatthī. “Monks, there are these four establishing of mindfulness. Which four?

“There is the case where a monk remains focused on the body in & of itself—ardent, alert, & mindful—subduing greed & distress with

reference to the world. For him, remaining focused on the body in & of itself, any desire for the body is abandoned. From the abandoning of desire, the deathless is realized.

“He remains focused on feelings in & of themselves—ardent, alert, & mindful—subduing greed & distress with reference to the world. For him, remaining focused on feelings in & of themselves, any desire for feelings is abandoned. From the abandoning of desire, the deathless is realized.

“He remains focused on the mind in & of itself—ardent, alert, & mindful—subduing greed & distress with reference to the world. For him, remaining focused on the mind in & of itself, any desire for the mind is abandoned. From the abandoning of desire, the deathless is realized.

“He remains focused on mental qualities in & of themselves—ardent, alert, & mindful—subduing greed & distress with reference to the world. For him, remaining focused on mental qualities in & of themselves, any desire for mental qualities is abandoned. From the abandoning of desire, the deathless is realized.”

See also: SN 51:51; AN 10:58

Comprehension

Pariññā Sutta (SN 47:38)

“Monks, there are these four establishing of mindfulness. Which four?

“There is the case where a monk remains focused on the body in & of itself—ardent, alert, & mindful—subduing greed & distress with reference to the world. For him, remaining focused on the body in & of itself, the body is comprehended. From the comprehension of the body, the deathless is realized.

“He remains focused on feelings in & of themselves—ardent, alert, & mindful—subduing greed & distress with reference to the world. For

him, remaining focused on feelings in & of themselves, feelings are comprehended. From the comprehension of feelings, the deathless is realized.

“He remains focused on the mind in & of itself—ardent, alert, & mindful—subduing greed & distress with reference to the world. For him, remaining focused on the mind in & of itself, the mind is comprehended. From the comprehension of the mind, the deathless is realized.

“He remains focused on mental qualities in & of themselves—ardent, alert, & mindful—subduing greed & distress with reference to the world. For him, remaining focused on mental qualities in & of themselves, mental qualities are comprehended. From the comprehension of mental qualities, the deathless is realized.”

See also: [SN 22:23](#)

An Analysis of the Establishings of Mindfulness *Satipaṭṭhāna-Vibhaṅga Sutta (SN 47:40)*

“I will teach you the establishing of mindfulness, its development, and the path of practice leading to its development. Listen & pay close attention. I will speak.

“Now, what is the establishing of mindfulness? There is the case where a monk remains focused on the body in & of itself—ardent, alert, & mindful—subduing greed & distress with reference to the world. He remains focused on feelings in & of themselves... mind in & of itself... mental qualities in & of themselves—ardent, alert, & mindful—subduing greed & distress with reference to the world.

“This is called the establishing of mindfulness.

“And what is the development of the establishing of mindfulness? There is the case where a monk remains focused on the phenomenon of origination with regard to the body, remains focused on the phenomenon of passing away with regard to the body, remains focused

on the phenomenon of origination & passing away with regard to the body—ardent, alert, & mindful—subduing greed & distress with reference to the world.¹

“He remains focused on the phenomenon of origination with regard to feelings, remains focused on the phenomenon of passing away with regard to feelings, remains focused on the phenomenon of origination & passing away with regard to feelings—ardent, alert, & mindful—subduing greed & distress with reference to the world.

“He remains focused on the phenomenon of origination with regard to the mind, remains focused on the phenomenon of passing away with regard to the mind, remains focused on the phenomenon of origination & passing away with regard to the mind—ardent, alert, & mindful—subduing greed & distress with reference to the world.

“He remains focused on the phenomenon of origination with regard to mental qualities, remains focused on the phenomenon of passing away with regard to mental qualities, remains focused on the phenomenon of origination & passing away with regard to mental qualities—ardent, alert, & mindful—subduing greed & distress with reference to the world.

“This is called the development of the establishing of mindfulness.

“And what is the path of practice to the development of the establishing of mindfulness? Just this noble eightfold path: right view, right resolve, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness, right concentration. This is called the path of practice to the development of the establishing of mindfulness.”

NOTE

1. The phrasing of this passage contains two details worth noticing. First is the term “origination” (*samudaya*). This is sometimes mistranslated as “arising,” giving the impression that the meditator simply watches passively as phenomena come and go. However, the word *samudaya* actually carries the meaning of *causation*, which means that one must also ferret out exactly what is causing those phenomena to come and go. As any scientist knows, establishing a causal relationship involves more than simply watching. One has to make experimental changes in one’s environment to test what is and

is not affecting the phenomenon in which one is interested. As the concluding paragraph of this sutta states, this is accomplished by fabricating all eight factors of the noble eightfold path.

The second important detail to notice is the use of the locative case to express the idea of origination *in reference to* each of the four frames.

[SN 47:42](#), using the genitive case—a grammatical case that indicates possession—identifies the origination *of* each of these objects: nutriment as the origination of the body, contact as the origination of feeling, name-and-form as the origination of mind, and attention as the origination of mental qualities. But that is not what the meditator is being told to look for here. Instead of looking for the origination *of* one’s frame, one watches origination and passing away of phenomena as viewed *in reference to* or *in the context of* that frame. In other words, while maintaining any of the four frames of reference as a framework for one’s attention, one keeps watch over how events arise from causes and how they pass away, all with reference to that frame.

See also: DN 22; AN 4:245

Deathless

Amata Sutta (SN 47:41)

At Savatthi. “Monks, remain with your minds well-established in the four establishings of mindfulness. Don’t let the deathless be lost for you.

“In which four? There is the case where a monk remains focused on the body in & of itself—ardent, alert, & mindful—subduing greed & distress with reference to the world. He remains focused on feelings... mind... mental qualities in & of themselves—ardent, alert, & mindful—subduing greed & distress with reference to the world.

“Monks, remain with your minds well-established in these four establishings of mindfulness. Don’t let the deathless be lost for you.”

Origination

Samudaya Sutta (SN 47:42)

I have heard that at one time the Blessed One was staying near Sāvattthī in Jeta’s Grove, Anāthapiṇḍika’s monastery. There he addressed the monks, “Monks!”

“Yes, lord,” the monks responded to him.

The Blessed One said, “I will teach & analyze for you the origination and subsiding of the four establishing of mindfulness. Listen & pay close attention. I will speak.”

“As you say, lord,” the monks responded to him.

The Blessed One said, “And what, monks, is the origination of the body?¹ From the origination of nutriment is the origination of the body. From the cessation of nutriment is the subsiding of the body.

“From the origination of contact is the origination of feeling. From the cessation of contact is the subsiding of feeling.

“From the origination of name-&-form is the origination of the mind. From the cessation of name-&-form is the cessation of the mind.

“From the origination of attention is the origination of mental qualities.² From the cessation of attention is the subsiding of mental qualities.”

NOTES

1. This discourse is unusual in that it identifies the word *satipaṭṭhāna*, not with the standard formula of the process of establishing mindfulness, but with the objects that form the frame of reference for that process. For example, instead of identifying the first *satipaṭṭhāna* as, “There is the case where a monk remains focused on the body in & of itself—ardent, alert, & mindful—subduing greed & distress with reference to the world,” it identifies it simply as “body.”

See also the note to [SN 47:40](#).

2. Mental qualities = *dhammas*. [SN 46:51](#) discusses the ways in which inappropriate attention feeds such unskillful mental qualities as the hindrances, whereas appropriate attention feeds such skillful mental qualities as the factors for awakening.

Dhammas can also mean “phenomena,” “events,” or “actions.” It is apparently in connection with these three meanings that AN 10:58 lists three factors underlying the appearance of *dhammas*:

“All phenomena are rooted in desire.

“All phenomena come into play through attention.

“All phenomena have contact as their origination.”

See also: [SN 22:5](#)

The Stream

Sota Sutta (SN 48:3)

This sutta and the following one are unusual in that they apply a framework usually employed to explain the steps leading to an escape from unskillful qualities, and apply it to a set of skillful qualities: the five faculties. In this way, they make a point similar to that made by the simile of the raft in MN 22, that the goal is something that lies beyond the path, and that the act of abandoning the path, after it has been developed, is a necessary step in reaching the goal.

“Monks, there are these five faculties. Which five? The faculty of conviction, the faculty of persistence, the faculty of mindfulness, the faculty of concentration, the faculty of discernment. When a disciple of the noble ones discerns, as they have come to be, the origination, the passing away, the allure, the drawbacks, and the escape from these five faculties, he is called a disciple of the noble ones who has attained the stream: never again destined for the lower realms, certain, headed for self-awakening.”

The Arahant

Arahant Sutta (SN 48:4)

“Monks, there are these five faculties. Which five? The faculty of conviction, the faculty of persistence, the faculty of mindfulness, the faculty of concentration, the faculty of discernment. When—having discerned, as they have come to be, the origination, the passing away, the allure, the drawbacks, and the escape from these five faculties—a monk is released from lack of clinging/sustenance, he is called an arahant whose effluents are ended, who has reached fulfillment, done the task, laid down the burden, attained the true goal, laid to waste the fetter of becoming, and who is released through right gnosis.”

An Analysis of the Faculties

Indriya-Vibhaṅga Sutta (SN 48:10)

“Monks, there are these five faculties. Which five? The faculty of conviction, the faculty of persistence, the faculty of mindfulness, the faculty of concentration, the faculty of discernment.

“Now what is the faculty of conviction? There is the case where a monk, a disciple of the noble ones, has conviction, is convinced of the Tathāgata’s awakening: ‘Indeed, the Blessed One is worthy & rightly self-awakened, consummate in clear-knowing & conduct, well-gone, an expert with regard to the cosmos, unexcelled trainer of people fit to be tamed, teacher of devas & human beings, awakened, blessed.’ This is called the faculty of conviction.

“And what is the faculty of persistence? There is the case where a monk, a disciple of the noble ones, keeps his persistence aroused for abandoning unskillful mental qualities and taking on skillful mental qualities. He is steadfast, solid in his effort, not shirking his duties with regard to skillful mental qualities. He generates desire, endeavors,

arouses persistence, upholds & exerts his intent for the sake of the non-arising of evil, unskillful qualities that have not yet arisen... for the sake of the abandoning of evil, unskillful qualities that have arisen... for the sake of the arising of skillful qualities that have not yet arisen... (and) for the maintenance, non-confusion, increase, plenitude, development, & culmination of skillful qualities that have arisen. This is called the faculty of persistence.

“And what is the faculty of mindfulness? There is the case where a monk, a disciple of the noble ones, is mindful, is endowed with excellent proficiency in mindfulness, remembering & able to call to mind even things that were done & said long ago. He remains focused on the body in & of itself—ardent, alert, & mindful—subduing greed & distress with reference to the world. He remains focused on feelings in & of themselves... the mind in & of itself... mental qualities in & of themselves—ardent, alert, & mindful—subduing greed & distress with reference to the world. This is called the faculty of mindfulness.

“And what is the faculty of concentration? There is the case where a monk, a disciple of the noble ones, making it his object to let go, attains concentration, attains singleness of mind. Quite secluded from sensuality, secluded from unskillful qualities—enters & remains in the first jhāna: rapture & pleasure born of seclusion, accompanied by directed thought & evaluation. With the stilling of directed thoughts & evaluations, he enters & remains in the second jhāna: rapture & pleasure born of concentration, unification of awareness free from directed thought & evaluation—internal assurance. With the fading of rapture, he remains equanimous, mindful, & alert, and senses pleasure with the body. He enters & remains in the third jhāna, of which the noble ones declare, ‘Equanimous & mindful, he has a pleasant abiding.’ With the abandoning of pleasure & pain—as with the earlier disappearance of elation & distress—he enters & remains in the fourth jhāna: purity of equanimity & mindfulness, neither pleasure nor pain. This is called the faculty of concentration.

“And what is the faculty of discernment? There is the case where a monk, a disciple of the noble ones, is discerning, endowed with discernment of arising & passing away—noble, penetrating, leading to

the right ending of stress. He discerns, as it has come to be: ‘This is stress...This is the origination of stress...This is the cessation of stress... This is the path of practice leading to the cessation of stress.’ This is called the faculty of discernment.

“These are the five faculties.”

See also: AN 7:63

No Becoming

Na Bhava Sutta (SN 48:21)

“Monks, there are these five faculties. Which five? The faculty of conviction, the faculty of persistence, the faculty of mindfulness, the faculty of concentration, the faculty of discernment.

“Now, as long as I did not have direct knowledge, as it has come to be, of the origination, the passing away, the allure, the drawbacks of—and the escape from—these five faculties, I did not claim to have directly awakened to the unexcelled right self-awakening in this cosmos with its devas, Māras, & Brahmās, in this generation with its contemplatives & brahmans, its royalty & common people. But when I did have direct knowledge, as it has come to be, of the origination, the passing away, the allure, the drawbacks of—and the escape from—these five faculties, then I did claim to have directly awakened to the unexcelled right self-awakening in this cosmos with its devas, Māras, & Brahmās, in this generation with its contemplatives & brahmans, its royalty & common people.

“Knowledge & vision arose in me: ‘Unprovoked is my release. This is the last birth. There is now no further becoming.’”

See also: MN 22; [SN 22:57](#); [SN 48:3](#); [SN 48:4](#)

An Analysis (of the Feeling Faculties) (3)

Vibhaṅga Sutta (SN 48:38)

“Monks, there are these five faculties. Which five? The pleasure-faculty, the pain-faculty, the happiness-faculty, the distress-faculty, the equanimity-faculty.

“And what is the pleasure-faculty? Any physical pleasure, physical comfort born of body-contact to be experienced as pleasure & comfort. That is called the pleasure-faculty.

“And what is the pain-faculty? Any physical pain, physical discomfort born of body-contact to be experienced as pain & discomfort. That is called the pain-faculty.

“And what is the happiness-faculty? Any mental pleasure, mental comfort born of intellect-contact to be experienced as pleasure & comfort. That is called the happiness-faculty.

“And what is the distress-faculty? Any mental pain, mental discomfort born of intellect-contact to be experienced as pain & discomfort. That is called the distress-faculty.

“And what is the equanimity-faculty? Anything, physical or mental, to be experienced as neither comfort nor discomfort. That is called the equanimity-faculty.

“With regard to this, the pleasure-faculty & happiness-faculty are to be seen as a feeling of pleasure. The pain-faculty & distress-faculty are to be seen as a feeling of pain. The equanimity-faculty is to be seen as a feeling of neither pleasure nor pain. Thus, by this exposition, the five are three; and the three, five.”

See also: MN 59; [SN 36:22](#)

An Analysis (of the Feeling Faculties) (4)

Vibhaṅga Sutta (SN 48:39)

“Monks, there are these five faculties. Which five? The pleasure-faculty, the pain-faculty, the happiness-faculty, the distress-faculty, the equanimity-faculty.

“In dependence on a contact to be experienced as pleasure, the pleasure-faculty arises. Being eased, one discerns, ‘I am eased.’ With the cessation of that very contact to be experienced as pleasure, one discerns, ‘What was experienced as coming from that—the pleasure-faculty arising in dependence on a contact to be experienced as pleasure—ceases & grows still.’

“In dependence on a contact to be experienced as pain, the pain-faculty arises. Being pained, one discerns, ‘I am pained.’ With the cessation of that very contact to be experienced as pain, one discerns, ‘What was experienced as coming from that—the pain-faculty arising in dependence on a contact to be experienced as pain—ceases & grows still.’

“In dependence on a contact to be experienced as happiness, the happiness-faculty arises. Being happy, one discerns, ‘I am happy.’ With the cessation of that very contact to be experienced as happiness, one discerns, ‘What was experienced as coming from that—the happiness-faculty arising in dependence on a contact to be experienced as happiness—ceases & grows still.’

“In dependence on a contact to be experienced as distress, the distress-faculty arises. Being distressed, one discerns, ‘I am distressed.’ With the cessation of that very contact to be experienced as distress, one discerns, ‘What was experienced as coming from that—the distress-faculty arising in dependence on a contact to be experienced as distress—ceases & grows still.’

“In dependence on a contact to be experienced as equanimity, the equanimity-faculty arises. Being equanimous, one discerns, ‘I am

equanimous.’ With the cessation of that very contact to be experienced as equanimity, one discerns, ‘What was experienced as coming from that—the equanimity-faculty arising in dependence on a contact to be experienced as equanimity—ceases & grows still.’

“Just as when, from the conjunction & combining of two fire sticks, heat is generated & fire produced, while from the separation & laying down of those fire sticks the heat coming from them ceases & grows still; in the same way, in dependence on a contact to be experienced as pleasure, the pleasure-faculty arises...

“In dependence on a contact to be experienced as pain, the pain-faculty arises...

“In dependence on a contact to be experienced as happiness, the happiness-faculty arises...

“In dependence on a contact to be experienced as distress, the distress-faculty arises...

“In dependence on a contact to be experienced as equanimity, the equanimity-faculty arises. Being equanimous, one discerns, ‘I am equanimous.’ With the cessation of that very contact to be experienced as equanimity, one discerns, ‘What was experienced as coming from that—the equanimity-faculty arising in dependence on a contact to be experienced as equanimity—ceases & grows still.’”

See also: MN 146

Old Age

Jarā Sutta (SN 48:41)

I have heard that on one occasion the Blessed One was staying near Sāvattthī in the Eastern Monastery, the palace of Migāra’s mother. Now on that occasion the Blessed One, on emerging from his seclusion in the evening, sat warming his back in the western sun. Then Ven. Ānanda went to the Blessed One and, on arrival, having bowed down to the Blessed One, massaged the Blessed One’s limbs with his hand and said,

“It’s amazing, lord. It’s astounding, how the Blessed One’s complexion is no longer so clear & bright; his limbs are flabby & wrinkled; his back, bent forward; there’s a discernible change in his faculties—the faculty of the eye, the faculty of the ear, the faculty of the nose, the faculty of the tongue, the faculty of the body.”

“That’s the way it is, Ānanda. When young, one is subject to aging; when healthy, subject to illness; when alive, subject to death. The complexion is no longer so clear & bright; the limbs are flabby & wrinkled; the back, bent forward; there’s a discernible change in the faculties—the faculty of the eye, the faculty of the ear, the faculty of the nose, the faculty of the tongue, the faculty of the body.”

That is what the Blessed One said. Having said that, the One Well-Gone, the Teacher, said further:

“I spit on you, wretched old age—
old age that makes for ugliness.
The bodily image, so charming,
is trampled by old age.
Even those who live to a hundred
are headed—all—to an end in death,
which spares no one,
which tramples all.”

See also: DN 16; [SN 3:25](#); Thag 1:118; Thig 5:8

Eastern Gatehouse

Pubbakoṭṭhaka Sutta (SN 48:44)

I have heard that on one occasion the Blessed One was staying near Sāvattthī at the Eastern Gatehouse. There he addressed Ven. Sāriputta: “Sāriputta, do you take it on conviction that the faculty of conviction, when developed & pursued, gains a footing in the deathless, has the deathless as its final end & consummation? Do you take it on conviction that the faculty of persistence... mindfulness... concentration...

discernment, when developed & pursued, gains a footing in the deathless, has the deathless as its final end & consummation?”

“Lord, it’s not that I take it on conviction in the Blessed One that the faculty of conviction... persistence... mindfulness... concentration... discernment, when developed & pursued, gains a footing in the deathless, has the deathless as its final end & consummation. Those who have not known, seen, penetrated, realized, or attained it by means of discernment would have to take it on conviction in others that the faculty of conviction... persistence... mindfulness... concentration... discernment, when developed & pursued, gains a footing in the deathless, has the deathless as its final end & consummation; whereas those who have known, seen, penetrated, realized, & attained it by means of discernment would have no doubt or uncertainty that the faculty of conviction... persistence... mindfulness... concentration... discernment, when developed & pursued, gains a footing in the deathless, has the deathless as its final end & consummation. And as for me, I have known, seen, penetrated, realized, & attained it by means of discernment. I have no doubt or uncertainty that the faculty of conviction... persistence... mindfulness... concentration... discernment, when developed & pursued, gains a footing in the deathless, has the deathless as its final end & consummation.”

“Excellent, Sāriputta. Excellent. Those who have not known, seen, penetrated, realized, or attained it by means of discernment would have to take it on conviction in others that the faculty of conviction... persistence... mindfulness... concentration... discernment, when developed & pursued, gains a footing in the deathless, has the deathless as its final end & consummation; whereas those who have known, seen, penetrated, realized, & attained it by means of discernment would have no doubt or uncertainty that the faculty of conviction... persistence... mindfulness... concentration... discernment, when developed & pursued, gains a footing in the deathless, has the deathless as its final end & consummation.”

See also: [SN 12:68](#); AN 6:19–20; AN 7:46; AN 10:58

The Eastern Monastery

Pubbārāma Sutta (SN 48:46)

“Through the development & pursuit of how many faculties, monks, does a monk whose effluents are ended declare gnosis: ‘Birth is ended, the holy life fulfilled, the task done. There is nothing further for the sake of this world?’”

“For us, lord, the teachings have the Blessed One as their root, their guide, & their arbitrator. It would be good if the Blessed One himself would explicate the meaning of this statement. Having heard it from the Blessed One, the monks will remember it.”

“Monks, it’s through the development & pursuit of two faculties that a monk whose effluents are ended declares gnosis: ‘Birth is ended, the holy life fulfilled, the task done. There is nothing further for the sake of this world.’ Through which two? Through noble discernment & noble release. Whatever is his noble discernment is his faculty of discernment. Whatever is his noble release is his faculty of concentration.

“It’s through the development & pursuit of these two faculties that a monk whose effluents are ended declares gnosis: ‘Birth is ended, the holy life fulfilled, the task done. There is nothing further for the sake of this world.’”

Conviction

Saddhā Sutta (SN 48:50)

This sutta can be read in two ways. The first way is to see it as portraying the five faculties as a set of qualities that develops in a spiral fashion. Based on conviction, one develops the remaining faculties. Then, through discernment, one’s conviction turns into a faculty as well, thus providing the basis for the other faculties to be even further strengthened.

The second way is to see it as describing the practice of the conviction-follower mentioned in MN 70.

I have heard that on one occasion the Blessed One was staying among the Aṅgas. Now the Aṅgas have a town called Āpaṇṇa, and there the Blessed One addressed Ven. Sāriputta, “Sāriputta, a disciple of the noble ones who is thoroughly inspired by the Tathāgata, who has gone solely to the Tathāgata [for refuge]: Would he have any doubt or uncertainty concerning the Tathāgata or the Tathāgata’s message?”

“Lord, a disciple of the noble ones who is thoroughly inspired by the Tathāgata, who has gone solely to the Tathāgata [for refuge] would have no doubt or uncertainty concerning the Tathāgata or the Tathāgata’s message. Of a disciple of the noble ones who has conviction, it can indeed be expected that he will keep his persistence aroused for abandoning unskillful mental qualities and taking on skillful mental qualities, that he will be steadfast, solid in his effort, not shirking his duties with regard to skillful mental qualities. Whatever persistence he has is his faculty of persistence.

“Lord, of a disciple of the noble ones who has conviction, whose persistence is aroused, it can indeed be expected that he will be mindful, endowed with excellent proficiency in mindfulness, remembering & able to call to mind even things that were done & said long ago. Whatever mindfulness he has is his faculty of mindfulness.

“Lord, of a disciple of the noble ones who has conviction, whose persistence is aroused, and whose mindfulness is established, it can indeed be expected that—making it his object to let go—he will gain concentration, he will gain singleness of mind.¹ Whatever concentration he has is his faculty of concentration.

“Lord, of a disciple of the noble ones who has conviction, whose persistence is aroused, whose mindfulness is established, and whose mind is rightly concentrated, it can indeed be expected that he will discern: ‘From an inconceivable beginning comes transmigration. A beginning point is not evident, though beings hindered by ignorance and fettered by craving are transmigrating & wandering on. The total fading & cessation of ignorance, of this mass of darkness, is this peaceful

state, this exquisite state: the pacification of all fabrications; the relinquishing of all acquisitions; the ending of craving; dispassion; cessation; unbinding.’ Whatever discernment he has is his faculty of discernment.

“And so, lord, this convinced disciple of the noble ones, thus striving again & again, recollecting again & again, concentrating his mind again & again, discerning again & again, becomes thoroughly convinced: ‘Those phenomena that once I had only heard about, I here & now dwell touching with my body and, breaking through with discernment, I see.’ Whatever conviction he has is his faculty of conviction.”

“Excellent, Sāriputta. Excellent. A disciple of the noble ones who is thoroughly inspired by the Tathāgata, who has gone solely to the Tathāgata [for refuge] would have no doubt or uncertainty concerning the Tathāgata or the Tathāgata’s message. Of a disciple of the noble ones who has conviction, it can indeed be expected that he will keep his persistence aroused for abandoning unskillful mental qualities and taking on skillful mental qualities, that he will be steadfast, solid in his effort, not shirking his duties with regard to skillful mental qualities. Whatever persistence he has is his faculty of persistence.

“Sāriputta, of a disciple of the noble ones who has conviction, whose persistence is aroused, it can indeed be expected that he will be mindful, endowed with excellent proficiency in mindfulness, remembering & able to call to mind even things that were done & said long ago. Whatever mindfulness he has is his faculty of mindfulness.

“Sāriputta, of a disciple of the noble ones who has conviction, whose persistence is aroused, and whose mindfulness is established, it can indeed be expected that—making it his object to let go—he will gain concentration, he will gain singleness of mind. Whatever concentration he has is his faculty of concentration.

“Sāriputta, of a disciple of the noble ones who has conviction, whose persistence is aroused, whose mindfulness is established, and whose mind is rightly concentrated, it can indeed be expected that he will discern: ‘From an inconceivable beginning comes transmigration. A beginning point is not evident, though beings hindered by ignorance and fettered by craving are transmigrating & wandering on. The total

fading & cessation of ignorance, of this mass of darkness, is this peaceful state, this exquisite state: the pacification of all fabrications; the relinquishing of all acquisitions; the ending of craving; dispassion; cessation; unbinding.’ Whatever discernment he has is his faculty of discernment.

“And so, Sāriputta, this convinced disciple of the noble ones, thus striving again & again, recollecting again & again, concentrating his mind again & again, discerning again & again, becomes thoroughly convinced: ‘Those phenomena that once I had only heard about, I here & now dwell touching with my body and, breaking through with discernment, I see.’ Whatever conviction he has is his faculty of conviction.”

NOTE

1. *Cittassa ekaggatā*. On the meaning of this term, see AN 5:151, note 1

Mallans

Malla Sutta (SN 48:52)

I have heard that on one occasion the Blessed One was staying among the Mallans. Now, there is a town of the Mallans named Uruvelakappa, and there the Blessed One addressed the monks: “Monks, as long as noble knowledge has not arisen in a disciple of the noble ones, four faculties are not stable, four faculties are not firm; but when noble knowledge has arisen in a disciple of the noble ones, four faculties are stable, four faculties are firm.

“Just as—as long as the ridge-beam of a house with a ridged roof, is not in place—the rafters are not stable, the rafters are not firm, but when the ridge-beam of the house with a ridged roof is in place, the rafters are stable, the rafters are firm; in the same way, as long as noble knowledge has not arisen in a disciple of the noble ones, four faculties are not stable, four faculties are not firm; but when noble knowledge has arisen in a disciple of the noble ones, four faculties are stable, four faculties are

firm. Which four? The faculty of conviction, the faculty of persistence, the faculty of mindfulness, & the faculty of concentration.

“When a disciple of the noble ones is discerning, the conviction that follows from that is stable. The persistence that follows from that is stable. The mindfulness that follows from that is stable. The concentration that follows from that is stable.”

See also: AN 3:110

The Learner

Sekha Sutta (SN 48:53)

I have heard that on one occasion the Blessed One was staying near Kosambī at Ghosita’s monastery. There he addressed the monks, “Monks, is there a manner of reckoning whereby a monk who is a learner [i.e., a person who has attained at least stream-entry, but has not yet reached arahantship], standing at the level of a learner, can discern that ‘I am a learner,’ and whereby a monk who is an adept [i.e., an arahant], standing at the level of an adept, can discern that ‘I am an adept?’”

“For us, lord, the teachings have the Blessed One as their root, their guide, & their arbitrator. It would be good if the Blessed One himself would explicate the meaning of this statement. Having heard it from the Blessed One, the monks will remember it.”

“In that case, monks, listen & pay close attention. I will speak.”

“As you say, lord,” the monks responded.

The Blessed One said, “There is a manner of reckoning whereby a monk who is a learner, standing at the level of a learner, can discern that ‘I am a learner,’ and whereby a monk who is an adept, standing at the level of an adept, can discern that ‘I am an adept.’

“And what is the manner of reckoning whereby a monk who is a learner, standing at the level of a learner, can discern that ‘I am a learner’? There is the case where a monk is a learner. He discerns, as it

has come to be, that ‘This is stress... This is the origination of stress... This is the cessation of stress... This is the path of practice leading to the cessation of stress.’ This is a manner of reckoning whereby a monk who is a learner, standing at the level of a learner, can discern that ‘I am a learner.’

“And further, the monk who is a learner reflects, ‘Is there outside of this (Dhamma & Vinaya) any contemplative or brahman who teaches the true, genuine, & accurate Dhamma like the Blessed One?’ And he discerns, ‘No, there is no contemplative or brahman outside of this who teaches the true, genuine, & accurate Dhamma like the Blessed One.’ This too is a manner of reckoning whereby a monk who is a learner, standing at the level of a learner, can discern that ‘I am a learner.’

“And further, the monk who is a learner discerns the five faculties: the faculty of conviction... persistence... mindfulness... concentration... discernment. He sees clear through with discernment their destiny, excellence, rewards, & consummation, but he does not touch them with his body. This too is a manner of reckoning whereby a monk who is a learner, standing at the level of a learner, can discern that ‘I am a learner.’

“And what is the manner of reckoning whereby a monk who is an adept, standing at the level of an adept, can discern that ‘I am an adept’? There is the case where a monk who is an adept discerns the five faculties: the faculty of conviction... persistence... mindfulness... concentration... discernment. He touches with his body and sees clear through with discernment what their destiny, excellence, rewards, & consummation are. This is a manner of reckoning whereby a monk who is an adept, standing at the level of an adept, can discern that ‘I am an adept.’

“And further, the monk who is an adept discerns the six sense faculties: the faculty of the eye... ear... nose... tongue... body... intellect. He discerns, ‘These six sense faculties will disband entirely, everywhere, & in every way without remainder, and no other set of six sense faculties will arise anywhere or in any way.’ This too is a manner of reckoning whereby a monk who is an adept, standing at the level of an adept, can discern that ‘I am an adept.’”

See also: DN 16; MN 48; AN 10:75

Established

Patitṭhita Sutta (SN 48:56)

“Monks, when one quality is established in a monk, the five faculties are developed & developed well. Which one quality? Heedfulness.

“And what is heedfulness? There is the case where a monk guards his mind with regard to effluents and qualities accompanied by effluents. When his mind is guarded with regard to effluents and mental qualities accompanied by effluents, the faculty of conviction goes to the culmination of its development. The faculty of persistence... mindfulness... concentration... discernment goes to the culmination of its development.

“This is how when one quality is established in a monk, the five faculties are developed & developed well.”

See also: MN 70; [SN 55:40](#); AN 3:17

Desire

Chanda Sutta (SN 51:13)

“Monks, if a monk attains concentration, attains singleness of mind¹ founded on desire, that is called concentration founded on desire. He generates desire, endeavors, arouses persistence, upholds & exerts his intent for the sake of the non-arising of evil, unskillful qualities that have not yet arisen... for the sake of the abandoning of evil, unskillful qualities that have arisen... for the sake of the arising of skillful qualities that have not yet arisen... (and) for the maintenance, non-confusion, increase, plenitude, development, & culmination of skillful qualities that have arisen. These are called the fabrications of exertion. This is desire, this is concentration founded on desire, these are the fabrications

of exertion. This is called the base of power endowed with concentration founded on desire & the fabrications of exertion.

“If a monk attains concentration, attains singleness of mind founded on persistence, that is called concentration founded on persistence...

“If a monk attains concentration, attains singleness of mind founded on intent, that is called concentration founded on intent...

“If a monk attains concentration, attains singleness of mind founded on discrimination, that is called concentration founded on discrimination. He generates desire, endeavors, arouses persistence, upholds & exerts his intent for the sake of the non-arising of evil, unskillful qualities that have not yet arisen... for the sake of the abandoning of evil, unskillful qualities that have arisen... for the sake of the arising of skillful qualities that have not yet arisen... (and) for the maintenance, non-confusion, increase, plenitude, development, & culmination of skillful qualities that have arisen. These are called the fabrications of exertion. This is discrimination, this is concentration founded on discrimination, these are the fabrications of exertion. This is called the base of power endowed with concentration founded on discrimination & the fabrications of exertion.”

NOTE

1. *Cittassa ekaggatā*. On the meaning of this term, see AN 5:151, note 1

Moggallāna

Moggallāna Sutta (SN 51:14)

I have heard that on one occasion the Blessed One was staying near Sāvattthī in the Eastern Monastery, the palace of Migāra’s mother. And on that occasion a large number of monks were dwelling on the lower floor of the palace: high-strung, rowdy, flighty, talkative, of loose words & muddled mindfulness, unalert, unconcentrated, their minds scattered, their faculties left wide open.

Then the Blessed One addressed Ven. Mahā Moggallāna, “Moggallāna, your fellows in the holy life dwelling on the lower floor of the palace of Migāra’s mother are high-strung, rowdy, flighty, talkative, of loose words & muddled mindfulness, unalert, unconcentrated, their minds scattered, their faculties left wide open. Go, Moggallāna, and terrify those monks.”

Responding, “As you say, lord,” to the Blessed One, Ven. Moggallāna willed a feat of psychic power such that with his toe he made the palace of Migāra’s mother shake, quiver, & quake.

Then those monks, standing to one side terrified, their hair on end, (exclaimed,) “How amazing! How astounding!—how, although there is no wind, the palace of Migāra’s mother—deeply-rooted, well-implanted, immovable, unshakable—still shook, quivered, and quaked!”

Then the Blessed One went to those monks and, on arrival, said to them, “Why monks, are you standing to one side terrified, your hair on end?”

“It’s amazing, lord! It’s astounding!—how, although there is no wind, the palace of Migāra’s mother—deeply-rooted, well-implanted, immovable, unshakable—still shook, quivered, and quaked!”

“Monks, wanting to terrify you, the monk Moggallāna with his toe made the palace of Migāra’s mother shake, quiver, & quake. What do you think, monks? Having developed & pursued which qualities is the monk Moggallāna of such power, such might?”

“For us, lord, the teachings have the Blessed One as their root, their guide, & their arbitrator. It would be good if the Blessed One himself would explicate the meaning of this statement. Having heard it from the Blessed One, the monks will remember it.”

“In that case, monks, listen: It’s through having developed & pursued the four bases of power that the monk Moggallāna is of such power, such might. Which four?

“There is the case where the monk Moggallāna develops the base of power endowed with concentration founded on desire & the fabrications of exertion, thinking, ‘This desire of mine will be neither overly sluggish nor overly active, neither inwardly constricted nor

outwardly scattered.' He keeps perceiving what is in front & behind so that what is in front is the same as what is behind, what is behind is the same as what is in front. What is below is the same as what is above, what is above is the same as what is below. (He dwells) by night as by day, and by day as by night. By means of an awareness thus open & unhampered, he develops a brightened mind.

“He develops the base of power endowed with concentration founded on persistence...

“He develops the base of power endowed with concentration founded on intent...

“He develops the base of power endowed with concentration founded on discrimination & the fabrications of exertion, thinking, ‘This discrimination of mine will be neither overly sluggish nor overly active, neither inwardly constricted nor outwardly scattered.’ He keeps perceiving what is in front & behind so that what is in front is the same as what is behind, what is behind is the same as what is in front. What is below is the same as what is above, what is above is the same as what is below. (He dwells) by night as by day, and by day as by night. By means of an awareness thus open & unhampered, he develops a brightened mind.

“It’s through having developed & pursued these four bases of power that the monk Moggallāna is of such power, such might.

“Having developed & pursued these four bases of power, the monk Moggallāna experiences manifold supranormal powers. Having been one he becomes many; having been many he becomes one. He appears. He vanishes. He goes unimpeded through walls, ramparts, & mountains as if through space. He dives in & out of the earth as if it were water. He walks on water without sinking as if it were dry land. Sitting cross-legged he flies through the air like a winged bird. With his hand he touches & strokes even the sun & moon, so mighty & powerful. He exercises influence with his body even as far as the Brahmā worlds.

“Having developed & pursued these four bases of power, the monk Moggallāna hears—by means of the divine ear-element, purified & surpassing the human—both kinds of sounds: divine & human, whether near or far.

“Having developed & pursued these four bases of power, the monk Moggallāna knows the awareness of other beings, other individuals, having encompassed it with his own awareness. He discerns a mind with passion as ‘a mind with passion,’ and a mind without passion as ‘a mind without passion.’ He discerns a mind with aversion as ‘a mind with aversion,’ and a mind without aversion as ‘a mind without aversion.’ He discerns a mind with delusion as ‘a mind with delusion,’ and a mind without delusion as ‘a mind without delusion.’ He discerns a restricted mind as ‘a restricted mind,’ and a scattered mind as ‘a scattered mind.’ He discerns an enlarged mind as ‘an enlarged mind,’ and an unenlarged mind as ‘an unenlarged mind.’ He discerns a surpassed mind [one that is not at the most excellent level] as ‘a surpassed mind,’ and an unsurpassed mind as ‘an unsurpassed mind.’ He discerns a concentrated mind as ‘a concentrated mind,’ and an unconcentrated mind as ‘an unconcentrated mind.’ He discerns a released mind as ‘a released mind,’ and an unreleased mind as ‘an unreleased mind.’

“Having developed & pursued these four bases of power, the monk Moggallāna recollects his manifold past lives [lit: previous homes], i.e., one birth, two births, three births, four, five, ten, twenty, thirty, forty, fifty, one hundred, one thousand, one hundred thousand, many eons of cosmic contraction, many eons of cosmic expansion, many eons of cosmic contraction & expansion, (recollecting,) ‘There I had such a name, belonged to such a clan, had such an appearance. Such was my food, such my experience of pleasure & pain, such the end of my life. Passing away from that state, I re-arose there. There too I had such a name, belonged to such a clan, had such an appearance. Such was my food, such my experience of pleasure & pain, such the end of my life. Passing away from that state, I re-arose here.’ Thus he remembers his manifold past lives in their modes & details.

“Having developed & pursued these four bases of power, the monk Moggallāna sees—by means of the divine eye, purified & surpassing the human—beings passing away and re-appearing, and he discerns how they are inferior & superior, beautiful & ugly, fortunate & unfortunate in accordance with their kamma: ‘These beings—who were endowed with bad conduct of body, speech, & mind, who reviled the noble ones,

held wrong views and undertook actions under the influence of wrong views—with the break-up of the body, after death, have re-appeared in a plane of deprivation, a bad destination, a lower realm, hell. But these beings—who were endowed with good conduct of body, speech, & mind, who did not revile the noble ones, who held right views and undertook actions under the influence of right views—with the break-up of the body, after death, have re-appeared in a good destination, a heavenly world.’ Thus—by means of the divine eye, purified & surpassing the human—he sees beings passing away and re-appearing, and he discerns how they are inferior & superior, beautiful & ugly, fortunate & unfortunate in accordance with their kamma.

“Having developed & pursued these four bases of power, the monk Moggallāna—through the ending of the effluents—enters & remains in the effluent-free awareness-release & discernment-release, having directly known & realized them for himself right in the here & now.”

See also: DN 2; [SN 21:3](#); AN 5:28

To Uṇṇābha the Brahman *Brahmaṇa Sutta (SN 51:15)*

I have heard that on one occasion Ven. Ānanda was staying near Kosambī at Ghosita’s monastery. Then Uṇṇābha the brahman went to Ven. Ānanda and on arrival greeted him courteously. After an exchange of friendly greetings & courtesies, he sat to one side. As he was sitting there, he said to Ven. Ānanda: “Master Ānanda, what is the aim of this holy life lived under Gotama the contemplative?”

“Brahman, the holy life is lived under the Blessed One with the aim of abandoning desire.”

“Is there a path, is there a practice, for the abandoning of that desire?”

“Yes, there is a path, there is a practice, for the abandoning of that desire.”

“What is the path, the practice, for the abandoning of that desire?”

“Brahman, there is the case where a monk develops the base of power endowed with concentration founded on desire & the fabrications of exertion. He develops the base of power endowed with concentration founded on persistence... concentration founded on intent... concentration founded on discrimination & the fabrications of exertion. This, brahman, is the path, this is the practice for the abandoning of that desire.”

“If that’s so, Master Ānanda, then it’s an endless path, and not one with an end, for it’s impossible that one could abandon desire by means of desire.”

“In that case, brahman, let me cross-question you on this matter. Answer as you see fit. What do you think? Didn’t you first have desire, thinking, ‘I’ll go to the monastery,’ and then when you reached the monastery, wasn’t that particular desire allayed?”

“Yes, sir.”

“Didn’t you first have persistence, thinking, ‘I’ll go to the monastery,’ and then when you reached the monastery, wasn’t that particular persistence allayed?”

“Yes, sir.”

“Didn’t you first have the intent, thinking, ‘I’ll go to the monastery,’ and then when you reached the monastery, wasn’t that particular intent allayed?”

“Yes, sir.”

“Didn’t you first have (an act of) discrimination, thinking, ‘I’ll go to the monastery,’ and then when you reached the monastery, wasn’t that particular act of discrimination allayed?”

“Yes, sir.”

“So it is with an arahant whose effluents are ended, who has reached fulfillment, done the task, laid down the burden, attained the true goal, totally destroyed the fetter of becoming, and who is released through right gnosis. Whatever desire he first had for the attainment of arahantship, on attaining arahantship that particular desire is allayed. Whatever persistence he first had for the attainment of arahantship, on attaining arahantship that particular persistence is allayed. Whatever

intent he first had for the attainment of arahantship, on attaining arahantship that particular intent is allayed. Whatever discrimination he first had for the attainment of arahantship, on attaining arahantship that particular discrimination is allayed. So what do you think, brahman? Is this an endless path, or one with an end?”

“You’re right, Master Ānanda. This is a path with an end, and not an endless one. Magnificent, Master Ānanda! Magnificent! Just as if he were to place upright what was overturned, to reveal what was hidden, to show the way to one who was lost, or to carry a lamp into the dark so that those with eyes could see forms, in the same way has Master Ānanda—through many lines of reasoning—made the Dhamma clear. I go to Master Gotama for refuge, to the Dhamma, and to the Saṅgha of monks. May Master Ānanda remember me as a lay follower who has gone for refuge, from this day forward, for life.”

See also: MN 24; MN 109; AN 4:159; AN 10:58

An Analysis of the Bases of Power

Iddhipāda-Vibhaṅga Sutta (SN 51:20)

“These four bases of power, when developed & pursued, are of great fruit & great benefit. And how are the four bases of power developed & pursued so as to be of great fruit & great benefit?

“There is the case where a monk develops the base of power endowed with concentration founded on desire & the fabrications of exertion, thinking, ‘This desire of mine will be neither overly sluggish nor overly active, neither inwardly constricted nor outwardly scattered.’ He keeps perceiving what is in front & behind so that what is in front is the same as what is behind, what is behind is the same as what is in front. What is below is the same as what is above, what is above is the same as what is below. (He dwells) by night as by day, and by day as by night. By means of an awareness thus open & unhampered, he develops a brightened mind.

“He develops the base of power endowed with concentration founded on persistence...

“He develops the base of power endowed with concentration founded on intent...

“He develops the base of power endowed with concentration founded on discrimination & the fabrications of exertion, thinking, ‘This discrimination of mine will be neither overly sluggish nor overly active, neither inwardly constricted nor outwardly scattered.’ He keeps perceiving what is in front & behind so that what is in front is the same as what is behind, what is behind is the same as what is in front. What is below is the same as what is above, what is above is the same as what is below. (He dwells) by night as by day, and by day as by night. By means of an awareness thus open & unhampered, he develops a brightened mind.

“And how is desire overly sluggish? Whatever desire is accompanied by laziness, conjoined with laziness, that is called overly sluggish desire.

“And how is desire overly active? Whatever desire is accompanied by restlessness, conjoined with restlessness, that is called overly active desire.

“And how is desire inwardly constricted? Whatever desire is accompanied by sloth & drowsiness, conjoined with sloth & drowsiness, that is called inwardly restricted desire.

“And how is desire outwardly scattered? Whatever desire is stirred up by the five strands of sensuality, outwardly dispersed & dissipated, that is called outwardly scattered desire.

“And how does a monk dwell perceiving what is in front & behind so that what is in front is the same as what is behind, and what is behind is the same as what is in front? There is the case where a monk’s perception of what is in front & behind is well in hand, well-attended to, well-considered, well-tuned [‘penetrated’] by means of discernment. This is how a monk keeps perceiving what is in front and behind so that what is in front is the same as what is behind, and what is behind is the same as what is in front.

“And how does a monk dwell so that what is below is the same as what is above, and what is above is the same as what is below? There is

the case where a monk reflects on this very body, from the soles of the feet on up, from the crown of the head on down, surrounded by skin, & full of various kinds of unclean things: ‘In this body there are head hairs, body hairs, nails, teeth, skin, flesh, tendons, bones, bone marrow, kidneys, heart, liver, pleura, spleen, lungs, large intestines, small intestines, gorge, feces, bile, phlegm, pus, blood, sweat, fat, tears, skin-oil, saliva, mucus, fluid in the joints, urine.’ This is how a monk dwells so that what is below is the same as what is above, and what is above is the same as what is below.

“And how does a monk dwell by night as by day, and by day as by night? There is the case where a monk at night develops the base of power endowed with concentration founded on desire & the fabrications of exertion by means of the same modes [permutations] & signs & themes that he uses by day, and by day he develops the base of power endowed with concentration founded on desire & the fabrications of exertion by means of the same modes & signs & themes that he uses by night. This is how a monk dwells by night as by day, and by day as by night.

“And how does a monk—by means of an awareness open & unhampered—develop a brightened mind? There is the case where a monk has the perception of light, the perception of daytime [at any hour of the day] well in hand & well-established. This is how a monk—by means of an awareness open & unhampered—develops a brightened mind.

[The above discussion is then repeated for persistence, intent, & discrimination.]

“When a monk has thus developed & pursued the four bases of power, he experiences manifold supranormal powers. Having been one he becomes many; having been many he becomes one. He appears. He vanishes. He goes unimpeded through walls, ramparts, & mountains as if through space. He dives in & out of the earth as if it were water. He walks on water without sinking as if it were dry land. Sitting cross-legged he flies through the air like a winged bird. With his hand he touches & strokes even the sun & moon, so mighty & powerful. He exercises influence with his body even as far as the Brahmā worlds.

“He hears—by means of the divine ear-element, purified & surpassing the human—both kinds of sounds: divine & human, whether near or far.

“He knows the awareness of other beings, other individuals, having encompassed it with his own awareness. He discerns a mind with passion as ‘a mind with passion,’ and a mind without passion as ‘a mind without passion.’ He discerns a mind with aversion as ‘a mind with aversion,’ and a mind without aversion as ‘a mind without aversion.’ He discerns a mind with delusion as ‘a mind with delusion,’ and a mind without delusion as ‘a mind without delusion.’ He discerns a restricted mind as ‘a restricted mind,’ and a scattered mind as ‘a scattered mind.’ He discerns an enlarged mind¹ as ‘an enlarged mind,’ and an unenlarged mind as ‘an unenlarged mind.’ He discerns a surpassed mind [one that is not at the most excellent level] as ‘a surpassed mind,’ and an unsurpassed mind as ‘an unsurpassed mind.’ He discerns a concentrated mind as ‘a concentrated mind,’ and an unconcentrated mind as ‘an unconcentrated mind.’ He discerns a released mind² as ‘a released mind,’ and an unreleased mind as ‘an unreleased mind.’

“He recollects his manifold past lives [lit: previous homes], i.e., one birth, two births, three births, four, five, ten, twenty, thirty, forty, fifty, one hundred, one thousand, one hundred thousand, many eons of cosmic contraction, many eons of cosmic expansion, many eons of cosmic contraction & expansion, (recollecting,) ‘There I had such a name, belonged to such a clan, had such an appearance. Such was my food, such my experience of pleasure & pain, such the end of my life. Passing away from that state, I re-arose there. There too I had such a name, belonged to such a clan, had such an appearance. Such was my food, such my experience of pleasure & pain, such the end of my life. Passing away from that state, I re-arose here.’ Thus he remembers his manifold past lives in their modes & details.

“He sees—by means of the divine eye, purified & surpassing the human—beings passing away and re-appearing, and he discerns how they are inferior & superior, beautiful & ugly, fortunate & unfortunate in accordance with their kamma: ‘These beings—who were endowed with bad conduct of body, speech, & mind, who reviled the noble ones,

held wrong views and undertook actions under the influence of wrong views—with the break-up of the body, after death, have re-appeared in a plane of deprivation, a bad destination, a lower realm, hell. But these beings—who were endowed with good conduct of body, speech, & mind, who did not revile the noble ones, who held right views and undertook actions under the influence of right views—with the break-up of the body, after death, have re-appeared in a good destination, a heavenly world.’ Thus—by means of the divine eye, purified & surpassing the human—he sees beings passing away and re-appearing, and he discerns how they are inferior & superior, beautiful & ugly, fortunate & unfortunate in accordance with their kamma.

“Through the ending of the effluents, he enters & remains in the effluent-free awareness-release & discernment-release, having directly known & realized them for himself right in the here & now.

“This is how these four bases of power, when developed & pursued, are of great fruit & great benefit.”

NOTES

1. Mahaggatam. This term is used, together with “immeasurable / unlimited,” in the standard description of the awareness generated in the practice of the brahmavihāras ([SN 42:8](#)). According to Ven. Anuruddha in MN 127, however, an enlarged mind is not immeasurable. Its range of awareness is larger than the body but still measurable, ranging in distance from the shade of a tree to the earth bounded by the ocean.

2. On the various levels of release, see DN 15, MN 43, and AN 9:43–45.

See also: MN 101; [SN 46:53](#); [SN 47:8](#); AN 3:102; AN 3:103; AN 5:28

Ambapālī

Ambapālī Sutta (SN 52:9)

I have heard that on one occasion Ven. Anuruddha & Ven. Sāriputta were staying near Vesālī in Ambapālīs forest. Then Ven. Sāriputta, arising from his seclusion in the late afternoon, went to Ven. Anuruddha. On

arrival, he exchanged courteous greetings with him. After an exchange of friendly greetings & courtesies, he sat to one side. As he was sitting there, he said to Ven. Anuruddha, “Bright are your faculties, friend Anuruddha; pure your complexion, and clear. By means of what dwelling do you now often dwell?”

“I now often dwell, friend, with a mind well-established in the four establishing of mindfulness. Which four? There is the case where I remain focused on the body in & of itself—ardent, alert, & mindful—subduing greed & distress with reference to the world. I remain focused on feelings in & of themselves... the mind in & of itself... mental qualities in & of themselves—ardent, alert, & mindful—subduing greed & distress with reference to the world.

“I now often dwell, friend, with a mind well-established in these four establishing of mindfulness.

“Any monk whose effluents are ended—who has reached fulfillment, done the task, laid down the burden, attained the true goal, laid to waste the fetter of becoming, and who is released through right gnosis—often dwells with a mind well-established in these four establishing of mindfulness.”

“It is a gain for us, my friend, a great gain for us, that we were right in Ven. Anuruddha’s presence when he said this bull-like statement!”

See also: [SN 22:122](#); [SN 46:4](#); [SN 47:4](#); [SN 54:11](#)

Illness

Gilāyana Sutta (SN 52:10)

I have heard that on one occasion Ven. Anuruddha was staying near Sāvattthī in the Dark Forest—diseased, in pain, severely ill. Then a large number of monks went to Ven. Anuruddha and on arrival said to him, “What (mental) dwelling are you dwelling in so that the pains that have arisen in the body do not invade or remain in the mind?”

“When I dwell with my mind well-established in the four establishing of mindfulness, the pains that have arisen in the body do not invade or remain in the mind. Which four? There is the case where I remain focused on the body in & of itself—ardent, alert, & mindful—subduing greed & distress with reference to the world. I remain focused on feelings in & of themselves... mind in & of itself... mental qualities in & of themselves—ardent, alert, & mindful—subduing greed & distress with reference to the world. When I dwell with my mind well-established in these four establishing of mindfulness, the pains that have arisen in the body do not invade or remain in the mind.”

See also: MN 36; MN 146; [SN 1:38](#); [SN 22:88](#); [SN 36:6](#); [SN 46:14](#); AN 10:60; Thag 5:8

To Ariṭṭha (On Mindfulness of Breathing) *Ariṭṭha Sutta (SN 54:6)*

Near Sāvattihī. There the Blessed One said, “Monks, do you develop mindfulness of in-&-out breathing?”

When this was said, Ven. Ariṭṭha replied to the Blessed One, “I develop mindfulness of in-&-out breathing, lord.”

“But how do you develop mindfulness of in-&-out breathing, Ariṭṭha?”

“Having abandoned sensual desire for past sensual pleasures, lord, having done away with sensual desire for future sensual pleasures, and having thoroughly subdued perceptions of resistance with regard to internal & external events, I breathe in mindfully and breathe out mindfully.”¹

“There is that mindfulness of in-&-out breathing, Ariṭṭha. I don’t say that there isn’t. But as to how mindfulness of in-&-out breathing is brought in detail to its culmination, listen and pay close attention. I will speak.”

“As you say, lord,” Ven. Ariṭṭha responded to the Blessed One.

The Blessed One said, “And how, Aritṭha, is mindfulness of in-&-out breathing brought in detail to its culmination? There is the case where a monk, having gone to the wilderness, to the shade of a tree, or to an empty building, sits down folding his legs crosswise, holding his body erect, and establishing mindfulness to the fore.² Always mindful, he breathes in; mindful he breathes out.

“[1] Breathing in long, he discerns, ‘I am breathing in long’; or breathing out long, he discerns, ‘I am breathing out long.’ [2] Or breathing in short, he discerns, ‘I am breathing in short’; or breathing out short, he discerns, ‘I am breathing out short.’ [3] He trains himself, ‘I will breathe in sensitive to the entire body.’³ He trains himself, ‘I will breathe out sensitive to the entire body.’ [4] He trains himself, ‘I will breathe in calming bodily fabrication.’⁴ He trains himself, ‘I will breathe out calming bodily fabrication.’

“[5] He trains himself, ‘I will breathe in sensitive to rapture.’ He trains himself, ‘I will breathe out sensitive to rapture.’ [6] He trains himself, ‘I will breathe in sensitive to pleasure.’ He trains himself, ‘I will breathe out sensitive to pleasure.’ [7] He trains himself, ‘I will breathe in sensitive to mental fabrication.’⁵ He trains himself, ‘I will breathe out sensitive to mental fabrication.’ [8] He trains himself, ‘I will breathe in calming mental fabrication.’ He trains himself, ‘I will breathe out calming mental fabrication.’

“[9] He trains himself, ‘I will breathe in sensitive to the mind.’ He trains himself, ‘I will breathe out sensitive to the mind.’ [10] He trains himself, ‘I will breathe in satisfying the mind.’ He trains himself, ‘I will breathe out satisfying the mind.’ [11] He trains himself, ‘I will breathe in steadying the mind.’ He trains himself, ‘I will breathe out steadying the mind.’ [12] He trains himself, ‘I will breathe in releasing the mind.’ He trains himself, ‘I will breathe out releasing the mind.’⁶

“[13] He trains himself, ‘I will breathe in focusing on inconstancy.’ He trains himself, ‘I will breathe out focusing on inconstancy.’ [14] He trains himself, ‘I will breathe in focusing on dispassion [lit: fading].’ He trains himself, ‘I will breathe out focusing on dispassion.’ [15] He trains himself, ‘I will breathe in focusing on cessation.’ He trains himself, ‘I will

breathe out focusing on cessation.’ [16] He trains himself, ‘I will breathe in focusing on relinquishment.’ He trains himself, ‘I will breathe out focusing on relinquishment.’

“This, Aritṭha, is how mindfulness of in-&-out breathing is brought in detail to its culmination.”

NOTES

1. The Commentary reads this statement as indicating that Aritṭha has attained the third level of awakening, non-return, but it is also possible to interpret the statement on a more mundane level: Aritṭha is simply practicing mindful equanimity—in the present moment, having temporarily subdued desire for past and future sensual pleasures, and having temporarily subdued any thought of resistance with regard to the present.

2. To the fore (*parimukham*): An Abhidhamma text, Vibhaṅga 12:1, defines this term as meaning “the tip of the nose or the sign of the mouth.” However, the term appears as part of a stock phrase describing a person engaged in meditation, even for themes that have nothing to do with the body at all, such as sublime-attitude (*brahma-vihāra*) meditation (AN 3:64). Thus it seems more likely that the term is used in an idiomatic sense, indicating either that mindfulness is placed face-to-face with its object, or that it is made prominent, which is how I have translated it here.

3. The commentaries insist that “body” here means the full length of the breath, but this is unlikely in this context, for three reasons: (a) The first two steps already require being aware of the entire length of the breath. Otherwise, the meditator wouldn’t know if a breath was short or long. (b) The fourth step—without further explanation—refers to the breath as “bodily fabrication.” If the Buddha were using two different terms to refer to the breath—“body” and “bodily fabrication”—in such close proximity, he would have been careful to signal that he was redefining his terms (as he does below, when explaining that the first four steps in breath meditation correspond to the practice of focusing on the body in and of itself as a frame of reference). But he doesn’t. (c) As AN 10:20 indicates, the fourth step refers to bringing the mind to the fourth jhāna, a state in which in-and-out breathing grows still ([SN 36:11](#); AN 10:72) and the body is filled with pure,

bright awareness (after awareness has been extended to be sensitive to the entire body beginning with the first jhāna (DN 2; MN 119)). Because the fourth step focuses on the stilling of the breath, there has to be a step in which the awareness is extended to fill the entire body. That would be this step.

4. “In-&-out breaths are bodily; these are things tied up with the body. That’s why in-&-out breaths are bodily fabrications.” —MN 44

“And how is a monk calmed in his bodily fabrication? There is the case where a monk, with the abandoning of pleasure & pain—as with the earlier disappearance of elation & distress—enters & remains in the fourth jhāna: purity of equanimity & mindfulness, neither pleasure nor pain.” —AN 10:20

“When one has attained the fourth jhāna, in-and-out breaths have ceased.” —[SN 36:11](#) & AN 9:31

5. “Perceptions & feelings are mental; these are things tied up with the mind. That’s why perceptions & feelings are mental fabrications.” —MN 44

6. AN 9:34 shows how the mind, step by step, is temporarily released from burdensome mental states of greater and greater refinement as it advances through the stages of jhāna.

The Lamp

Dīpa Sutta (SN 54:8)

“Monks, concentration through mindfulness of in-&-out breathing, when developed & pursued, is of great fruit, great benefit. And how is concentration through mindfulness of in-&-out breathing developed & pursued so as to be of great fruit, great benefit?

“There is the case where a monk, having gone to the wilderness, to the shade of a tree, or to an empty building, sits down folding his legs crosswise, holding his body erect, and establishing mindfulness to the fore. Always mindful, he breathes in; mindful he breathes out.

“[1] Breathing in long, he discerns, ‘I am breathing in long’; or breathing out long, he discerns, ‘I am breathing out long.’ [2] Or breathing in short, he discerns, ‘I am breathing in short’; or breathing

out short, he discerns, ‘I am breathing out short.’ [3] He trains himself, ‘I will breathe in sensitive to the entire body.’ He trains himself, ‘I will breathe out sensitive to the entire body.’ [4] He trains himself, ‘I will breathe in calming bodily fabrication.’ He trains himself, ‘I will breathe out calming bodily fabrication.’

“[5] He trains himself, ‘I will breathe in sensitive to rapture.’ He trains himself, ‘I will breathe out sensitive to rapture.’ [6] He trains himself, ‘I will breathe in sensitive to pleasure.’ He trains himself, ‘I will breathe out sensitive to pleasure.’ [7] He trains himself, ‘I will breathe in sensitive to mental fabrication.’ He trains himself, ‘I will breathe out sensitive to mental fabrication.’ [8] He trains himself, ‘I will breathe in calming mental fabrication.’ He trains himself, ‘I will breathe out calming mental fabrication.’

“[9] He trains himself, ‘I will breathe in sensitive to the mind.’ He trains himself, ‘I will breathe out sensitive to the mind.’ [10] He trains himself, ‘I will breathe in satisfying the mind.’ He trains himself, ‘I will breathe out satisfying the mind.’ [11] He trains himself, ‘I will breathe in steadying the mind.’ He trains himself, ‘I will breathe out steadying the mind.’ [12] He trains himself, ‘I will breathe in releasing the mind.’ He trains himself, ‘I will breathe out releasing the mind.’

“[13] He trains himself, ‘I will breathe in focusing on inconstancy.’ He trains himself, ‘I will breathe out focusing on inconstancy.’ [14] He trains himself, ‘I will breathe in focusing on dispassion [lit: fading].’ He trains himself, ‘I will breathe out focusing on dispassion.’ [15] He trains himself, ‘I will breathe in focusing on cessation.’ He trains himself, ‘I will breathe out focusing on cessation.’ [16] He trains himself, ‘I will breathe in focusing on relinquishment.’ He trains himself, ‘I will breathe out focusing on relinquishment.’

“This is how concentration through mindfulness of in-&-out breathing is developed & pursued so as to be of great fruit, great benefit.

“I myself, monks, before my awakening, when I was still an unawakened bodhisatta, often dwelt in this (meditative) dwelling. While I was dwelling in this (meditative) dwelling, neither my body nor my eyes were fatigued, and the mind—through lack of clinging/sustenance—was released from effluents.

“Thus, monks, if a monk should wish, ‘May neither my body nor my eyes be fatigued, and may my mind—through lack of clinging/sustenance—be released from effluents,’ then he should attend closely to this very same concentration through mindfulness of in-&-out breathing.

“If a monk should wish, ‘May memories & resolves connected to the household life be abandoned within me,’ he should attend closely to this very same concentration through mindfulness of in-&-out breathing.

“If a monk should wish, ‘May I be percipient of loathsomeness in the presence of what is not loathsome,’ he should attend closely to this very same concentration through mindfulness of in-&-out breathing.

“If a monk should wish, ‘May I be percipient of unloathsomeness in the presence of what is loathsome... May I be percipient of loathsomeness in the presence of what is loathsome & what is not... May I be percipient of unloathsomeness in the presence of what is loathsome & what is not... May I—in the presence of what is loathsome & what is not—cutting myself off from both, remain equanimous, alert, & mindful,’ then he should attend closely to this very same concentration through mindfulness of in-&-out breathing.

“If a monk should wish, ‘May I—quite secluded from sensuality, secluded from unskillful qualities—enter & remain in the first jhāna: rapture & pleasure born of seclusion, accompanied by directed thought & evaluation,’ then he should attend closely to this very same concentration through mindfulness of in-&-out breathing.

“If a monk should wish, ‘May I, with the stilling of directed thoughts & evaluations, enter & remain in the second jhāna: rapture & pleasure born of concentration, unification of awareness free from directed thought & evaluation—internal assurance, then he should attend closely to this very same concentration through mindfulness of in-&-out breathing.

“If a monk should wish, ‘May I, with the fading of rapture, remain equanimous, mindful, & alert, sense pleasure with the body, and enter & remain in the third jhāna, of which the noble ones declare, “Equanimous & mindful, he has a pleasant abiding,”’ then he should

attend closely to this very same concentration through mindfulness of in-&-out breathing.

“If a monk should wish, ‘May I, with the abandoning of pleasure & pain—as with the earlier disappearance of elation & distress—enter & remain in the fourth jhāna: purity of equanimity & mindfulness, neither-pleasure-nor-pain,’ then he should attend closely to this very same concentration through mindfulness of in-&-out breathing.

“If a monk should wish, ‘May I, with the complete transcending of perceptions of (physical) form, with the disappearance of perceptions of resistance, and not attending to perceptions of multiplicity, (perceiving,) ‘Infinite space,’ enter & remain in the dimension of the infinitude of space,’ then he should attend closely to this very same concentration through mindfulness of in-&-out breathing.

“If a monk should wish, ‘May I, with the complete transcending of the dimension of the infinitude of space, (perceiving,) ‘Infinite consciousness,’ enter & remain in the dimension of the infinitude of consciousness,’ then he should attend closely to this very same concentration through mindfulness of in-&-out breathing.

“If a monk should wish, ‘May I, with the complete transcending of the dimension of the infinitude of consciousness, (perceiving,) ‘There is nothing,’ enter & remain in the dimension of nothingness,’ then he should attend closely to this very same concentration through mindfulness of in-&-out breathing.

“If a monk should wish, ‘May I, with the complete transcending of the dimension of nothingness, enter & remain in the dimension of neither perception nor non-perception,’ then he should attend closely to this very same concentration through mindfulness of in-&-out breathing.

“If a monk should wish, ‘May I, with the complete transcending of the dimension of neither perception nor non-perception, enter & remain in the cessation of perception & feeling,’ then he should attend closely to this very same concentration through mindfulness of in-&-out breathing.

“When concentration through mindfulness of in-&-out breathing has been thus developed, thus pursued, one senses a feeling of pleasure. One discerns it as ‘inconstant.’ One discerns it as ‘not grasped at.’ One discerns it as ‘not relished.’ One senses a feeling of pain. One discerns it as ‘inconstant.’ One discerns it as ‘not grasped at.’ One discerns it as ‘not relished.’ One senses a feeling of neither pleasure nor pain. One discerns it as ‘inconstant.’ One discerns it as ‘not grasped at.’ One discerns it as ‘not relished.’

“If sensing a feeling of pleasure, one senses it disjoined from it. If sensing a feeling of pain, one senses it disjoined from it. If sensing a feeling of neither pleasure nor pain, one senses it disjoined from it. When sensing a feeling limited to the body, one discerns, ‘I am sensing a feeling limited to the body.’ When sensing a feeling limited to life, one discerns, ‘I am sensing a feeling limited to life.’ One discerns, ‘With the break-up of the body, after the termination of life, all that is experienced, not being relished, will grow cold right here.’

“Just as an oil lamp would burn in dependence on oil & wick and, from the termination of the oil & wick, it would go out unnourished; in the same way, when sensing a feeling limited to the body, one discerns that ‘I am sensing a feeling limited to the body.’ When sensing a feeling limited to life, one discerns that ‘I am sensing a feeling limited to life.’ One discerns, ‘With the break-up of the body, after the termination of life, all that is sensed, not being relished, will grow cold right here.’”

See also: MN 6; MN 118; [SN 22:88](#); [SN 46:54](#); AN 10:71

At Vesālī

Vesālī Sutta (SN 54:9)

I have heard that on one occasion the Blessed One was staying near Vesālī at the Gabled Hall in the Great Forest. Now on that occasion the Blessed One, with many lines of reasoning, was giving the monks a talk on the unattractiveness (of the body), was speaking in praise of (the perception of) unattractiveness, was speaking in praise of the

development of (the perception of) unattractiveness. Then the Blessed One addressed the monks: “Monks, I wish to go into seclusion for half a month. I am not to be approached by anyone at all except for the one who brings almsfood.”

“As you say, lord,” the monks responded to him. And no one approached the Blessed One except for the one who brought almsfood.

Then the monks—(thinking,) “The Blessed One, with many lines of reasoning, has given a talk on the unattractiveness (of the body), has spoken in praise of (the perception of) unattractiveness, has spoken in praise of the development of (the perception of) unattractiveness”—remained committed to the development of (the perception of) unattractiveness in many modes & manners. They—ashamed, repelled, & disgusted with this body—sought for an assassin.¹ In one day, ten monks took the knife. In one day, twenty monks took the knife. In one day, thirty monks took the knife.

Then the Blessed One, emerging from his seclusion after half a month’s time, said to Ven. Ānanda, “Ānanda, why does the Saṅgha of monks seem so depleted?”

“Because, lord, the Blessed One, with many lines of reasoning, gave the monks a talk on the unattractiveness (of the body), spoke in praise of (the perception of) unattractiveness, spoke in praise of the development of (the perception of) unattractiveness. The monks—(thinking,) ‘The Blessed One, with many lines of reasoning, has given a talk on the unattractiveness (of the body), has spoken in praise of (the perception of) unattractiveness, has spoken in praise of the development of (the perception of) unattractiveness’—remained committed to the development of (the perception of) unattractiveness in many modes & manners. They—ashamed, repelled, & disgusted with this body—sought for an assassin. In one day, ten monks took the knife. In one day, twenty monks took the knife. In one day, thirty monks took the knife. It would be good, lord, if the Blessed One would explain another method so that this Saṅgha of monks might be established in gnosis.”

“In that case, Ānanda, gather in the assembly hall all the monks who live in dependence on Vesālī.”

“As you say, lord,” Ven. Ānanda responded. When he had gathered in the assembly hall all the monks who lived in dependence on Vesālī, he went to the Blessed One and said, “The Saṅgha of monks is gathered, lord. Now is the time to do as the Blessed One sees fit.”

Then the Blessed One went to the assembly hall and sat down on a seat made ready. Having sat down, he addressed the monks: “Monks, this concentration through mindfulness of in-&-out breathing, when developed & pursued, is both peaceful & exquisite, a refreshing & pleasant abiding that immediately disperses & allays any evil, unskillful (mental) qualities that have arisen. Just as when, in the last month of the hot season, a great rain-cloud out of season immediately disperses & allays the dust & dirt that have stirred up, in the same way this concentration through mindfulness of in-&-out breathing, when developed & pursued, is both peaceful & exquisite, a refreshing & pleasant abiding that immediately disperses & allays any evil, unskillful (mental) qualities that have arisen.

“And how is concentration through mindfulness of in-&-out breathing developed & pursued so as to be both peaceful & exquisite, a refreshing & pleasant abiding that immediately disperses & allays any evil, unskillful (mental) qualities that have arisen?

“There is the case where a monk, having gone to the wilderness, to the shade of a tree, or to an empty building, sits down folding his legs crosswise, holding his body erect, and establishing mindfulness to the fore. Always mindful, he breathes in; mindful he breathes out.

“[1] Breathing in long, he discerns, ‘I am breathing in long’; or breathing out long, he discerns, ‘I am breathing out long.’ [2] Or breathing in short, he discerns, ‘I am breathing in short’; or breathing out short, he discerns, ‘I am breathing out short.’ [3] He trains himself, ‘I will breathe in sensitive to the entire body.’ He trains himself, ‘I will breathe out sensitive to the entire body.’ [4] He trains himself, ‘I will breathe in calming bodily fabrication [in-&-out breathing].’ He trains himself, ‘I will breathe out calming bodily fabrication.’

“[5] He trains himself, ‘I will breathe in sensitive to rapture.’ He trains himself, ‘I will breathe out sensitive to rapture.’ [6] He trains himself, ‘I will breathe in sensitive to pleasure.’ He trains himself, ‘I will breathe out

sensitive to pleasure.’ [7] He trains himself, ‘I will breathe in sensitive to mental fabrication [feeling & perception].’ He trains himself, ‘I will breathe out sensitive to mental fabrication.’ [8] He trains himself, ‘I will breathe in calming mental fabrication.’ He trains himself, ‘I will breathe out calming mental fabrication.’

“[9] He trains himself, ‘I will breathe in sensitive to the mind.’ He trains himself, ‘I will breathe out sensitive to the mind.’ [10] He trains himself, ‘I will breathe in gladdening the mind.’ He trains himself, ‘I will breathe out gladdening the mind.’ [11] He trains himself, ‘I will breathe in steadying the mind.’ He trains himself, ‘I will breathe out steadying the mind.’ [12] He trains himself, ‘I will breathe in releasing the mind.’ He trains himself, ‘I will breathe out releasing the mind.’

“[13] He trains himself, ‘I will breathe in focusing on inconstancy.’ He trains himself, ‘I will breathe out focusing on inconstancy.’ [14] He trains himself, ‘I will breathe in focusing on dispassion [lit: fading].’ He trains himself, ‘I will breathe out focusing on dispassion.’ [15] He trains himself, ‘I will breathe in focusing on cessation.’ He trains himself, ‘I will breathe out focusing on cessation.’ [16] He trains himself, ‘I will breathe in focusing on relinquishment.’ He trains himself, ‘I will breathe out focusing on relinquishment.’

“This is how concentration through mindfulness of in-&-out breathing is developed & pursued so as to be both peaceful & exquisite, a refreshing & pleasant abiding that immediately disperses & allays any evil, unskillful (mental) qualities that have arisen.”

NOTE

1. *Satthahāraka*. Some scholars have objected that this word could not mean “assassin,” on the grounds that it is a neuter noun, and Pali does not use neuter nouns to describe people, but that is not true. For example, *kaṇṭaka*, “thorn,” another neuter noun, means “a subversive”—suggesting that neuter nouns were used to describe people as a way of showing disrespect.

See also: [SN 35:88](#); AN 4:163

At Icchānaṅgala

Icchānaṅgala Sutta (SN 54:11)

On one occasion the Blessed One was staying in Icchānaṅgala in the Icchānaṅgala forest grove. There he addressed the monks: “Monks, I wish to go into seclusion for three months. I am not to be approached by anyone at all except for the one who brings almsfood.”

“As you say, lord,” the monks responded to him. And no one approached the Blessed One except for the one who brought almsfood.

Then the Blessed One, having emerged from seclusion after the passing of three months, addressed the monks: “Monks, if wanderers of other sects ask you, ‘By means of what dwelling, friends, did Gotama the contemplative mostly dwell during the rains residence?’ You, thus asked, should answer them in this way: ‘It was by means of the concentration of mindfulness of breathing that the Blessed One mostly dwelled.’

“There is the case, monks, where mindful¹ I breathe in; mindful I breathe out.

“[1] Breathing in long, I discern, ‘I am breathing in long;’ or breathing out long, I discern, ‘I am breathing out long.’ [2] Or breathing in short, I discern, ‘I am breathing in short;’ or breathing out short, I discern, ‘I am breathing out short.’ [3] I discern,² ‘I will breathe in sensitive to the entire body.’ I discern, ‘I will breathe out sensitive to the entire body.’ [4] I discern, ‘I will breathe in calming bodily fabrication [in-&-out breathing].’ I discern, ‘I will breathe out calming bodily fabrication.’

“[5] I discern, ‘I will breathe in sensitive to rapture.’ I discern, ‘I will breathe out sensitive to rapture.’ [6] I discern, ‘I will breathe in sensitive to pleasure.’ I discern, ‘I will breathe out sensitive to pleasure.’ [7] I discern, ‘I will breathe in sensitive to mental fabrication [feeling & perception].’ I discern, ‘I will breathe out sensitive to mental fabrication.’ [8] I discern, ‘I will breathe in calming mental fabrication.’ I discern, ‘I will breathe out calming mental fabrication.’

“[9] I discern, ‘I will breathe in sensitive to the mind.’ I discern, ‘I will breathe out sensitive to the mind.’ [10] I discern, ‘I will breathe in gladdening the mind.’ I discern, ‘I will breathe out gladdening the mind.’ [11] I discern, ‘I will breathe in steadying the mind.’ I discern, ‘I will breathe out steadying the mind.’ [12] I discern, ‘I will breathe in releasing the mind.’ I discern, ‘I will breathe out releasing the mind.’

“[13] I discern, ‘I will breathe in focusing on inconstancy.’ I discern, ‘I will breathe out focusing on inconstancy.’ [14] I discern, ‘I will breathe in focusing on dispassion [lit: fading].’ I discern, ‘I will breathe out focusing on dispassion.’ [15] I discern, ‘I will breathe in focusing on cessation.’ I discern, ‘I will breathe out focusing on cessation.’ [16] I discern, ‘I will breathe in focusing on relinquishment.’ I discern, ‘I will breathe out focusing on relinquishment.’

“For whatever one rightly speaking would call, ‘a noble dwelling,’ ‘a brahmā dwelling,’ ‘a Tathāgata dwelling,’ it would be the concentration of mindfulness of breathing that he, speaking rightly, would call, ‘a noble dwelling,’ ‘a brahmā dwelling,’ ‘a Tathāgata dwelling.’

“Those who are learners, who have yet to attain their hearts’ desire, who stay resolved on the unexcelled security from bondage: When the concentration of mindfulness of breathing is developed & pursued by them, it leads to the ending of the effluents.

“Those who are arahants, whose effluents are ended, who have reached fulfillment, done the task, laid down the burden, attained the true goal, totally destroyed the fetter of becoming, and who are released through right gnosis: When the concentration of mindfulness of breathing is developed & pursued by them, it leads to a pleasant abiding here-&-now and to mindfulness & alertness.

“For whatever one rightly speaking would call, ‘a noble dwelling,’ ‘a brahmā dwelling,’ ‘a Tathāgata dwelling,’ it would be the concentration of mindfulness of breathing that he, speaking rightly, would call, ‘a noble dwelling,’ ‘a brahmā dwelling,’ ‘a Tathāgata dwelling.’”

NOTES

1. Whereas, in the normal formula for breath meditation, the meditator is described as “always mindful (*sato’va*),” the Buddha describes himself as

mindful. This, apparently, is a reference to the fact that he is already always mindful, so he doesn't have to emphasize the point.

2. Whereas, in the normal formula for breath meditation, the verb in this step and the remaining ones is "he trains himself (*sikkhati*)," when the Buddha talks of his own practice, he simply says, "I discern (*pajānāmi*).” He has no further need to train.

See also: [SN 22:122](#); [SN 46:4](#); [SN 47:4](#); [SN 52:9](#)

To Ānanda (on Mindfulness of Breathing) *Ānanda Sutta (SN 54:13)*

I have heard that on one occasion the Blessed One was staying near Sāvattthī in Jeta's Grove, Anāthapiṇḍika's monastery. Then Ven. Ānanda went to the Blessed One and, on arrival, having bowed down to him, sat to one side. As he was sitting there he asked the Blessed One, "Is there one quality that, when developed & pursued, brings four qualities to their culmination? And four qualities that, when developed & pursued, bring seven qualities to their culmination? And seven qualities that, when developed & pursued, bring two qualities to their culmination?"

"Yes, Ānanda, there is one quality that, when developed & pursued, brings four qualities to their culmination; and four qualities that, when developed & pursued, bring seven qualities to their culmination; and seven qualities that, when developed & pursued, bring two qualities to their culmination. And which is the one quality that, when developed & pursued, brings four qualities to their culmination? Which are the four qualities that, when developed & pursued, bring seven qualities to their culmination? Which are the seven qualities that, when developed & pursued, bring two qualities to their culmination?"

"Concentration through mindfulness of in-&-out breathing, when developed & pursued, brings the four establishings of mindfulness to their culmination. The four establishings of mindfulness, when developed & pursued, bring the seven factors for awakening to their

culmination. The seven factors for awakening, when developed & pursued, bring clear knowing & release to their culmination.

“Now how does a monk develop & pursue concentration through mindfulness of in-&-out breathing so that it brings the four establishing of mindfulness to their culmination?

“There is the case where a monk, having gone to the wilderness, to the shade of a tree, or to an empty building, sits down folding his legs crosswise, holding his body erect, and establishing mindfulness to the fore. Always mindful, he breathes in; mindful he breathes out.

“[1] Breathing in long, he discerns, ‘I am breathing in long;’ or breathing out long, he discerns, ‘I am breathing out long.’ [2] Or breathing in short, he discerns, ‘I am breathing in short;’ or breathing out short, he discerns, ‘I am breathing out short.’ [3] He trains himself, ‘I will breathe in sensitive to the entire body.’ He trains himself, ‘I will breathe out sensitive to the entire body.’ [4] He trains himself, ‘I will breathe in calming bodily fabrication.’ He trains himself, ‘I will breathe out calming bodily fabrication.’

“[5] He trains himself, ‘I will breathe in sensitive to rapture.’ He trains himself, ‘I will breathe out sensitive to rapture.’ [6] He trains himself, ‘I will breathe in sensitive to pleasure.’ He trains himself, ‘I will breathe out sensitive to pleasure.’ [7] He trains himself, ‘I will breathe in sensitive to mental fabrication.’ He trains himself, ‘I will breathe out sensitive to mental fabrication.’ [8] He trains himself, ‘I will breathe in calming mental fabrication.’ He trains himself, ‘I will breathe out calming mental fabrication.’

“[9] He trains himself, ‘I will breathe in sensitive to the mind.’ He trains himself, ‘I will breathe out sensitive to the mind.’ [10] He trains himself, ‘I will breathe in gladdening the mind.’ He trains himself, ‘I will breathe out gladdening the mind.’ [11] He trains himself, ‘I will breathe in steadying the mind.’ He trains himself, ‘I will breathe out steadying the mind.’ [12] He trains himself, ‘I will breathe in releasing the mind.’ He trains himself, ‘I will breathe out releasing the mind.’

“[13] He trains himself, ‘I will breathe in focusing on inconstancy.’ He trains himself, ‘I will breathe out focusing on inconstancy.’ [14] He trains himself, ‘I will breathe in focusing on dispassion [or: fading].’ He trains

himself, ‘I will breathe out focusing on dispassion.’ [15] He trains himself, ‘I will breathe in focusing on cessation.’ He trains himself, ‘I will breathe out focusing on cessation.’ [16] He trains himself, ‘I will breathe in focusing on relinquishment.’ He trains himself, ‘I will breathe out focusing on relinquishment.’

“[1] On whatever occasion a monk breathing in long discerns, ‘I am breathing in long’; or breathing out long, discerns, ‘I am breathing out long’; or breathing in short, discerns, ‘I am breathing in short’; or breathing out short, discerns, ‘I am breathing out short’; trains himself, ‘I will breathe in...&... out sensitive to the entire body’; trains himself, ‘I will breathe in...&...out calming bodily fabrication’; On that occasion the monk remains focused on the *body* in & of itself—ardent, alert, & mindful—subduing greed & distress with reference to the world. I tell you, Ānanda, that this—the in-&-out breath—is classed as a body among bodies, which is why the monk on that occasion remains focused on the body in & of itself—ardent, alert, & mindful—subduing greed & distress with reference to the world.

“[2] On whatever occasion a monk trains himself, ‘I will breathe in... &...out sensitive to rapture’; trains himself, ‘I will breathe in...&...out sensitive to pleasure’; trains himself, ‘I will breathe in...&...out sensitive to mental fabrication’; trains himself, ‘I will breathe in...&...out calming mental fabrication’; On that occasion the monk remains focused on *feelings* in & of themselves—ardent, alert, & mindful—subduing greed & distress with reference to the world. I tell you, Ānanda, that this—careful attention to in-&-out breaths—is classed as a feeling among feelings,¹ which is why the monk on that occasion remains focused on feelings in & of themselves—ardent, alert, & mindful—subduing greed & distress with reference to the world.

“[3] On whatever occasion a monk trains himself, ‘I will breathe in... &...out sensitive to the mind’; trains himself, ‘I will breathe in...&...out gladdening the mind’; trains himself, ‘I will breathe in...&...out steadying the mind’; trains himself, ‘I will breathe in...&...out releasing the mind’; On that occasion the monk remains focused on the *mind* in & of itself—ardent, alert, & mindful—subduing greed & distress with reference to the world. I don’t say that there is mindfulness of in-&-out

breathing in one of lapsed mindfulness and no alertness, which is why the monk on that occasion remains focused on the mind in & of itself—ardent, alert, & mindful—subduing greed & distress with reference to the world.

“[4] On whatever occasion a monk trains himself, ‘I will breathe in... &...out focusing on inconstancy’; trains himself, ‘I will breathe in...&...out focusing on dispassion’; trains himself, ‘I will breathe in...&...out focusing on cessation’; trains himself, ‘I will breathe in...&...out focusing on relinquishing’: On that occasion the monk remains focused on *mental qualities* in & of themselves—ardent, alert, & mindful—subduing greed & distress with reference to the world. He who sees with discernment the abandoning of greed & distress is one who watches carefully with equanimity, which is why the monk on that occasion remains focused on mental qualities in & of themselves—ardent, alert, & mindful—subduing greed & distress with reference to the world.

“This is how concentration through mindfulness of in-&-out breathing, when developed & pursued, brings the four establishing of mindfulness to their culmination.

“And how are the four establishing of mindfulness developed & pursued so that they bring the seven factors for awakening to their culmination?

“[1] On whatever occasion the monk remains focused on the *body* in & of itself—ardent, alert, & mindful—subduing greed & distress with reference to the world, on that occasion his mindfulness is steady & without lapse. When his mindfulness is steady & without lapse, then *mindfulness* as a factor for awakening becomes aroused. He develops it, and for him it goes to the culmination of its development.

“[2] Remaining mindful in this way, he examines, analyzes, & comes to a comprehension of that quality with discernment. When he remains mindful in this way, examining, analyzing, & coming to a comprehension of that quality with discernment, then *analysis of qualities* as a factor for awakening becomes aroused. He develops it, and for him it goes to the culmination of its development.

“[3] In one who examines, analyzes, & comes to a comprehension of that quality with discernment, persistence is aroused unflaggingly. When

persistence is aroused unflaggingly in one who examines, analyzes, & comes to a comprehension of that quality with discernment, then *persistence* as a factor for awakening becomes aroused. He develops it, and for him it goes to the culmination of its development.

“[4] In one whose persistence is aroused, a rapture not of the flesh arises. When a rapture not of the flesh arises in one whose persistence is aroused, then *rapture* as a factor for awakening becomes aroused. He develops it, and for him it goes to the culmination of its development.

“[5] For one enraptured at heart, the body grows calm and the mind grows calm. When the body & mind of a monk enraptured at heart grow calm, then *calm* as a factor for awakening becomes aroused. He develops it, and for him it goes to the culmination of its development.

“[6] For one who is at ease—his body calmed—the mind becomes concentrated. When the mind of one who is at ease—his body calmed—becomes concentrated, then *concentration* as a factor for awakening becomes aroused. He develops it, and for him it goes to the culmination of its development.

“[7] He carefully watches the mind thus concentrated with equanimity. When he carefully watches the mind thus concentrated with equanimity, *equanimity* as a factor for awakening becomes aroused. He develops it, and for him it goes to the culmination of its development.

[Similarly with the other three establishing of mindfulness: in feelings, mind, & mental qualities.]

“This is how the four establishing of mindfulness, when developed & pursued, bring the seven factors for awakening to their culmination.

“And how are the seven factors for awakening developed & pursued so as to clear knowing & release to their culmination? There is the case where a monk develops *mindfulness* as a factor for awakening dependent on seclusion... *dispassion*... *cessation*, resulting in letting go. He develops *analysis of qualities* as a factor for awakening... *persistence* as a factor for awakening... *rapture* as a factor for awakening... *calm* as a factor for awakening... *concentration* as a factor for awakening... *equanimity* as a factor for awakening dependent on seclusion... *dispassion*... *cessation*, resulting in letting go.

“This is how the seven factors for awakening, when developed & pursued, bring clear knowing & release to their culmination.”

That is what the Blessed One said. Gratified, Ven. Ānanda delighted in the Blessed One’s words.

NOTE

1. As this shows, a meditator focusing on feelings in themselves as a frame of reference should not abandon the breath as the basis for his/her concentration.

The Emperor

Rāja Sutta (SN 55:1)

Near Sāvattthī. There the Blessed One said, “Monks, even though a wheel-turning emperor, having exercised sovereign lordship over the four continents, on the break-up of the body, after death, reappears in the good destination, a heavenly world, in the company of the Devas of the Thirty-three, and enjoys himself there in the Nandana grove, surrounded by a consort of nymphs, supplied and endowed with the five strings of heavenly sensual pleasure, still—because he is not endowed with four qualities—he is not freed from (the possibility of going to) hell, not freed from the animal womb, not freed from the realm of hungry ghosts, not freed from the plane of deprivation, the bad destinations, the lower realms.

“And even though a disciple of the noble ones lives off lumps of alms food and wears rag-robles, still—because he is endowed with four qualities—he is freed from hell, freed from the animal womb, freed from the realm of hungry ghosts, freed from the plane of deprivation, the bad destinations, the lower realms.

“And what are the four? There is the case where the disciple of the noble ones is endowed with verified confidence in the Awakened One: ‘Indeed, the Blessed One is worthy & rightly self-awakened, consummate in clear-knowing & conduct, well-gone, an expert with regard to the

cosmos, unexcelled trainer of people fit to be tamed, teacher of devas & human beings, awakened, blessed?

“He/she is endowed with verified confidence in the Dhamma: ‘The Dhamma is well taught by the Blessed One, to be seen here & now, timeless, inviting verification, pertinent, to be experienced by the observant for themselves.’

“He/she is endowed with verified confidence in the Saṅgha: ‘The Saṅgha of the Blessed One’s disciples who have practiced well... who have practiced straight-forwardly... who have practiced methodically... who have practiced masterfully—in other words, the four types of noble disciples when taken as pairs, the eight when taken as individual types¹—they are the Saṅgha of the Blessed One’s disciples: deserving of gifts, deserving of hospitality, deserving of offerings, deserving of respect, the incomparable field of merit for the world.’

“He/she is endowed with virtues that are appealing to the noble ones: untorn, unbroken, unspotted, unsplattered, liberating, praised by the observant, ungrasped at, leading to concentration.

“He/she is endowed with these four qualities.”²

“And between the gaining of the four continents and the gaining of these four qualities, the gaining of the four continents is not equal to one sixteenth of the gaining of these four qualities.”³

NOTES

1. The four pairs are (1) the person on the path to stream-entry, the person experiencing the fruit of stream-entry; (2) the person on the path to once-returning, the person experiencing the fruit of once-returning; (3) the person on the path to non-returning, the person experiencing the fruit of non-returning; (4) the person on the path to arahantship, the person experiencing the fruit of arahantship. The eight individuals are the eight types forming these four pairs.

2. These four qualities—the factors of stream-entry—characterize the person who has attained the first of the four levels of awakening.

3. Dhṛp 178 provides what would appear to be a verse summary of this last paragraph:

Sole dominion over the earth,
going to heaven,
lordship over all worlds:
The fruit of Stream-entry
excels them.

See also: [SN 13:1](#); AN 3:74

To Mahānāma (1)

Mahānāma Sutta (SN 55:21)

I have heard that on one occasion the Blessed One was staying among the Sakyans near Kapilavatthu in the Banyan Park. Then Mahānāma the Sakyan went to the Blessed One and, on arrival, having bowed down to him, sat to one side. As he was sitting there, he said to the Blessed One, “Lord, this Kapilavatthu is rich & prosperous, populous & crowded, its alleys congested. Sometimes, when I enter Kapilavatthu in the evening after visiting with the Blessed One or with the monks who inspire the mind, I meet up with a runaway elephant, a runaway horse, a runaway chariot, a runaway cart, or a runaway person. At times like that my mindfulness with regard to the Blessed One gets muddled, my mindfulness with regard to the Dhamma... the Saṅgha gets muddled. The thought occurs to me, ‘If I were to die at this moment, what would be my destination? What would be my future course?’”

“Have no fear, Mahānāma. Have no fear. Your death will not be a bad one, your demise will not be bad. If one’s mind has long been nurtured with conviction, nurtured with virtue, nurtured with learning, nurtured with relinquishment, nurtured with discernment, then when the body—endowed with form, composed of the four primary elements, born from mother & father, nourished with rice & porridge, subject to inconstancy, rubbing, pressing, dissolution, & dispersion—is eaten by crows, vultures, hawks, dogs, hyenas, or all sorts of creatures, nevertheless the mind—long nurtured with conviction, nurtured with virtue, learning, relinquishment, & discernment—rises upward and separates out.

“Suppose a man were to throw a jar of ghee or a jar of oil into a deep lake of water, where it would break. There the shards & jar-fragments would go down, while the ghee or oil would rise upward and separate out. In the same way, if one’s mind has long been nurtured with conviction, nurtured with virtue, nurtured with learning, nurtured with relinquishment, nurtured with discernment, then when the body... is eaten by crows, vultures, hawks, dogs, hyenas, or all sorts of creatures, nevertheless the mind... rises upward and separates out.

“Have no fear, Mahānāma. Have no fear. Your death will not be a bad one, your demise will not be bad.”

See also: [SN 22:88](#)

To Mahānāma (2)

Mahānāma Sutta (SN 55:22)

I have heard that on one occasion the Blessed One was staying among the Sakyans near Kapilavatthu in the Banyan Park. Then Mahānāma the Sakyan went to the Blessed One and, on arrival, having bowed down to him, sat to one side. As he was sitting there, he said to the Blessed One, “Lord, this Kapilavatthu is rich & prosperous, populous & crowded, its alleys congested. Sometimes, when I enter Kapilavatthu in the evening after visiting with the Blessed One or with the monks who inspire the mind, I meet up with a runaway elephant, a runaway horse, a runaway chariot, a runaway cart, or a runaway person. At times like that my mindfulness with regard to the Blessed One gets muddled, my mindfulness with regard to the Dhamma... the Saṅgha gets muddled. The thought occurs to me, ‘If I were to die at this moment, what would be my destination? What would be my future course?’”

“Have no fear, Mahānāma! Have no fear! Your death will not be a bad one, your demise will not be bad. A disciple of the noble ones, when endowed with four qualities, leans toward unbinding, slants toward unbinding, inclines toward unbinding. Which four?

“There is the case where the disciple of the noble ones is endowed with verified confidence in the Awakened One: ‘Indeed, the Blessed One is worthy & rightly self-awakened, consummate in clear-knowing & conduct, well-gone, an expert with regard to the cosmos, unexcelled trainer of people fit to be tamed, teacher of devas & human beings, awakened, blessed.’

“He/she is endowed with verified confidence in the Dhamma: ‘The Dhamma is well taught by the Blessed One, to be seen here & now, timeless, inviting verification, pertinent, to be experienced by the observant for themselves.’

“He/she is endowed with verified confidence in the Saṅgha: ‘The Saṅgha of the Blessed One’s disciples who have practiced well... who have practiced straight-forwardly... who have practiced methodically... who have practiced masterfully—in other words, the four types of noble disciples when taken as pairs, the eight when taken as individual types—they are the Saṅgha of the Blessed One’s disciples: deserving of gifts, deserving of hospitality, deserving of offerings, deserving of respect, the incomparable field of merit for the world.’

“He/she is endowed with virtues that are appealing to the noble ones: untorn, unbroken, unspotted, unsplattered, liberating, praised by the observant, ungrasped at, leading to concentration.

“Suppose a tree were leaning toward the east, slanting toward the east, inclining toward the east. When its root is cut, which way would it fall?”

“In whichever way it was leaning, slanting, and inclining, lord.”

“In the same way, Mahānāma, a disciple of the noble ones, when endowed with four qualities, leans toward unbinding, slants toward unbinding, inclines toward unbinding.”

To the Licchavi

Licchavi Sutta (SN 55:30)

On one occasion the Blessed One was staying near Vesālī in the Gabled Hall in the Great Forest. Then Nandaka, the chief minister of the Licchavis, went to the Blessed One and on arrival, having bowed down to him, sat to one side. As he was sitting there the Blessed One said to him: “Nandaka, a disciple of the noble ones endowed with four qualities is a stream-winner, steadfast, never again destined for states of woe, headed for self-awakening. Which four?”

“There is the case where the disciple of the noble ones is endowed with verified confidence in the Awakened One: ‘Indeed, the Blessed One is worthy & rightly self-awakened, consummate in clear-knowing & conduct, well-gone, an expert with regard to the cosmos, unexcelled trainer of people fit to be tamed, teacher of devas & human beings, awakened, blessed.’

“He/she is endowed with verified confidence in the Dhamma: ‘The Dhamma is well taught by the Blessed One, to be seen here & now, timeless, inviting verification, pertinent, to be experienced by the observant for themselves.’

“He/she is endowed with verified confidence in the Saṅgha: ‘The Saṅgha of the Blessed One’s disciples who have practiced well... who have practiced straight-forwardly... who have practiced methodically... who have practiced masterfully—in other words, the four types of noble disciples when taken as pairs, the eight when taken as individual types—they are the Saṅgha of the Blessed One’s disciples: deserving of gifts, deserving of hospitality, deserving of offerings, deserving of respect, the incomparable field of merit for the world.’

“He/she is endowed with virtues that are appealing to the noble ones: untorn, unbroken, unspotted, unsplattered, liberating, praised by the observant, ungrasped at, leading to concentration.

“A disciple of the noble ones endowed with these four qualities is a stream-winner, steadfast, never again destined for states of woe, headed for self-awakening.

“And further, a disciple of the noble ones endowed with these four qualities is linked with long life, human or divine; is linked with beauty, human or divine; is linked with happiness, human or divine; is linked with status, human or divine; is linked with influence, human or divine.

“I tell you this, Nandaka, not having heard it from any other contemplative or brahman. Instead, I tell you this having known, seen, and realized it for myself.”

When this was said, a certain man said to Nandaka, the chief minister of the Licchavis, “It is now time for your bath, sir.”

[Nandaka responded,] “Enough, I say, with this external bath. I am satisfied with this internal bath: confidence in the Blessed One.”

Bonanzas (1)

Abhisanda Sutta (SN 55:31)

“Monks, there are these four bonanzas of merit, bonanzas of skillfulness, nourishments of bliss. Which four?

“There is the case where the disciple of the noble ones is endowed with verified confidence in the Awakened One: ‘Indeed, the Blessed One is worthy & rightly self-awakened, consummate in clear-knowing & conduct, well-gone, an expert with regard to the cosmos, unexcelled trainer of people fit to be tamed, teacher of devas & human beings, awakened, blessed.’ This is the first bonanza of merit, bonanza of skillfulness, nourishment of bliss.

“And further, the disciple of the noble ones is endowed with verified confidence in the Dhamma: ‘The Dhamma is well taught by the Blessed One, to be seen here & now, timeless, inviting verification, pertinent, to be experienced by the observant for themselves.’ This is the second bonanza of merit, bonanza of skillfulness, nourishment of bliss.

“And further, the disciple of the noble ones is endowed with verified confidence in the Saṅgha: ‘The Saṅgha of the Blessed One’s disciples who have practiced well... who have practiced straight-forwardly... who have practiced methodically... who have practiced masterfully—in other words, the four types of noble disciples when taken as pairs, the eight when taken as individual types—they are the Saṅgha of the Blessed One’s disciples: deserving of gifts, deserving of hospitality, deserving of offerings, deserving of respect, the incomparable field of merit for the

world? This is the third bonanza of merit, bonanza of skillfulness, nourishment of bliss.

“And further, the disciple of the noble ones is endowed with virtues that are appealing to the noble ones: untorn, unbroken, unspotted, unsplattered, liberating, praised by the observant, ungrasped at, leading to concentration. This is the fourth bonanza of merit, bonanza of skillfulness, nourishment of bliss.

“These are four bonanzas of merit, bonanzas of skillfulness, nourishments of bliss.”

Bonanzas (2)

Abhisanda Sutta (SN 55:32)

“Monks, there are these four bonanzas of merit, bonanzas of skillfulness, nourishments of bliss. Which four?

“There is the case where the disciple of the noble ones is endowed with verified confidence in the Awakened One.... This is the first bonanza of merit, bonanza of skillfulness, nourishment of bliss.

“And further, the disciple of the noble ones is endowed with verified confidence in the Dhamma.... This is the second bonanza of merit, bonanza of skillfulness, nourishment of bliss.

“And further, the disciple of the noble ones is endowed with verified confidence in the Saṅgha.... This is the third bonanza of merit, bonanza of skillfulness, nourishment of bliss.

“And further, the disciple of the noble ones lives at home with an awareness cleansed of the stain of stinginess, freely generous, openhanded, delighting in being magnanimous, responsive to requests, delighting in the distribution of alms. This is the fourth bonanza of merit, bonanza of skillfulness, nourishment of bliss.

“These are four bonanzas of merit, bonanzas of skillfulness, nourishments of bliss.”

Bonanzas (3)

Abhisanda Sutta (SN 55:33)

“Monks, there are these four bonanzas of merit, bonanzas of skillfulness, nourishments of bliss. Which four?

“There is the case where the disciple of the noble ones is endowed with verified confidence in the Awakened One.... This is the first bonanza of merit, bonanza of skillfulness, nourishment of bliss.

“And further, the disciple of the noble ones is endowed with verified confidence in the Dhamma.... This is the second bonanza of merit, bonanza of skillfulness, nourishment of bliss.

“And further, the disciple of the noble ones is endowed with verified confidence in the Saṅgha.... This is the third bonanza of merit, bonanza of skillfulness, nourishment of bliss.

“And further, the disciple of the noble ones is discerning, endowed with discernment of arising & passing away—noble, penetrating, leading to the right ending of stress. This is the fourth bonanza of merit, bonanza of skillfulness, nourishment of bliss.

“These are four bonanzas of merit, bonanzas of skillfulness, nourishments of bliss.”

See also: AN 8:39

To Nandiya

Nandiya Sutta (SN 55:40)

On one occasion the Blessed One was staying among the Sakyans near Kapilavatthu in the Banyan Park. Then Nandiya the Sakyan went to the Blessed One and, on arrival, having bowed down to him, sat to one side. As he was sitting there he said to the Blessed One, “Lord, the disciple of the noble ones in whom the factors of stream entry are

altogether & in every way lacking: Is he called a disciple of the noble ones who lives heedlessly?”

“Nandiya, the person in whom the factors of stream entry are altogether & in every way lacking I call an outsider, one who stands in the faction of the run-of-the-mill. But as to how a disciple of the noble ones dwells in heedlessness and dwells in heedfulness, listen well and pay attention, I will speak.”

“As you say, lord,” Nandiya the Sakyan responded to the Blessed One.

The Blessed One said, “And how, Nandiya, does a disciple of the noble ones dwell in heedlessness? There is the case where a disciple of the noble ones is endowed with verified confidence in the Awakened One: ‘Indeed, the Blessed One is worthy & rightly self-awakened, consummate in clear-knowing & conduct, well-gone, an expert with regard to the cosmos, unexcelled trainer of people fit to be tamed, teacher of devas & human beings, awakened, blessed.’ Content with that verified confidence in the Awakened One, he doesn’t exert himself further in solitude by day or seclusion by night. For him, dwelling thus heedlessly, there is no joy. There being no joy, there is no rapture. There being no rapture, there is no calm. There being no calm, he dwells in pain. When pained, the mind doesn’t become concentrated. When the mind is unconcentrated, phenomena don’t become manifest. When phenomena aren’t manifest, he is reckoned simply as one who dwells in heedlessness.

“And further, the disciple of the noble ones is endowed with verified confidence in the Dhamma: ‘The Dhamma is well taught by the Blessed One, to be seen here & now, timeless, inviting verification, pertinent, to be experienced by the observant for themselves.’ Content with that verified confidence in the Dhamma, he doesn’t exert himself further in solitude by day or seclusion by night. For him, dwelling thus heedlessly, there is no joy. There being no joy, there is no rapture. There being no rapture, there is no calm. There being no calm, he dwells in pain. When pained, the mind doesn’t become centered. When the mind is uncentered, phenomena don’t become manifest. When phenomena aren’t manifest, he is reckoned simply as one who dwells in heedlessness.

“And further, the disciple of the noble ones is endowed with verified confidence in the ‘The Saṅgha of the Blessed One’s disciples who have practiced well... who have practiced straight-forwardly... who have practiced methodically... who have practiced masterfully—in other words, the four types of noble disciples when taken as pairs, the eight when taken as individual types—they are the Saṅgha of the Blessed One’s disciples: deserving of gifts, deserving of hospitality, deserving of offerings, deserving of respect, the incomparable field of merit for the world.’ Content with that verified confidence in the Saṅgha, he doesn’t exert himself further in solitude by day or seclusion by night. For him, dwelling thus heedlessly, there is no joy. There being no joy, there is no rapture. There being no rapture, there is no calm. There being no calm, he dwells in pain. When pained, the mind doesn’t become centered. When the mind is uncentered, phenomena don’t become manifest. When phenomena aren’t manifest, he is reckoned simply as one who dwells in heedlessness.

“And further, the disciple of the noble ones is endowed with virtues that are appealing to the noble ones: untorn, unbroken, unspotted, unsplattered, liberating, praised by the observant, ungrasped at, leading to concentration. Content with those virtues pleasing to the noble ones, he doesn’t exert himself further in solitude by day or seclusion by night. For him, dwelling thus heedlessly, there is no joy. There being no joy, there is no rapture. There being no rapture, there is no calm. There being no calm, he dwells in pain. When pained, the mind doesn’t become centered. When the mind is uncentered, phenomena don’t become manifest. When phenomena aren’t manifest, he is reckoned simply as one who dwells in heedlessness.

“This is how a disciple of the noble ones dwells in heedlessness.

“And how, Nandiya, does a disciple of the noble ones dwell in heedfulness? There is the case where a disciple of the noble ones is endowed with verified confidence in the Awakened One.... Not content with that verified confidence in the Awakened One, he exerts himself further in solitude by day & seclusion by night. For him, dwelling thus heedfully, joy is born. In one who has joy, rapture is born. The body of one enraptured at heart grows calm. When the body is calm, one feels

pleasure. Feeling pleasure, the mind becomes centered. When the mind is centered, phenomena become manifest. When phenomena are manifest, he is reckoned as one who dwells in heedfulness.

“And further, the disciple of the noble ones is endowed with verified confidence in the Dhamma... verified confidence in the Saṅgha... virtues that are appealing to the noble ones: untorn, unbroken, unspotted, unsplattered, liberating, praised by the observant, ungrasped at, leading to concentration. Not content with those virtues pleasing to the noble ones, he exerts himself further in solitude by day & seclusion by night. For him, dwelling thus heedfully, joy is born. In one who has joy, rapture is born. The body of one enraptured at heart grows calm. When the body is calm, one feels pleasure. Feeling pleasure, the mind becomes centered. When the mind is centered, phenomena become manifest. When phenomena are manifest, he is reckoned as one who dwells in heedfulness.

“This is how a disciple of the noble ones dwells in heedfulness.”

See also: MN 29–30; [SN 15](#); [SN 35:97](#); [SN 48:56](#); [SN 56:35–36](#); AN 1:329; AN 2:5; AN 6:19–20

III

Gilāna Sutta (SN 55:54)

On one occasion the Blessed One was staying among the Sakyans at Kapilavatthu in the Banyan Park. Now at that time many monks were at work making robes for the Blessed One, (thinking,) “When the robes are finished, at the end of the three months, the Blessed One will set out wandering.”

Mahānāma the Sakyan heard that many monks were at work making robes for the Blessed One, (thinking,) “When the robes are finished, at the end of the three months, the Blessed One will set out wandering.” So he approached the Blessed One and, on arrival, having bowed down, sat to one side. As he was sitting there he said to the Blessed One: “I have heard that many monks are at work making robes for the Blessed One,

(thinking,) ‘When the robes are finished, at the end of the three months, the Blessed One will set out wandering.’ But I haven’t heard in the Blessed One’s presence, haven’t learned in the Blessed One’s presence, how a discerning lay follower who is diseased, in pain, severely ill should be instructed by (another) discerning lay follower.”

“Mahānāma, a discerning lay follower¹ who is diseased, in pain, severely ill should be reassured by another discerning lay follower with four reassurances: ‘Be reassured, friend, that you are endowed with verified confidence in the Awakened One: “Indeed, the Blessed One is worthy & rightly self-awakened, consummate in clear-knowing & conduct, well-gone, an expert with regard to the cosmos, unexcelled trainer of people fit to be tamed, teacher of devas & human beings, awakened, blessed.”

“Be reassured, friend, that you have verified confidence in the Dhamma: “The Dhamma is well taught by the Blessed One, to be seen here & now, timeless, inviting verification, pertinent, to be experienced by the observant for themselves.”

“Be reassured, friend, that you have verified confidence in the Saṅgha: “The Saṅgha of the Blessed One's disciples who have practiced well... who have practiced straight-forwardly... who have practiced methodically... who have practiced masterfully—in other words, the four pairs, the eight individuals—they are the Saṅgha of the Blessed One's disciples: deserving of gifts, deserving of hospitality, deserving of offerings, deserving of respect, the incomparable field of merit for the world.”

“Be reassured, friend, that you have virtues that are appealing to the noble ones: untorn, unbroken, unspotted, unsplattered, liberating, praised by the observant, ungrasped at, leading to concentration.”

“Mahānāma, when a discerning lay follower who is diseased, in pain, severely ill has been reassured by another discerning lay follower with these four reassurances, he should be asked: ‘Friend, are you concerned for your mother & father?’ If he should say, ‘I am concerned for my mother & father,’ he should be told, ‘You, my dear friend, are subject to death. If you feel concern for your mother & father, you’re still going to die. If you don’t feel concern for your mother & father, you’re still going

to die. It would be good if you abandoned concern for your mother & father.’

“If he should say, ‘My concern for my mother & father has been abandoned,’ he should be asked, ‘Friend, are you concerned for your wife & children?’ If he should say, ‘I am concerned for my wife & children,’ he should be told, ‘You, my dear friend, are subject to death. If you feel concern for your wife & children, you’re still going to die. If you don’t feel concern for your wife & children, you’re still going to die. It would be good if you abandoned concern for your wife & children.’

“If he should say, ‘My concern for my wife & children has been abandoned,’ he should be asked, ‘Friend, are you concerned for the five strings of human sensuality?’ If he should say, ‘I am concerned for the five strings of human sensuality,’ he should be told, ‘Friend, divine sensual pleasures are more splendid & more refined than human sensual pleasures. It would be good if, having raised your mind above human sensual pleasures, you set it on the Devas of the Four Great Kings.’

“If he should say, ‘My mind is raised above human sensual pleasures and is set on the Devas of the Four Great Kings,’ he should be told, ‘Friend, the Devas of the Thirty-three are more splendid & more refined than the Devas of the Four Great Kings. It would be good if, having raised your mind above the Devas of the Four Great Kings, you set it on the Devas of the Thirty-three.’

“If he should say, ‘My mind is raised above the Devas of the Four Great Kings and is set on the Devas of the Thirty-three,’ he should be told, ‘Friend, the Devas of the Hours are more splendid & more refined than the Devas of the Thirty-three. It would be good if, having raised your mind above the Devas of the Thirty-three, you set it on the Devas of the Hours.’

“If he should say, ‘My mind is raised above the Devas of the Thirty-three and is set on the Devas of the Hours,’ he should be told, ‘Friend, the Contented Devas are more splendid & more refined than the Devas of the Hours... the Devas Delighting in Creation are more splendid & more refined than the Contented Devas... the Devas [Muses?] Wielding Power over the Creations of Others are more splendid & more refined than the Devas Delighting in Creation... the Brahmā world is more

splendid and more refined than the Devas Wielding Power over the Creations of Others. It would be good if, having raised your mind above the Devas Wielding Power over the Creations of Others, you set it on the Brahmā world.

“If he should say, ‘My mind is raised above the Devas Wielding Power over the Creations of Others and is set on the Brahmā world,’ he should be told, ‘Friend, even the Brahmā world is inconstant, impermanent, included in self-identity. It would be good if, having raised your mind above the Brahmā world, you brought it to the cessation of self-identity.’

“If he should say, ‘My mind is raised above the Brahmā world and is brought to the cessation of self-identity,’ then, I tell you, Mahānāma, there is no difference—in terms of release—between the release of that lay follower whose mind is released and the release of a monk whose mind is released.”

NOTE

1. These four reassurances indicate that the “discerning lay follower” is at least a stream-enterer.

See also: MN 97; MN 143; [SN 22:88](#); AN 4:123; AN 4:125; AN 6:16

Setting the Wheel of Dhamma in Motion *Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta (SN 56:11)*

According to Mahāvagga I.6, this was the Buddha’s first discourse after his awakening.

* * *

I have heard that on one occasion the Blessed One was staying near Vārāṇasī in the Deer Park at Isipatana. There he addressed the group of five monks:

“There are these two extremes that are not to be indulged in by one who has gone forth. Which two? That which is devoted to sensual pleasure in connection with sensuality: base, vulgar, common, ignoble,

unprofitable; and that which is devoted to self-affliction: painful, ignoble, unprofitable. Avoiding both of these extremes, the middle way realized by the Tathāgata—producing vision, producing knowledge—leads to stilling, to direct knowledge, to self-awakening, to unbinding.

“And what is the middle way realized by the Tathāgata that—producing vision, producing knowledge—leads to stilling, to direct knowledge, to self-awakening, to unbinding? Precisely this noble eightfold path: right view, right resolve, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness, right concentration. This is the middle way realized by the Tathāgata that—producing vision, producing knowledge—leads to stilling, to direct knowledge, to self-awakening, to unbinding.

“Now this, monks, is the noble truth of stress¹: Birth is stressful, aging is stressful, death is stressful; sorrow, lamentation, pain, distress, & despair are stressful; association with the unbeloved is stressful, separation from the loved is stressful, not getting what is wanted is stressful. In short, the five clinging-aggregates are stressful.²

“And this, monks, is the noble truth of the origination of stress: the craving that makes for further becoming—accompanied by passion & delight, relishing now here & now there—i.e., craving for sensuality, craving for becoming, craving for non-becoming.³

“And this, monks, is the noble truth of the cessation of stress: the remainderless fading & cessation, renunciation, relinquishment, release, & letting go of that very craving.

“And this, monks, is the noble truth of the way of practice leading to the cessation of stress: precisely this noble eightfold path—right view, right resolve, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness, right concentration.⁴

“Vision arose, insight arose, discernment arose, knowledge arose, illumination arose within me with regard to things never heard before: ‘This is the noble truth of stress’ ... ‘This noble truth of stress is to be comprehended’ ... ‘This noble truth of stress has been comprehended.’

“Vision arose, insight arose, discernment arose, knowledge arose, illumination arose within me with regard to things never heard before:

‘This is the noble truth of the origination of stress’ ... ‘This noble truth of the origination of stress is to be abandoned’⁵ ... ‘This noble truth of the origination of stress has been abandoned.’

“Vision arose, insight arose, discernment arose, knowledge arose, illumination arose within me with regard to things never heard before: ‘This is the noble truth of the cessation of stress’ ... ‘This noble truth of the cessation of stress is to be realized’ ... ‘This noble truth of the cessation of stress has been realized.’

“Vision arose, insight arose, discernment arose, knowledge arose, illumination arose within me with regard to things never heard before: ‘This is the noble truth of the way of practice leading to the cessation of stress’ ... ‘This noble truth of the way of practice leading to the cessation of stress is to be developed’ ... ‘This noble truth of the way of practice leading to the cessation of stress has been developed.’⁶

“And, monks, as long as this—my three-round, twelve-permutation knowledge & vision concerning these four noble truths⁷ as they have come to be—was not pure, I did not claim to have directly awakened to the right self-awakening unexcelled in the cosmos with its devas, Māras, & Brahmās, in this generation with its contemplatives & brahmans, its royalty & commonfolk. But as soon as this—my three-round, twelve-permutation knowledge & vision concerning these four noble truths as they have come to be—was truly pure, then I did claim to have directly awakened to the right self-awakening unexcelled in the cosmos with its devas, Māras, & Brahmās, in this generation with its contemplatives & brahmans, its royalty & commonfolk. Knowledge & vision arose in me: ‘Unprovoked⁸ is my release. This is the last birth. There is now no further becoming.’”

That is what the Blessed One said. Gratified, the group of five monks delighted in the Blessed One’s words. And while this explanation was being given, there arose to Ven. Kondañña the dustless, stainless Dhamma eye: Whatever is subject to origination is all subject to cessation.

And when the Blessed One had set the Wheel of Dhamma in motion, the earth devas cried out: “Near Vārāṇasī, in the Deer Park at Isipatana,

the Blessed One has set in motion the unexcelled Wheel of Dhamma that cannot be stopped by contemplative or brahman, deva, Māra, or Brahmā, or anyone at all in the cosmos.” On hearing the earth devas’ cry, the Devas of the Four Great Kings took up the cry... the Devas of the Thirty-three... the Devas of the Hours... the Contented Devas... the Devas Delighting in Creation ... the Devas [Muses?] Wielding Power over the Creations of Others... the Devas of Brahmā’s Retinue took up the cry: “Near Vārāṇasī, in the Deer Park at Isipatana, the Blessed One has set in motion the unexcelled Wheel of Dhamma that cannot be stopped by contemplative or brahman, deva, Māra, or Brahmā, or anyone at all in the cosmos.”

So in that moment, that instant, the cry shot right up to the Brahmā worlds. And this ten-thousand-fold cosmos shivered & quivered & quaked, while a great, measureless radiance appeared in the cosmos, surpassing the effulgence of the deities.

Then the Blessed One exclaimed: “So you really know, Kondañña? So you really know?” And that is how Ven. Kondañña acquired the name Añña-Kondañña—Kondañña who knows.

NOTES

1. The Pali phrases for the four noble truths are grammatical anomalies. From these anomalies, some scholars have argued that the expression “noble truth” is a later addition to the texts. Others have argued even further that the content of the four truths is also a later addition. Both of these arguments are based on the unproven assumption that the language the Buddha spoke was grammatically regular, and that any irregularities were later corruptions of the language. This assumption forgets that the languages of the Buddha’s time were oral dialects, and that the nature of such dialects is to contain many grammatical irregularities. Languages tend to become regular only when being used to govern a large nation state or to produce a large body of literature: events that happened in India only after the Buddha’s time. (A European example: Italian was a group of irregular oral dialects until Dante fashioned it into a regular language for the sake of his poetry.) Thus the irregularity of the Pali here is no proof either for the earliness or lateness of this particular teaching.

2. For further discussion of the first noble truth, see DN 22, MN 109, [SN 22:48](#), [SN 22:79](#), [SN 38:14](#), AN 6:63.
3. For further discussion of the second noble truth, see DN 22, [SN 12:2](#), [SN 12:64](#).
4. For further discussion of the fourth noble truth, see MN 117, [SN 45:8](#).
5. Another argument for the lateness of the expression “noble truth” is that a truth—meaning an accurate statement about a body of facts—is not something that should be abandoned. In this case, only the craving is to be abandoned, not the truth about craving. However, in Vedic Sanskrit—as in modern colloquial English—a “truth” can mean both a fact and an accurate statement about a fact. In this case, the “truth” is the fact, not the statement about the fact. The fact of craving is to be abandoned, not the statement about it. Thus the expression is not necessarily late.
6. The discussion in the four paragraphs beginning with the phrase, “Vision arose...” takes two sets of variables—the four noble truths and the three levels of knowledge appropriate to each—and lists their twelve permutations. In ancient Indian philosophical and legal traditions, this sort of discussion is called a wheel. Thus, this passage is the Wheel of Dhamma from which the discourse takes its name.

For other discussions of the duties listed in this wheel, see MN 149, [SN 22:23](#), [SN 38:14](#), and [SN 56:30](#).
7. Scholars who believe that the term “noble truth” was a later addition to the early parts of this sutta ignore the fact that the term reappears here in a perfectly regular way, and that it would be hard to make sense of this passage without the term. Thus there is no reason at all to believe that “noble truth” was a later addition here.
8. On the meaning of “unprovoked,” here, see MN 29, note 3.

See also: MN 9; MN 28; MN 141

Real

Tatha Sutta (SN 56:20)

“Monks, these four things are real, not unreal, not otherwise. Which four?

“‘This is stress,’ is real, not unreal, not otherwise. ‘This is the origination of stress,’ is real, not unreal, not otherwise. ‘This is the cessation of stress,’ is real, not unreal, not otherwise. ‘This is the path of practice leading to the cessation of stress,’ is real, not unreal, not otherwise.

“These are the four things that are real, not unreal, not otherwise.

“Therefore your duty is the contemplation, ‘This is stress ... This is the origination of stress ... This is the cessation of stress.’ Your duty is the contemplation, ‘This is the path of practice leading to the cessation of stress.’”

Gavampati

Gavampati Sutta (SN 56:30)

On one occasion a larger number of elder monks were staying among the Cetiya at Sahajani [Sahajati]. And on that occasion a large number of elder monks, after the meal, on returning from their alms round, were sitting gathered together in a pavilion when this discussion arose: “Is it the case that whoever sees stress also sees the origination of stress, the cessation of stress, & the path of practice leading to the cessation of stress?”

When this was said, Ven. Gavampati the Elder said, “Face to face with the Blessed One did I hear this, friends, face to face did I receive it: ‘Monks, whoever sees stress also sees the origination of stress, the cessation of stress, & the path of practice leading to the cessation of stress.

“‘Whoever sees the origination of stress also sees stress, the cessation of stress, & the path of practice leading to the cessation of stress.

“‘Whoever sees the cessation of stress also sees stress, the origination of stress, & the path of practice leading to the cessation of stress.

“Whoever sees the path of practice leading to the cessation of stress also sees stress, the origination of stress, & the cessation of stress.”

Simsapā Leaves

Simsapā Sutta (SN 56:31)

Once the Blessed One was staying near Kosambī in the Simsapā forest. Then, picking up a few Simsapā leaves with his hand, he asked the monks, “What do you think, monks? Which are more numerous, the few Simsapā leaves in my hand or those overhead in the Simsapā forest?”

“The leaves in the hand of the Blessed One are few in number, lord. Those overhead in the forest are far more numerous.”

“In the same way, monks, those things that I have known with direct knowledge but have not taught are far more numerous (than what I have taught). And why haven’t I taught them? Because they are not connected with the goal, do not relate to the rudiments of the holy life, and do not lead to disenchantment, to dispassion, to cessation, to stilling, to direct knowledge, to self-awakening, to unbinding. That is why I haven’t taught them.

“And what have I taught? ‘This is stress ... This is the origination of stress ... This is the cessation of stress ... This is the path of practice leading to the cessation of stress.’ This is what I have taught. And why have I taught these things? Because they are connected with the goal, relate to the rudiments of the holy life, and lead to disenchantment, to dispassion, to cessation, to stilling, to direct knowledge, to self-awakening, to unbinding. This is why I have taught them.

“Therefore your duty is the contemplation, ‘This is stress ... This is the origination of stress ... This is the cessation of stress.’ Your duty is the contemplation, ‘This is the path of practice leading to the cessation of stress.’”

One Hundred Spears

Sattisata Sutta (SN 56:35)

“Monks, suppose there was a man whose life span was 100 years, who would live to 100. Someone would say to him, ‘Look here, fellow. They will stab you at dawn with 100 spears, at noon with 100 spears, & again at evening with 100 spears. You, thus stabbed day after day with 300 spears, will have a lifespan of 100 years, will live to be 100, and at the end of 100 years you will realize the four noble truths that you have never realized before.’

“Monks, a person who desired his own true benefit would do well to take up (the offer). Why is that? From an inconceivable beginning comes transmigration. A beginning point is not evident for the (pain of) blows from spears, swords, & axes. Even if this (offer) were to occur, I tell you that the realization of the four noble truths would not be accompanied by pain & distress. Instead, I tell you, the realization of the four noble truths would be accompanied by pleasure & happiness.

“Which four? The noble truth of stress, the noble truth of the origination of stress, the noble truth of the cessation of stress, and the noble truth of the path of practice leading to the cessation of stress.

“Therefore your duty is the contemplation, ‘This is stress ... This is the origination of stress ... This is the cessation of stress.’ Your duty is the contemplation, ‘This is the path of practice leading to the cessation of stress.’”

See also: [SN 12:63](#); [SN 15:3](#); [SN 15:13–19](#)

Animals

Pāṇa Sutta (SN 56:36)

“Monks, suppose that a man were to cut down all the grass, sticks, branches, & leaves in India and to gather them into a heap. Having gathered them into a heap, he would make stakes from them, and having made stakes¹ he would impale all the large animals in the sea on large stakes, all the medium-sized animals in the sea on medium-sized stakes, & all the minute animals in the sea on minute stakes. Before he had come to the end of all the sizable animals in the sea, all the grass, sticks, branches, & leaves here in India would have been used up and exhausted. It wouldn’t be feasible for him to impale on stakes the even-more-numerous minute animals in the sea. Why is that? Because of the minuteness of their bodies. So great is the plane of deprivation.

“Freed from this great plane of deprivation is the individual consummate in view, who discerns, as it has come to be, that ‘This is stress ... This is the origination of stress ... This is the cessation of stress ... This is the path of practice leading to the cessation of stress.’

“Therefore your duty is the contemplation, ‘This is stress ... This is the origination of stress ... This is the cessation of stress.’ Your duty is the contemplation, ‘This is the path of practice leading to the cessation of stress.’”

NOTE

1. The reference to making stakes is missing in CDB.

See also: [*SN 22:100*](#)

The Drop-off

Papāta Sutta (SN 56:42)

On one occasion the Blessed One was staying near Rājagaha on Vulture Peak Mountain. Then he said to the monks, “Come, monks, let’s go to Inspiration [Paṭibhāna] Peak for the day’s abiding.”

“As you say, lord,” the monks responded.

Then the Blessed One together with a large number of monks went to Inspiration Peak. One of the monks saw the huge drop-off from

Inspiration Peak and, on seeing it, said to the Blessed One, “Wow, what a huge drop-off! What a really huge drop-off!¹ Is there any drop-off more huge & frightening than this?”

“There is, monk, a drop-off more huge & frightening than this.”

“And which drop-off, lord, is more huge & frightening than this?”

“Any contemplatives or brahmans who do not know, as it has come to be, that ‘This is stress’; who do not know, as it has come to be, that ‘This is the origination of stress’ ... ‘This is the cessation of stress’ ... ‘This is the path of practice leading to the cessation of stress’: They revel in fabrications leading to birth; they revel in fabrications leading to aging; they revel in fabrications leading to death; they revel in fabrications leading to sorrow, lamentation, pain, distress, & despair. Reveling in fabrications leading to birth... aging... death... sorrow, lamentation, pain, distress, & despair, they fabricate fabrications leading to birth... aging... death... sorrow, lamentation, pain, distress, & despair. Fabricating fabrications leading to birth... aging... death... sorrow, lamentation, pain, distress, & despair, they drop over the drop-off of birth. They drop over the drop-off of aging... the drop-off of death... the drop-off of sorrow, lamentation, pain, distress, & despair. They are not totally released from birth, aging, death, sorrows, lamentations, pains, distresses, & despairs. They are not totally released, I tell you, from suffering & stress.

“But as for any contemplatives or brahmans who do know, as it has come to be, that ‘This is stress’; who know, as it has come to be, that ‘This is the origination of stress’ ... ‘This is the cessation of stress’ ... ‘This is the path of practice leading to the cessation of stress’: They don’t revel in fabrications leading to birth; don’t revel in fabrications leading to aging; don’t revel in fabrications leading to death; don’t revel in fabrications leading to sorrow, lamentation, pain, distress, & despair. Not reveling in fabrications leading to birth... aging... death... sorrow, lamentation, pain, distress, & despair, they don’t fabricate fabrications leading to birth... aging... death... sorrow, lamentation, pain, distress, & despair. Not fabricating fabrications leading to birth... aging... death... sorrow, lamentation, pain, distress, & despair, they don’t drop over the drop-off of birth. They don’t drop over the drop-off of aging,

don't drop over the drop-off of death, don't drop over the drop-off of sorrow, lamentation, pain, distress, & despair. They are totally released from birth, aging, death, sorrows, lamentations, pains, distresses, & despairs. They are totally released, I tell you, from suffering & stress.

“Therefore, monks, your duty is the contemplation, ‘This is stress ... This is the origination of stress ... This is the cessation of stress.’ Your duty is the contemplation, ‘This is the path of practice leading to the cessation of stress.’”

NOTE

1. The Thai edition has “really huge drop-off” here. The Burmese and PTS editions have “really frightening drop-off.” Both readings are found in parallel passages in other suttas in this section in all three editions, so it’s hard to decide which reading is more likely to be the original one.

Gabled

Kūṭa Sutta (SN 56:44)

“Monks, if anyone were to say, ‘Without having broken through to the noble truth of stress as it has come to be, without having broken through to the noble truth of the origination of stress... the cessation of stress... the path of practice leading to the cessation of stress, as it has come to be, I will bring about the right ending of stress,’ that would be an impossibility. Just as if someone were to say, ‘Without having built the lower story of a gabled building, I will put up the upper story,’ that would be an impossibility; in the same way, if anyone were to say, ‘Without having broken through to the noble truth of stress as it has come to be, without having broken through to the noble truth of the origination of stress... the cessation of stress... the path of practice leading to the cessation of stress, as it has come to be, I will bring about the right ending of stress,’ that would be an impossibility.

“If anyone were to say, ‘Having broken through to the noble truth of stress as it has come to be, having broken through to the noble truth of

the origination of stress... the cessation of stress... the path of practice leading to the cessation of stress, as it has come to be, I will bring about the right ending of stress,' that would be a possibility. Just as if someone were to say, 'Having built the lower story of a gabled building, I will put up the upper story,' that would be a possibility; in the same way, if anyone were to say, 'Having broken through to the noble truth of stress as it has come to be, having broken through to the noble truth of the origination of stress... the cessation of stress... the path of practice leading to the cessation of stress, as it has come to be, I will bring about the right ending of stress,' that would be a possibility.

"Therefore, monks, your duty is the contemplation, 'This is stress ... This is the origination of stress ... This is the cessation of stress.' Your duty is the contemplation, 'This is the path of practice leading to the cessation of stress.'"

The Horsehair

Vāla Sutta (SN 56:45)

On one occasion the Blessed One was staying near Vesālī at the Gabled Hall in the Great Forest. Then in the early morning, Ven. Ānanda, having adjusted his lower robe and taking his bowl & outer robe, went into Vesālī for alms. He saw a large number of Licchavi boys practicing archery in the stadium building. From a distance they were shooting arrows through a tiny keyhole without missing, one right after the other. On seeing this, the thought occurred to him, "How trained these Licchavi boys are, how well-trained these Licchavi boys are, in that from a distance they can shoot arrows through a tiny keyhole without missing, one right after the other!"

Then, having gone for alms in Vesālī, after his meal, returning from his alms round, Ven. Ānanda went to the Blessed One and, on arrival, having bowed down to him, sat to one side. As he was sitting there, he said to the Blessed One: "Just now, lord, in the early morning, having adjusted my lower robe and taking my bowl & outer robe, I went into

Vesālī for alms. I saw a large number of Licchavi boys practicing archery in the stadium building. From a distance they were shooting arrows through a tiny keyhole without missing, one right after the other. On seeing this, the thought occurred to me ‘How trained these Licchavi boys are, how well-trained these Licchavi boys are, in that from a distance they can shoot arrows through a tiny keyhole without missing, one right after the other!’”

“What do you think, Ānanda? Which is harder to do, harder to master—to shoot arrows through a tiny keyhole without missing, one right after the other, or to take a horsehair split into seven strands and pierce tip with a tip?”¹

“This, lord, is harder to do, harder to master—to take a horsehair split into seven strands and pierce tip with a tip.”

“And they, Ānanda, pierce what is even harder to pierce, those who pierce, as it has come to be, that ‘This is stress’; who pierce, as it has come to be, that ‘This is the origination of stress’ ... ‘This is the cessation of stress’ ... ‘This is the path of practice leading to the cessation of stress’

“Therefore, Ānanda, your duty is the contemplation, ‘This is stress ... This is the origination of stress ... This is the cessation of stress.’ Your duty is the contemplation, ‘This is the path of practice leading to the cessation of stress.’”

NOTE

1. The Commentary tries to convert this feat into an archery trick, in which one fastens a strand of horsehair on an eggplant and another strand on the tip of an arrow, and then backs off to shoot the hair on the eggplant with the hair fastened on the arrow. This, however, sounds more like one of the impossible feats of marksmanship that Mark Twain once chided James Fennimore Cooper for including in his *Deerslayer* books. Even assuming that the hair on the arrow could withstand the force of the air pushing it back and actually stick straight ahead to pierce the other hair, the speed and force of the arrow would demolish any evidence that it had actually done so. Thus it seems more likely that the Buddha is describing a more delicate feat bearing more resemblance to the delicacy required in penetrating the four noble truths.

Darkness

Andhakāra Sutta (SN 56:46)

“There is, monks, an inter-cosmic [intergalactic?] void, an unrestrained darkness, a pitch-black darkness, where even the light of the sun & moon—so mighty, so powerful—doesn’t reach.”

When this was said, one of the monks said to the Blessed One, “Wow, what a great darkness! What a really great darkness! Is there any darkness greater & more frightening than that?”

“There is, monk, a darkness greater & more frightening than that.”

“And which darkness, lord, is greater & more frightening than that?”

“Any contemplatives or brahmans who do not know, as it has come to be, that ‘This is stress’; who do not know, as it has come to be, that ‘This is the origination of stress’ ... ‘This is the cessation of stress’ ... ‘This is the path of practice leading to the cessation of stress’: They revel in fabrications leading to birth; they revel in fabrications leading to aging; they revel in fabrications leading to death; they revel in fabrications leading to sorrow, lamentation, pain, distress, & despair. Reveling in fabrications leading to birth... aging... death... sorrow, lamentation, pain, distress, & despair, they fabricate fabrications leading to birth... aging... death... sorrow, lamentation, pain, distress, & despair. Fabricating fabrications leading to birth... aging... death... sorrow, lamentation, pain, distress, & despair, they drop into the darkness of birth. They drop into the darkness of aging... the darkness of death... darkness of sorrow, lamentation, pain, distress, & despair. They are not totally released from birth, aging, death, sorrows, lamentations, pains, distresses, & despairs. They are not totally released, I tell you, from suffering & stress.

“But as for any contemplatives or brahmans who do know, as it has come to be, that ‘This is stress’; who know, as it has come to be, that ‘This is the origination of stress’ ... ‘This is the cessation of stress’ ... ‘This is the path of practice leading to the cessation of stress’: They don’t

revel in fabrications leading to birth; don't revel in fabrications leading to aging; don't revel in fabrications leading to death; don't revel in fabrications leading to sorrow, lamentation, pain, distress, & despair. Not reveling in fabrications leading to birth... aging... death... sorrow, lamentation, pain, distress, & despair, they don't fabricate fabrications leading to birth... aging... death... sorrow, lamentation, pain, distress, & despair. Not fabricating fabrications leading to birth... aging... death... sorrow, lamentation, pain, distress, & despair, they don't drop into the darkness of birth. They don't drop into the darkness of aging, don't drop into the darkness of death, don't drop into the darkness of sorrow, lamentation, pain, distress, & despair. They are totally released from birth, aging, death, sorrows, lamentations, pains, distresses, & despairs. They are totally released, I tell you, from suffering & stress.

“Therefore, monks, your duty is the contemplation, ‘This is stress ... This is the origination of stress ... This is the cessation of stress.’ Your duty is the contemplation, ‘This is the path of practice leading to the cessation of stress.’”

The Hole

Chiggaḷa Sutta (SN 56:48)

“Monks, suppose that this great earth were totally covered with water, and a man were to toss a yoke with a single hole there. A wind from the east would push it west; a wind from the west would push it east. A wind from the north would push it south; a wind from the south would push it north. And suppose a blind sea turtle were there. It would come to the surface once every one hundred years. Now what do you think? Would that blind sea turtle, coming to the surface once every one hundred years, stick his neck into the yoke with a single hole?”

“It would be a sheer coincidence, lord, that the blind sea turtle, coming to the surface once every one hundred years, would stick his neck into the yoke with a single hole.”

“It’s likewise a sheer coincidence that one obtains the human state. It’s likewise a sheer coincidence that a Tathāgata, worthy & rightly self-awakened, arises in the world. It’s likewise a sheer coincidence that a Dhamma & Vinaya expounded by a Tathāgata appears in the world. Now, this human state has been obtained. A Tathāgata, worthy & rightly self-awakened, has arisen in the world. A Dhamma & Vinaya expounded by a Tathāgata appears in the world.

“Therefore your duty is the contemplation, ‘This is stress ... This is the origination of stress ... This is the cessation of stress.’ Your duty is the contemplation, ‘This is the path of practice leading to the cessation of stress.’”

Dust

Pamsu Suttas (SN 56:102–113)

Then the Blessed One, picking up a little bit of dust with the tip of his fingernail, said to the monks, “What do you think, monks? Which is greater: the little bit of dust I have picked up with the tip of my fingernail, or the great earth?”

“The great earth is far greater, lord. The little bit of dust the Blessed One has picked up with the tip of his fingernail is next to nothing. It doesn’t even count. It’s no comparison. It’s not even a fraction, this little bit of dust the Blessed One has picked up with the tip of his fingernail, when compared with the great earth.

“In the same way, monks, few are the beings who, on passing away from the human realm, are reborn among human beings. Far more are the beings who, on passing away from the human realm, are reborn in hell.

“Therefore your duty is the contemplation, ‘This is stress... This is the origination of stress... This is the cessation of stress.’ Your duty is the contemplation, ‘This is the path of practice leading to the cessation of stress.’”

Then the Blessed One, picking up a little bit of dust with the tip of his fingernail, said to the monks, “What do you think, monks? Which is greater: the little bit of dust I have picked up with the tip of my fingernail, or the great earth?”

“The great earth is far greater, lord. The little bit of dust the Blessed One has picked up with the tip of his fingernail is next to nothing. It doesn’t even count. It’s no comparison. It’s not even a fraction, this little bit of dust the Blessed One has picked up with the tip of his fingernail, when compared with the great earth.

“In the same way, monks, few are the beings who, on passing away from the human realm, are reborn among human beings. Far more are the beings who, on passing away from the human realm, are reborn in the animal womb... in the domain of the hungry ghosts.

... “In the same way, monks, few are the beings who, on passing away from the human realm, are reborn among devas. Far more are the beings who, on passing away from the human realm, are reborn in hell... in the animal womb... in the domain of the hungry ghosts.

... “In the same way, monks, few are the beings who, on passing away from the deva realm, are reborn among devas. Far more are the beings who, on passing away from the deva realm, are reborn in hell... in the animal womb... in the domain of the hungry ghosts.

... “In the same way, monks, few are the beings who, on passing away from the deva realm, are reborn among human beings. Far more are the beings who, on passing away from the deva realm, are reborn in hell... in the animal womb... in the domain of the hungry ghosts.

“Therefore your duty is the contemplation, ‘This is stress... This is the origination of stress... This is the cessation of stress.’ Your duty is the contemplation, ‘This is the path of practice leading to the cessation of stress.’”

Glossary

PALI-ENGLISH

Abhidhamma: (1) In the discourses of the Pali Canon, this term simply means “higher Dhamma,” and a systematic attempt to define the Buddha’s teachings and understand their interrelationships. (2) A later collection of treatises collating lists of categories drawn from the teachings in the discourses, added to the Canon several centuries after the Buddha’s life.

Arahant: A “worthy one” or “pure one;” a person whose mind is free of defilement and thus is not destined for further rebirth. A title for the Buddha and the highest level of his noble disciples.

Āsava: Effluent; fermentation. Four qualities—sensuality, views, becoming, and ignorance—that “flow out” of the mind and create the flood of the round of death and rebirth.

Asura: A member of a race of beings who, like the Titans in Greek mythology, battled the devas for sovereignty in heaven and lost.

Bodhisatta: “A being (striving) for awakening;” the term used to describe the Buddha before he actually became Buddha, from his first aspiration to Buddhahood until the time of his full awakening. Sanskrit form: *Bodhisattva*.

Brahmā: An inhabitant of the heavenly realms of form or formlessness.

Brahman: In common usage, a brahman is a member of the priestly caste, which claimed to be the highest caste in India, based on birth. In a specifically Buddhist usage, “brahman” can also mean an arahant, conveying the point that excellence is based, not on birth or race, but on the qualities attained in the mind.

Deva/devatā: Literally, “shining one.” An inhabitant of the terrestrial or heavenly realms higher than the human.

Dhamma: (1) Event; action; (2) a phenomenon in & of itself; (3) mental quality; (4) doctrine, teaching; (5) *nibbāna* (although there are passages describing nibbāna as the abandoning of all dhammas). Sanskrit form: *Dharma*.

Jhāna: Mental absorption. A state of strong concentration focused on a single sensation or mental notion. This term is derived from the verb *jhāyati*, which means to burn with a steady, still flame.

Kamma: Intentional act. Sanskrit form: *Karma*.

Māra: The personification of temptation and all forces, within and without, that create obstacles to release from *saṃsāra*.

Nāga: A magical serpent, technically classed as a common animal, but possessing many of the powers of a deva, including the ability to take on human shape. Sometimes this term is used metaphorically, in the sense of “Great One,” to indicate an arahant.

Nibbāna: Literally, the “unbinding” of the mind from passion, aversion, and delusion, and from the entire round of death and rebirth. As this term also denotes the extinguishing of a fire, it carries connotations of stilling, cooling, and peace. “Total nibbāna” in some contexts denotes the experience of awakening; in others, the final passing away of an arahant. Sanskrit form: *Nirvāṇa*.

Nigaṇṭha: Literally, one without ties. An ascetic in the Jain religion.

Paṭicca-samuppāda: Dependent co-arising; dependent origination. A map showing the way ignorance and craving interact with the aggregates (*khandha*) and sense media (*āyatana*) to bring about stress and suffering. As the interactions are complex, there are several different versions of paṭicca samuppāda given in the suttas. In the most common one, the map starts with ignorance. In another common one (given in DN 15), the map starts with the interrelation between name (*nāma*) and form (*rūpa*) on the one hand, and sensory consciousness on the other.

Pāṭimokkha: Basic code of monastic discipline, composed of 227 rules for monks and 311 for nuns.

Pavāraṇā: Invitation; a monastic ceremony marking the end of the rains retreat on the full moon in October. During the ceremony, each monk invites his fellow monks to accuse him of any offenses they may have suspected him of having committed.

Samāṇa: Contemplative. Literally, a person who abandons the conventional obligations of social life in order to find a way of life more “in tune” (*sama*) with the ways of nature.

Samāsāra: Transmigration; the process of wandering through repeated states of becoming, with their attendant death and rebirth.

Samvega: A sense of chastened dismay over the meaninglessness and futility of life as it is ordinarily lived, combined with a strong sense of urgency in looking for a way out.

Saṅgha: On the conventional (*sammati*) level, this term denotes the communities of Buddhist monks and nuns. On the ideal (*ariya*) level, it denotes those followers of the Buddha, lay or ordained, who have attained at least stream-entry.

Tādin: “Such,” an adjective to describe one who has attained the goal. It indicates that the person’s state is indefinable but not subject to change or influences of any sort.

Tathāgata: Literally, “one who has become authentic (*tatha-āgata*) or is truly gone (*tathā-gata*)”: an epithet used in ancient India for a person who has attained the highest religious goal. In Buddhism, it usually denotes the Buddha, although occasionally it also denotes any of his arahant disciples.

Upasatha: Observance day, coinciding with the full moon, new moon, and half moons. Lay Buddhists often observe the eight precepts on this day. Monks recite the Pāṭimokkha on the full moon and new moon uposathas.

Vinaya: The monastic discipline, whose rules and traditions comprise six volumes in printed text.

Yakkha: Spirit; a lower level of deva—sometimes friendly to human beings, sometimes not—often dwelling in trees or other wild places.

Although I have tried to be as consistent as possible in rendering Pali terms into English, there are a few cases where a single English term will not do justice to all the meanings of a Pali term. Although the rule of one English equivalent per one Pali word makes for consistency, any truly bilingual person will know that such a rule can create ludicrous distortions in translation. Thus, while I have generally tried to avoid using one English term to translate two different Pali terms, there are cases where I have found it necessary to render single Pali terms with two or more English terms, depending on context. *Citta* in some cases is rendered as mind, in others as heart, and in still others as intent. Similarly, *loka* is rendered either as cosmos or world, *manas* as intellect or heart, *āyatana* as medium or dimension, *upādāna* as clinging or sustenance, and dhamma as phenomenon, quality, or principle. If you see the word *heart* in a prose passage, it is translating *citta*; if in a passage of poetry, it is translating *manas*.

Also, for some of the Pali terms playing a central role in the teaching, I have chosen equivalents that do not follow general usage. In the following list I have marked these equivalents with asterisks. Explanations for these choices are provided at the end of the list.

- acceptance — *upasampadā*
- acquisition — *upadhi*
- aggregate — *khandha*
- alertness — *sampajañña*
- appropriate attention — *yoniso manasikāra*
- awakening — *bodhi*
- awareness — *cetas*
- awareness-release — *cetovimutti*
- becoming — *bhava*
- clear knowing — *vijjā*

clinging* — *upādāna*
compunction — *ottappa*
contemplative — *samaṇa*
conviction — *saddhā*
cosmos — *loka*
craving — *taṇhā*
dependent co-arising — *paṭicca samuppāda*
desire — *chanda*
dimension — *āyatana*
directed thought — *vitakka*
discern — *pajānāti*
discernment — *paññā*
discernment-release — *paññāvimutti*
discrimination — *vimamsā*
disenchantment — *nibbidā*
dispassion — *virāga*
effluent* — *āsava*
emptiness — *suññatā*
enlightened one* — *dhīra*
establishing of mindfulness — *satipaṭṭhāna*
evaluation — *vicāra*
fabricated — *saṅkhata*
fabrication — *saṅkhāra*
fetter — *saṅyojana*
gnosis — *aññā*
goodwill — *mettā*
habit — *sīla*

heart — *manas; citta*
identity — *sakkāya*
inconstant* — *anicca*
insight — *vipassanā*
intellect — *manas*
intent — *citta*
intention — *cetanā*
medium — *āyatana*
mind — *citta*
not-self — *anattā*
objectification* — *papañca*
obsession* — *anusaya*
origination — *samudaya*
perception — *saññā*
persistence — *virīya*
phenomenon — *dhamma*
precept — *sīla*
property — *dhātu*
quality — *dhamma*
release — *vimutti*
resolve — *saṅkappa*
self-awakening — *sambodhi*
self-identification — *sakkāya*
sensuality — *kāma*
shame — *hiri*
skillful — *kusala*
stream-entry — *sotāpatti*

stress* — *dukkha*
sustenance* — *upādāna*
theme — *nimitta*
tranquility — *samatha*
transcendent — *lokuttara*
unbinding* — *nibbāna*
unfabricated — *asaṅkhata*
virtue — *sīla*
world — *loka*

Acquisition: *Upadhi* literally means “belongings,” “baggage,” “paraphernalia.” In the suttas, it means the mental baggage that the mind carries around. The Cūḷaniddesa, a late canonical work, lists ten types of *upadhi*: craving, views, defilement, action, misconduct, nutriment (physical and mental), irritation, the four physical properties sustained in the body (earth, water, wind, and fire), the six external sense media, and the six forms of corresponding sensory consciousness. The state without *upadhi* or acquisitions is unbinding.

Aggregate: Any of the five types of phenomena that serve as objects of clinging and as bases for a sense of self: form, feeling, perception, mental fabrications, and consciousness.

Becoming: The processes of giving rise, within the mind, to states of being that allow for physical or mental birth on any of three levels: the level of sensuality, the level of form, and the level of formlessness.

Clinging/sustenance: The Pali term *upādāna*, which is used both on the physical and psychological levels, carries a double meaning on both levels. On the physical level, it denotes both the fuel of a fire and to the fire’s act of clinging to its fuel. On the psychological level, it denotes both the sustenance for becoming that the mind clings to, and to the act of clinging to its sustenance. To capture these double meanings, I have sometimes rendered *upādāna* as clinging, sometimes as sustenance, and sometimes as both.

Enlightened one: Throughout these suttas I have rendered *buddha* as “Awakened,” and *dhīra* as “enlightened.” As Jan Gonda points out in his book, *The Vision of the Vedic Poets*, the word *dhīra* was used in Vedic and Buddhist poetry to mean a person who has the heightened powers of mental vision needed to perceive the “light” of the underlying principles of the cosmos, together with the expertise to implement those principles in the affairs of life and to reveal them to others. A person enlightened in this sense may also be awakened in the formal Buddhist sense, but is not necessarily so.

Fabrication: *Saṅkhāra* literally means “putting together,” and carries connotations of jerry-rigged artificiality. It is applied to physical and to mental processes, as well as to the products of those processes. Various English words have been suggested as renderings for *saṅkhāra*, such as “formation,” “determination,” “force,” and “constructive activity.” However, “fabrication,” in both of its senses, as the process of fabrication and the fabricated things that result, seems the best equivalent for capturing the connotations as well as the denotations of the term.

Inconstant: The usual rendering for *anicca* is “impermanent.” However, the antonym of the term, *nicca*, carries connotations of constancy and reliability; and as *anicca* is used to emphasize the point that conditioned phenomena are unreliable as a basis for true happiness, this seems a useful rendering for conveying this point.

Objectification: The term *papañca* has entered popular usage in Buddhist circles to indicate obsessive, runaway thoughts that harass the mind. But in the suttas, the term is used to indicate, not the amount of thinking that harasses the mind, but the categories used in a particular type of thinking that harasses the mind and extends outward to create conflict with others. Sn 4:14 states that the root of the categories of *papañca* is the perception, “I am the thinker.” From this self-objectifying thought, in which one takes on the identity of a being, a number of categories can be derived: being/not-being, me/not-me, mine/not-mine, doer/done-to, feeder/food. This last pair of categories comes from the fact that, as a being, one has to lay claim to food, both physical and mental, to maintain that being (Khp 4). Thinking in terms of these categories inevitably leads to conflict, as different beings fight over their

food. Because this harassment and conflict come from a self-objectifying thought that leads to the objectification of others as well, *objectification* seems to be the best English equivalent for *papañca*.

Obsession: *Anusaya* is usually translated as “underlying tendency” or “latent tendency.” These translations are based on the etymology of the term, which literally means, “to lie down with.” However, in actual usage, the related verb (*anuseti*) means to be obsessed with something, for one’s thoughts to return and “lie down with it” (or, in our idiom, to “dwell on it”) over and over again.

Stress: The Pali term *dukkha*, which is traditionally translated in the commentaries as, “that which is hard to bear,” is notorious for having no truly adequate equivalent in English, but stress—in its basic sense as a strain on body or mind—seems as close as English can get. In the Canon, *dukkha* applies both to physical and to mental phenomena, ranging from the intense stress of acute anguish or pain to the innate burdensomeness of even the most subtle mental or physical fabrications.

Unbinding: Because *nibbāna* is used to denote not only the Buddhist goal, but also the extinguishing of a fire, it is usually rendered as “extinguishing” or, even worse, “extinction.” However, a close look at ancient Indian views of the workings of fire (see *The Mind Like Fire Unbound*) shows that people of the Buddha’s time felt that a fire, in going out, did not go out of existence but was simply freed from its agitation and attachment to its fuel. Thus, when applied to the Buddhist goal, the primary connotation of *nibbāna* is one of release and liberation. According to the commentaries, the literal meaning of the word *nibbāna* is “unbinding,” and as this is a rare case where the literal and contextual meanings of a term coincide, this seems to be the ideal English equivalent.

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