

The Ten Perfections

The four determinations:
One should not be negligent of discernment,
should guard the truth,
be devoted to relinquishment,
and train only for calm. — MN 140

I. *Discernment*

Good will

II. *Truth*

Persistence

Virtue

III. *Relinquishment*

Giving

Renunciation

IV. *Calm*

Endurance

Equanimity

I. DISCERNMENT

§ 1. Three types of discernment:

understanding that comes from listening (*sutamaya-paññā*)

understanding that comes from thinking (*cintāmaya-paññā*)

understanding that comes from developing / meditation

(*bhāvanāmaya-paññā*)

—DN 33

§ 2. “As for the course of action that is unpleasant to do but that, when done, leads to what is profitable, it is in light of this course of action that one may be known—in terms of manly stamina, manly persistence, manly effort—as a fool or a wise person. For a fool doesn’t reflect, ‘Even though this course of action is unpleasant to do, still when it is done it leads to what is profitable.’ So he doesn’t do it, and thus the non-doing of that course of action leads to what is unprofitable for him. But a wise person reflects, ‘Even though this course of action is unpleasant to do, still when it is done it leads to what is profitable.’ So he does it, and thus the doing of that course of action leads to what is profitable for him.

“As for the course of action that is pleasant to do but that, when done, leads to what is unprofitable, it is in light of this course of action that one may be known—in terms of manly stamina, manly persistence, manly effort—as a fool or a wise person. For a fool doesn’t reflect, ‘Even though this course of action is pleasant to do, still when it is done it leads to what is unprofitable.’ So he does it, and thus the doing of that course of action leads to what is unprofitable for him. But a wise person reflects, ‘Even though this course of

action is pleasant to do, still when it is done it leads to what is unprofitable.’ So he doesn’t do it, and thus the non-doing of that course of action leads to what is profitable for him.” — *AN 4:115*

§ 3. “And what is right view? Knowledge in terms of stress, knowledge in terms of the origination of stress, knowledge in terms of the cessation of stress, knowledge in terms of the way of practice leading to the cessation of stress: This is called right view.

“And what is right resolve? Resolve aimed at renunciation, at freedom from ill will, at non-cruelty: This is called right resolve.” — *SN 45:8*

§ 4. “And what is the right view that has fermentations, sides with merit, & results in acquisitions? ‘There is what is given, what is offered, what is sacrificed. There are fruits & results of good & bad actions. There is this world & the next world. There is mother & father. There are spontaneously reborn beings; there are brāhmans & contemplatives who, faring rightly & practicing rightly, proclaim this world & the next after having directly known & realized it for themselves.’ This is the right view that has fermentations, sides with merit, & results in acquisitions.

“And what is the right view that is without fermentations, transcendent, a factor of the path? The discernment, the faculty of discernment, the strength of discernment, analysis of qualities as a factor of Awakening, the path factor of right view in one developing the noble path whose mind is noble, whose mind is free from fermentations, who is fully possessed of the noble path. This is the right view that is without fermentations, transcendent, a factor of the path....

“And what is the right resolve that has fermentations, sides with merit, & results in acquisitions? Being resolved on renunciation, on freedom from ill will, on non-cruelty. This is the right resolve that has fermentations, sides with merit, & results in acquisitions.

“And what is the right resolve that is without fermentations, transcendent, a factor of the path? The thinking, directed thinking, resolve, mental absorption, mental fixity, focused awareness, & verbal fabrications in one developing the noble path whose mind is noble, whose mind is without fermentations, who is fully possessed of the noble path. This is the right resolve that is without fermentations, transcendent, a factor of the path.” — *MN 117*

§ 5. What does discernment come from? You might compare it with learning to become a potter, a tailor, or a basket weaver. The teacher will start out by telling you how to make a pot, sew a shirt or a pair of pants, or weave different patterns, but the proportions and beauty of the object you make will have to depend on your own powers of observation. Suppose you weave a basket and then take a good look at its proportions, to see if it’s too short or too tall. If it’s too short, weave another one, a little taller, and then take a good look at it to see if there’s anything that still needs improving, to see if it’s too thin or too fat. Then weave another one, better-looking than the last. Keep this up until you have one that’s as beautiful and well-proportioned as possible, one with nothing to criticize from any angle. This last basket you can take as your standard. You can now set yourself up in business.

What you’ve done is to learn from your own actions. As for your previous efforts, you needn’t concern yourself with them any longer. Throw them out. This is a sense of discernment that arises of its own accord, an ingenuity and sense of judgment that come not from anything your teachers have taught

you, but from observing and evaluating on your own the object that you yourself have made.

The same holds true in practicing meditation. For discernment to arise, you have to be observant as you keep track of the breath and to gain a sense of how to adjust and improve it so that it's well-proportioned throughout the body—to the point where it flows evenly without faltering, so that it's comfortable in slow and out slow, in fast and out fast, long, short, heavy, or refined. Get so that both the in-breath and the out-breath are comfortable no matter what way you breathe, so that—no matter when—you immediately feel a sense of ease the moment you focus on the breath. When you can do this, physical results will appear: a sense of ease and lightness, open and spacious. The body will be strong, the breath and blood will flow unobstructed and won't form an opening for disease to step in. The body will be healthy and awake.

As for the mind, when mindfulness and alertness are the causes, a still mind is the result. When negligence is the cause, a mind distracted and restless is the result. So we must try to make the causes good, in order to give rise to the good results we've referred to. If we use our powers of observation and evaluation in caring for the breath, and are constantly correcting and improving it, we'll develop awareness on our own, the fruit of having developed our concentration higher step by step. — *Ajaan Lee: Inner Strength*

§ 6. People with discernment will see that stress is of two kinds: (1) physical stress, or the inherent stress of natural conditions; and (2) mental stress, or the stress of defilement....

Aging, illness, and death are simply the shadows of stress and not its true substance. People lacking discernment will try to do away with the shadows, which leads only to more suffering and stress. This is because they aren't acquainted with what the shadows and substance of stress come from. The essence of stress lies with the mind. Aging, illness, and death are its shadows or effects that show by way of the body. When we want to kill our enemy and so take a knife to stab his shadow, how is he going to die? In the same way, ignorant people try to destroy the shadows of stress and don't get anywhere. As for the essence of stress in the heart, they don't think of remedying it at all. This ignorance of theirs is one form of avijjā, or unawareness. — *Ajaan Lee: Inner Strength*

Good Will

§ 7. "Devoid of covetousness, devoid of ill will, unbewildered, alert, mindful, one keeps pervading the first direction [the east] with an awareness imbued with good will, likewise the second, likewise the third, likewise the fourth. Thus above, below, & all around, everywhere, in its entirety, one keeps pervading the all-encompassing cosmos with an awareness imbued with good will—abundant, expansive, immeasurable, without hostility, without ill will, just as a strong conch-trumpet blower—without any difficulty—can notify the four directions." — *SN 42:8*

§ 8. Think: Happy, at rest,
 may all beings be happy at heart.
 Whatever beings there may be,
 weak or strong, without exception,

long, large,
 middling, short,
 subtle, blatant,
 seen & unseen,
 near & far,
 born & seeking birth:
 May all beings be happy at heart.
 Let no one deceive another
 or despise anyone anywhere,
 or through anger or resistance
 wish for another to suffer. — *Sn 1:8*

§ 9. Not consorting with fools,
 consorting with the wise,
 paying homage to those worthy of homage:
 This is the highest protection. — *Sn 2:4*

§ 10. “And what is meant by admirable friendship? There is the case where a lay person, in whatever town or village he may dwell, spends time with householders or householders’ sons, young or old, who are advanced in virtue. He talks with them, engages them in discussions. He emulates consummate conviction in those who are consummate in conviction, consummate virtue in those who are consummate in virtue, consummate generosity in those who are consummate in generosity, and consummate discernment in those who are consummate in discernment. This is called admirable friendship.” — *AN 8:54*

§ 11. “Once upon a time, 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 one another, watching after one another, 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.

“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 oneself, one watches after others. When watching after others, one watches after oneself.” — *SN 47:19*

II. TRUTH

§ 12. “Let an observant person come—one who is not fraudulent, not deceitful, one of a straightforward nature. I instruct him. I teach him the Dhamma. Practicing as instructed, he in no long time knows for himself, sees for himself: ‘So this is how there is the right liberation from bondage, i.e., the bondage of ignorance.’” — *MN 80*

§ 13. Kāpadika Bhāradvāja: “To what extent is there an awakening to the truth? To what extent does one awaken to the truth? We ask Master Gotama about awakening to the truth.”

The Buddha: “There is the case, Bhāradvāja, where a monk lives in dependence on a certain village or town. Then a householder or householder’s son goes to him and observes him with regard to three mental qualities—qualities based on greed, qualities based on aversion, qualities based on delusion: ‘Are there in this venerable one any such qualities based on greed that, with his mind overcome by these qualities, he might say, “I know,” while not knowing, or say, “I see,” while not seeing; or that he might urge another to act in a way that was for his/her long-term harm & pain?’ As he observes him, he comes to know, ‘There are in this venerable one no such qualities based on greed.... His bodily behavior & verbal behavior are those of one not greedy. And the Dhamma he teaches is deep, hard to see, hard to realize, tranquil, refined, beyond the scope of conjecture, subtle, to-be-experienced by the wise. This Dhamma can’t easily be taught by a person who’s greedy.

“When, on observing that the monk is purified with regard to qualities based on greed, he next observes him with regard to qualities based on aversion ... based on delusion: ‘Are there in this venerable one any such qualities based on delusion that, with his mind overcome by these qualities, he might say, “I know,” while not knowing, or say, “I see,” while not seeing; or that he might urge another to act in a way that was for his/her long-term harm & pain?’ As he observes him, he comes to know, ‘There are in this venerable one no such qualities based on delusion.... His bodily behavior & verbal behavior are those of one not deluded. And the Dhamma he teaches is deep, hard to see, hard to realize, tranquil, refined, beyond the scope of conjecture, subtle, to-be-experienced by the wise. This Dhamma can’t easily be taught by a person who’s deluded.

“When, on observing that the monk is purified with regard to qualities based on delusion, he places conviction in him. With the arising of conviction, he visits him & grows close to him. Growing close to him, he lends ear. Lending ear, he hears the Dhamma. Hearing the Dhamma, he remembers it. Remembering it, he penetrates the meaning of those dhammas. Penetrating the meaning, he comes to an agreement through pondering those dhammas. There being an agreement through pondering those dhammas, desire arises. With the arising of desire, he becomes willing. Willing, he contemplates [lit: “weighs,” “compares”]. Contemplating, he makes an exertion. Exerting himself, he both realizes the ultimate meaning of the truth with his body and sees by penetrating it with discernment.

“To this extent, Bhāradvāja, there is an awakening to the truth. To this extent one awakens to the truth. I describe this as an awakening to the truth. But it is not yet the final attainment of the truth.”

“Yes, Master Gotama, to this extent there is an awakening to the truth. To this extent one awakens to the truth. We regard this as an awakening to the

truth. But to what extent is there the final attainment of the truth? To what extent does one finally attain the truth? We ask Master Gotama about the final attainment of the truth.”

“The cultivation, development, & pursuit of those very same qualities: to this extent, Bhāradvāja, there is the final attainment of the truth. To this extent one finally attains the truth. I describe this as the final attainment of the truth.” — MN 95

§ 14. The Buddha saw that the ease and happiness of ordinary pleasures is nothing lasting. He wanted an ease and happiness that didn’t follow the way of the worldly pleasures that most people want. This was why he left his family and friends, and went off to live in seclusion. He said to himself, ‘I came alone when I was born and I’ll go alone when I die. No one hired me to be born and no one will hire me to die, so I’m beholden to no one. There’s no one I have to fear. In all of my actions, if there’s anything that is right from the standpoint of the world, but wrong from the standpoint of the truth—and wrong from the standpoint of my heart—there’s no way I’ll be willing to do it.’

So he posed himself a question: ‘Now that you’ve been born as a human being, what is the highest thing you want in this world?’ He then placed the following conditions on his answer: ‘In answering, you have to be really honest and truthful with yourself. And once you’ve answered, you have to hold to your answer as an unalterable law on which you’ve affixed your seal, without ever letting a second seal be affixed on top. So what do you want, and how do you want it? You have to give an honest answer, understand? I won’t accept anything false. And once you’ve answered, you have to keep to your answer. Don’t be a traitor to yourself.’

When he was sure of his answer, he said to himself, ‘I want only the highest and most certain happiness and ease: the happiness that won’t change into anything else. Other than that, I don’t want anything else in the world.’ Once he had given this answer, he kept to it firmly. He didn’t allow anything that would have caused the least bit of pain or distraction to his heart to get stuck there as a stain on it. He kept making a persistent effort with all his might to discover the truth, without retreat, until he finally awakened to that truth: the reality of Liberation.

If we search for the truth like the Buddha—if we’re true in our intent and true in what we do—there’s no way the truth can escape us. But if we aren’t true to ourselves, we won’t find the true happiness the Buddha found. We tell ourselves that we want to be happy but we go jumping into fires. We know what things are poison, yet we go ahead and drink them anyway. This is called being a traitor to yourself....

The Buddha’s teachings are an affair of the truth. *If a person isn’t true to the Buddha’s teachings, the Buddha’s teachings won’t be true to that person—and that person won’t be able to know what the Buddha’s true teachings are....* — Ajaan Lee: *Food for Thought*

Virtue

§ 15. “Now, there are these five gifts, five great gifts—original, long-standing, traditional, ancient, unadulterated, unadulterated from the beginning—that are not open to suspicion, will never be open to suspicion,

and are unfaulted by knowledgeable contemplatives & brāhmins. Which five?

“There is the case where a noble disciple, abandoning the taking of life, abstains from taking life. In doing so, he gives freedom from danger, freedom from animosity, freedom from oppression to limitless numbers of beings. In giving freedom from danger, freedom from animosity, freedom from oppression to limitless numbers of beings, he gains a share in limitless freedom from danger, freedom from animosity, and freedom from oppression. This is the first gift, the first great gift—original, long-standing, traditional, ancient, unadulterated, unadulterated from the beginning—that is not open to suspicion, will never be open to suspicion, and is unfaulted by knowledgeable contemplatives & brāhmins.”

[Similarly with the four remaining precepts: abandoning taking what is not given (stealing), abandoning illicit sex, abandoning lying, abandoning the use of intoxicants.] — *AN 8:39*

§ 16. “And how is one made pure in three ways by bodily action? There is the case where a certain person, abandoning the taking of life, abstains from the taking of life. He dwells with his rod laid down, his knife laid down, scrupulous, merciful, compassionate for the welfare of all living beings. Abandoning the taking of what is not given, he abstains from taking what is not given. He does not take, in the manner of a thief, things in a village or a wilderness that belong to others and have not been given by them. Abandoning sensual misconduct, he abstains from sensual misconduct. He does not get sexually involved with those who are protected by their mothers, their fathers, their brothers, their sisters, their relatives, or their Dhamma; those with husbands, those who entail punishments, or even those crowned with flowers by another man. This is how one is made pure in three ways by bodily action.

“And how is one made pure in four ways by verbal action? There is the case where a certain person, abandoning false speech, abstains from false speech. When he has been called to a town meeting, a group meeting, a gathering of his relatives, his guild, or of the royalty, if he is asked as a witness, ‘Come & tell, good man, what you know’: If he doesn’t know, he says, ‘I don’t know.’ If he does know, he says, ‘I know.’ If he hasn’t seen, he says, ‘I haven’t seen.’ If he has seen, he says, ‘I have seen.’ Thus he doesn’t consciously tell a lie for his own sake, for the sake of another, or for the sake of any reward. Abandoning false speech, he abstains from false speech. He speaks the truth, holds to the truth, is firm, reliable, no deceiver of the world. Abandoning divisive speech he abstains from divisive speech. What he has heard here he does not tell there to break those people apart from these people here. What he has heard there he does not tell here to break these people apart from those people there. Thus reconciling those who have broken apart or cementing those who are united, he loves concord, delights in concord, enjoys concord, speaks things that create concord. Abandoning abusive speech, he abstains from abusive speech. He speaks words that are soothing to the ear, that are affectionate, that go to the heart, that are polite, appealing & pleasing to people at large. Abandoning idle chatter, he abstains from idle chatter. He speaks in season, speaks what is factual, what is in accordance with the goal, the Dhamma, & the Vinaya. He speaks words

worth treasuring, seasonable, reasonable, circumscribed, connected with the goal. This is how one is made pure in four ways by verbal action.

“And how is one made pure in three ways by mental action? There is the case where a certain person is not covetous. He does not covet the belongings of others, thinking, ‘O, that what belongs to others would be mine!’ He bears no ill will and is not corrupt in the resolves of his heart. [He thinks,] ‘May these beings be free from animosity, free from oppression, free from trouble, and may they look after themselves with ease!’ He has right view and is not warped in the way he sees things: ‘There is what is given, what is offered, what is sacrificed. There are fruits & results of good & bad actions. There is this world & the next world. There is mother & father. There are spontaneously reborn beings; there are brahmans & contemplatives who, faring rightly & practicing rightly, proclaim this world & the next after having directly known & realized it for themselves.’ This is how one is made pure in three ways by mental action.” — *AN 10:176*

§ 17. “Monks, there are these five kinds of loss. Which five? Loss of relatives, loss of wealth, loss through disease, loss in terms of virtue, loss in terms of views. It’s not by reason of loss of relatives, loss of wealth, or loss through disease that beings—with the break-up of the body, after death—reappear in the plane of deprivation, the bad destination, the lower realms, in hell. It’s by reason of loss in terms of virtue and loss in terms of views that beings—with the break-up of the body, after death—reappear in the plane of deprivation, the bad destination, the lower realms, in hell.” — *AN 5:130*

§ 18. (1) Ill will (*byāpāda*) lies at the essence of killing (*pāṇātipāta*), for it causes us to destroy our own goodness and that of others—and when our mind can kill our own goodness, what’s to keep us from killing other people and animals as well?

(2) Restlessness (*uddhacca*) lies at the essence of taking what isn’t given (*adinnādāna*). The mind wanders about, taking hold of other people’s affairs, sometimes their good points, sometimes their bad. To fasten onto their good points isn’t too serious, for it can give us at least *some* nourishment. As long as we’re going to steal other people’s business and make it our own, we might as well take their silver and gold. Their bad points, though, are like trash they’ve thrown away—scraps and bones with nothing of any substance—and yet even so we let the mind feed on them. When we know that other people are possessive of their bad points and guard them well and yet we still take hold of these things to think about, it should be classed as a form of taking what isn’t given.

(3) Sensual desires (*kāmachanda*) lie at the essence of sensual misconduct. The mind feels an attraction for sensual objects—thoughts of past or future sights, sounds, smells, tastes, or tactile sensations—or for sensual defilements—passion, aversion, or delusion—to the point where we forget ourselves. Mental states such as these can be said to overstep the bounds of propriety in sensual matters.

(4) Doubt (*vicikicchā*) lies at the essence of lying. In other words, our minds are unsure, with nothing reliable or true to them. We have no firm principles and so drift along under the influence of all kinds of thoughts and preoccupations.

(5) Drowsiness (*thina-middha*) is intoxication—discouragement, dullness, forgetfulness, with no mindfulness or restraint watching over the mind. This is what it means to be drugged or drunk. — *Ajaan Lee: The Path to Peace & Freedom*

Persistence

§ 19. “And what is right effort? There is the case where one generates desire, endeavors, activates persistence, upholds, & exerts one’s 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 right effort.” — *SN 45:8*

§ 20. “And how is striving fruitful, how is exertion fruitful? There is the case where a monk, when not loaded down, does not load himself down with pain, nor does he reject pleasure that accords with the Dhamma, although he is not infatuated with that pleasure. He discerns that ‘When I exert a [bodily, verbal, or mental] fabrication against this cause of stress, then from the fabrication of *exertion* there is dispassion [fading away]. When I look on with equanimity at that cause of stress, then from the development of *equanimity* there is dispassion.’ So he exerts a fabrication against the (first) cause of stress... and develops equanimity with regard to the (second) cause of stress... Thus the stress [coming from any cause of the first sort] is abolished... & the stress [coming from any cause of the second sort] is abolished.” — *MN 101*

§ 21. On that occasion Ven. Soṇa was staying near Rājagaha in the Cool Wood. Then, as Ven. Soṇa was meditating in seclusion [after doing walking meditation until the skin of his soles was split & bleeding], this train of thought arose in his awareness: “Of the Blessed One’s disciples who have aroused their persistence, I am one, but my mind is not released from the effluents through lack of clinging/sustenance. Now, my family has enough wealth that it would be possible to enjoy wealth & make merit. What if I were to disavow the training, return to the lower life, enjoy wealth, & make merit?”

Then the Blessed One, as soon as he perceived with his awareness the train of thought in Ven. Soṇa’s awareness disappeared from Vulture Peak Mountain—just as a strong man might extend his flexed arm or flex his extended arm—appeared in the Cool Wood right in front of Ven. Soṇa, and sat down on a prepared seat. Ven. Soṇa, after bowing down to the Blessed One, sat to one side. As he was sitting there, the Blessed One said to him, “Just now, as you were meditating in seclusion, didn’t this train of thought appear to your awareness: ‘Of the Blessed One’s disciples who have aroused their persistence, I am one, but my mind is not released from the effluents...What if I were to disavow the training, return to the lower life, enjoy wealth, & make merit?’”

“Yes, lord.”

“Now what do you think, Soṇa. Before, when you were a house-dweller, were you skilled at playing the vina?”

“Yes, lord.”

“And what do you think: when the strings of your vina were too taut, was your vina in tune & playable?”

“No, lord.”

“And what do you think: when the strings of your vina were too loose, was your vina in tune & playable?”

“No, lord.”

“And what do you think: when the strings of your vina were neither too taut nor too loose, but tuned [lit: ‘established’] to be right on pitch, was your vina in tune & playable?”

“Yes, lord.”

“In the same way, *Soṇa*, over-aroused persistence leads to restlessness, overly slack persistence leads to laziness. Thus you should determine the right pitch for your persistence, attune the pitch of the (five) faculties (to that), and there pick up your theme.”

“Yes, lord,” Ven. *Soṇa* answered the Blessed One. Then, having given this exhortation to Ven. *Soṇa*, the Blessed One—as a strong man might extend his flexed arm or flex his extended arm—disappeared from the Cool Wood and appeared on Vulture Peak Mountain.

So after that, Ven. *Sona* determined the right pitch for his persistence, attuned the pitch of the [five] faculties [to that], and there picked up his theme. Dwelling alone, secluded, heedful, ardent, & resolute, he in no long time reached & remained in the supreme goal of the holy life for which clansmen rightly go forth from home into homelessness, 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. *Soṇa* became another one of the arahants. — *AN 6:55*

III. RELINQUISHMENT

§ 22. If, by forsaking
a limited ease,
he would see
an abundance of ease,
the enlightened man
would forsake
the limited ease
for the sake
of the abundant. — *Dhp 290*

§ 23. *Ven. Suppiya*:
I’ll make a trade:
aging for the Ageless,
burning for the Unbound:
the highest peace,
the unexcelled rest
from the yoke. — *Thag 1:32*

Giving

§ 24. “There are these four grounds for the bonds of fellowship. Which four? Giving, kind words, beneficial help, consistency. These are the four grounds for the bonds of fellowship.”

Giving, kind words, beneficial help,
& consistency in the face of events,
in line with what’s appropriate
in each case, each case.

These bonds of fellowship [function] in the world
like the linchpin in a moving cart.

Now, if these bonds of fellowship were lacking,
a mother would not receive
the honor & respect owed by her child,
nor would a father receive
what his child owes him.

But because the wise show regard
for these bonds of fellowship,
they achieve greatness
and are praised. — *AN 4:32*

§ 25. 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.”

“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.” — *SN 3:24*

§ 26. “A person of integrity gives a gift with a sense of conviction. A person of integrity gives a gift attentively. A person of integrity gives a gift in season. A person of integrity gives a gift with an empathetic heart. A person of integrity gives a gift without adversely affecting himself or others.

“Having given a gift with a sense of conviction, he—wherever the result of that gift ripens—is rich, with much wealth, with many possessions. And he is well-built, handsome, extremely inspiring, endowed with a lotus-like complexion.

“Having given a gift attentively, he—wherever the result of that gift ripens—is rich, with much wealth, with many possessions. And his children, wives, slaves, servants, and workers listen carefully to him, lend him their ears, and serve him with understanding hearts.

“Having given a gift in season, he—wherever the result of that gift ripens—is rich, with much wealth, with many possessions. And his goals are fulfilled in season.

“Having given a gift with an empathetic heart, he—wherever the result of that gift ripens—is rich, with much wealth, with many possessions. And his mind inclines to the enjoyment of the five strings of lavish sensuality.

“Having given a gift without adversely affecting himself or others, he—wherever the result of that gift ripens—is rich, with much wealth, with many possessions. And not from anywhere does destruction come to his

property— whether from fire, from water, from kings, from thieves, or from hateful heirs.

“These five are a person of integrity’s gifts.” — AN 5:148

§ 27. “Having given [a gift], not seeking one’s own profit, not with a mind attached [to the reward], not seeking to store up for oneself, nor [with the thought], ‘I’ll enjoy this after death,’

—nor with the thought, ‘Giving is good,’

—nor with the thought, ‘This was given in the past, done in the past, by my father & grandfather. It would not be right for me to let this old family custom be discontinued,’

—nor with the thought, ‘I am well-off. These are not well-off. It would not be right for me, being well-off, not to give a gift to those who are not well-off,’

—nor with the thought, ‘Just as there were the great sacrifices of the sages of the past— Aṭṭhaka, Vāmaka, Vāmadeva, Vessāmitta, Yamataggi, Aṅgīrasa, Bhāradvāja, Vāsetṭha, Kassapa & Bhagu—in the same way this will be my distribution of gifts,’

—nor with the thought, ‘When this gift of mine is given, it makes the mind serene. Gratification & joy arise,’ [all of the above motivations lead to various levels of heaven, but not to non-returning]

—but with the thought, ‘This is an ornament for the mind, a support for the mind’—on the break-up of the body, after death, one reappears in the company of Brahma’s Retinue. Then, having exhausted that action, that power, that status, that sovereignty, one is a non-returner and does not come back to this world.

“This, Sāriputta, is the cause, this is the reason, why a person gives a gift of a certain sort and it does not bear great fruit or great benefit, whereas another person gives a gift of the same sort and it bears great fruit and great benefit.” — AN 7:49

§ 28. “And how is a donation endowed with six factors? There is the case where there are the three factors of the donor, the three factors of the recipients.

“And which are the three factors of the donor? There is the case where the donor, before giving, is glad; while giving, his/her mind is bright & clear; and after giving is gratified. These are the three factors of the donor.

“And which are the three factors of the recipients? There is the case where the recipients are free of passion or are practicing for the subduing of passion; free of aversion or practicing for the subduing of aversion; and free of delusion or practicing for the subduing of delusion. These are the three factors of the recipients....

“Just as it is not easy to take the measure of the great ocean as ‘just this many buckets of water, just this many hundreds of buckets of water, just this many thousands of buckets of water, or just this many hundreds of thousands of buckets of water.’ It is simply reckoned as a great mass of water, incalculable, immeasurable. In the same way, it is not easy to take the measure of the merit of a donation thus endowed with six factors as ‘just this much a bonanza of merit, a bonanza of what is skillful—a nutriment of bliss, heavenly, resulting in bliss, leading to heaven—that leads to what is

desirable, pleasing, charming, beneficial, pleasant.' It is simply reckoned as a great mass of merit, incalculable, immeasurable." — *AN 6:37*

Renunciation

§ 29. "There are these five strings of sensuality. Which five? Forms cognizable via the eye—agreeable, pleasing, charming, endearing, fostering desire, enticing; 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, fostering desire, enticing. But these are not sensuality. They are called strings of sensuality in the discipline of the noble ones.

The passion for one's resolves is a person's sensuality,
not the beautiful sensual pleasures
found in the world.

The passion for one's intentions is a person's sensuality.
The beauties remain as they are in the world,
while the wise, in this regard,
subdue their desire. — *AN 6:63*

§ 30. "Even though a disciple of the noble ones has clearly seen as it actually is with right discernment that sensuality is of much stress, much despair, & greater drawbacks, still—if he has not attained a rapture & pleasure apart from sensuality, apart from unskillful mental qualities, or something more peaceful than that—he can be tempted by sensuality. But when he has clearly seen with right discernment as it has come to be that sensuality is of much stress, much despair, & greater drawbacks, and he has attained a rapture & pleasure apart from sensuality, apart from unskillful mental qualities, or something more peaceful than that, he cannot be tempted by sensuality." — *MN 14*

§ 31. On one occasion the Blessed One was staying near Āḷavi on a spread of leaves by a cattle track in a *siṃsapā* forest. Then Hatthaka of Āḷavi, out roaming & rambling for exercise, saw the Blessed One sitting on a spread of leaves by the cattle track in the *siṃsapā* forest. On seeing him, he went to him 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 hope the Blessed One has slept in ease."

"Yes, young man. I have slept in ease. Of those in the world who sleep in ease, I am one."

"But cold, lord, is the winter night. The 'Between-the-Eights' [a period in February] is a time of snowfall. Hard is the ground trampled by cattle hooves. Thin is the spread of leaves. Sparse are the leaves in the trees. Thin are your ochre robes. And cold blows the Veramba wind. Yet still the Blessed One says, 'Yes, young man. I have slept in ease. Of those in the world who sleep in ease, I am one.'"

"In that case, young man, I will question you in return. Answer as you see fit. Now, what do you think: Suppose a householder or householder's son has a house with a gabled roof, plastered inside & out, draft-free, with close-

fitting door & windows shut against the wind. Inside he has a horse-hair couch spread with a long-fleeced coverlet, a white wool coverlet, an embroidered coverlet, a rug of kadali-deer hide, with a canopy above, & red cushions on either side. And there a lamp would be burning, and his four wives, with their many charms, would be attending to him. Would he sleep in ease, or not? Or how does this strike you?"

"Yes, lord, he would sleep in ease. Of those in the world who sleep in ease, he would be one."

"But what do you think, young man. Might there arise in that householder or householder's son any bodily fevers or fevers of mind born of passion so that—burned with those passion-born fevers—he would sleep miserably?"

"Yes, lord."

"As for those passion-born fevers—burned with which the householder or householder's son would sleep miserably—that passion has been abandoned by the Tathāgata, its root destroyed, made like a palmyra stump, deprived of the conditions of existence, not destined for future arising. Therefore he sleeps in ease.

[Similarly with aversion and delusion.]

"Always, always,
he sleeps in ease:
the brāhman 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." — AN 3:35

§ 32. "There is the case where a monk, reflecting appropriately, uses the robe simply to counteract cold, to counteract heat, to counteract the touch of flies, mosquitoes, wind, sun, & reptiles; simply for the purpose of covering the parts of the body that cause shame.

"Reflecting appropriately, he uses alms 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, 'Thus will I destroy old feelings [of hunger] and not create new feelings [from overeating]. I will maintain myself, be blameless, & live in comfort.'

"Reflecting appropriately, he uses lodging simply to counteract cold, to counteract heat, to counteract the touch of flies, mosquitoes, wind, sun, & reptiles; simply for protection from the inclemencies of weather and for the enjoyment of seclusion.

“Reflecting appropriately, he uses medicinal requisites that are used for curing the sick simply to counteract any pains of illness that have arisen and for maximum freedom from disease.” — MN 2

IV. CALM

§ 33. How inconstant are fabricated things!
 Their nature: to arise & pass away.
 They disband as they are arising.
 Their total stilling is bliss. — DN 16

Endurance

§ 34. I have heard that on one occasion the Blessed One was staying near Rājagaha at the Maddakucchi Deer Reserve. Now at that time his foot had been pierced by a stone sliver [after Devadatta had tried to kill him by rolling a boulder down a hillside]. 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. — SN 4:13

§ 35. "Once, monks, in this same Sāvattī, there was a lady of a household named Vedehikā. This good report about Lady Vedehikā had circulated: 'Lady Vedehikā is gentle. Lady Vedehikā is even-tempered. Lady Vedehikā is calm.' Now, Lady Vedehikā had a slave named Kāli who was diligent, deft, & neat in her work. The thought occurred to Kāli the slave: 'This good report about my Lady Vedehikā has circulated: "Lady Vedehikā is even-tempered. Lady Vedehikā is gentle. Lady Vedehikā is calm." Now, is anger present in my lady without showing, or is it absent? Or is it just because I'm diligent, deft, & neat in my work that the anger present in my lady doesn't show? Why don't I test her?'

"So Kāli the slave got up after daybreak. Then Lady Vedehikā said to her: 'Hey, Kāli!'

"Yes, madam?'

"Why did you get up after daybreak?'

"No reason, madam.'

"No reason, you wicked slave, and yet you get up after daybreak?'

Angered & displeased, she scowled.

Then the thought occurred to Kāli the slave: 'Anger *is* present in my lady without showing, and not absent. And it's just because I'm diligent, deft, & neat in my work that the anger present in my lady doesn't show. Why don't I test her some more?'

"So Kāli the slave got up later in the day. Then Lady Vedehikā said to her: 'Hey, Kāli!'

"Yes, madam?'

"Why did you get up later in the day?'

"No reason, madam.'

"No reason, you wicked slave, and yet you get up later in the day?'

Angered & displeased, she grumbled.

Then the thought occurred to Kāli the slave: 'Anger *is* present in my lady without showing, and not absent. And it's just because I'm diligent, deft, & neat in my work that the anger present in my lady doesn't show. Why don't I test her some more?'

"So Kāli the slave got up even later in the day. Then Lady Vedehikā said to her: 'Hey, Kāli!'

"Yes, madam?'

"Why did you get up even later in the day?'

"No reason, madam.'

"No reason, you wicked slave, and yet you get up even later in the day?'

Angered & displeased, she grabbed hold of a rolling pin and gave her a whack over the head, cutting it open.

Then Kāli the slave, with blood streaming from her cut-open head, went and denounced her mistress to the neighbors: 'See, ladies, the gentle one's

handiwork? See the even-tempered one's handiwork? See the calm one's handiwork? How could she, angered & displeased with her only slave for getting up after daybreak, grab hold of a rolling pin and give her a whack over the head, cutting it open?"

After that this evil report about Lady Vedehikā circulated: 'Lady Vedehikā is vicious. Lady Vedehikā is foul-tempered. Lady Vedehikā is violent.'

"In the same way, monks, a monk may be ever so gentle, ever so even-tempered, ever so calm, as long as he is not touched by disagreeable aspects of speech. But it is only when disagreeable aspects of speech touch him that he can truly be known as gentle, even-tempered, & calm. I don't call a monk easy to admonish if he is easy to admonish and makes himself easy to admonish only by reason of robes, almsfood, lodging, & medicinal requisites for curing the sick. Why is that? Because if he doesn't get robes, almsfood, lodging, & medicinal requisites for curing the sick, then he isn't easy to admonish and doesn't make himself easy to admonish. But if a monk is easy to admonish and makes himself easy to admonish purely out of esteem for the Dhamma, respect for the Dhamma, reverence for the Dhamma, then I call him easy to admonish. Thus, monks, you should train yourselves: 'We will be easy to admonish and make ourselves easy to admonish purely out of esteem for the Dhamma, respect for the Dhamma, reverence for the Dhamma.' That's how you should train yourselves.

"Monks, there are these five aspects of speech by which others may address you: timely or untimely, true or false, affectionate or harsh, beneficial or unbeneficial, with a mind of good-will or with inner hate. Others may address you in a timely way or an untimely way. They may address you with what is true or what is false. They may address you in an affectionate way or a harsh way. They may address you in a beneficial way or an unbeneficial way. They may address you with a mind of good-will or with inner hate. In any event, you should train yourselves: 'Our minds will be unaffected and we will say no evil words. We will remain sympathetic to that person's welfare, with a mind of good will, and with no inner hate. We will keep pervading him with an awareness imbued with good will and, beginning with him, we will keep pervading the entire world with an awareness imbued with good will—abundant, expansive, immeasurable, free from hostility, free from ill will.' That's how you should train yourselves.

"Suppose that a man were to come along carrying a hoe & a basket, saying, 'I will make this great earth be without earth.' He would dig here & there, scatter soil here & there, spit here & there, urinate here & there, saying, 'Be without earth. Be without earth.' Now, what do you think—would he make this great earth be without earth?"

"No, lord. Why is that? Because this great earth is deep & enormous. It can't easily be made to be without earth. The man would reap only a share of weariness & disappointment."

"In the same way, monks, there are these five aspects of speech by which others may address you: timely or untimely, true or false, affectionate or harsh, beneficial or unbeneficial, with a mind of good-will or with inner hate. Others may address you in a timely way or an untimely way. They may address you with what is true or what is false. They may address you in an affectionate way or a harsh way. They may address you in a beneficial way or an unbeneficial way. They may address you with a mind of good-will or with inner hate. In any event, you should train yourselves: 'Our minds will be unaffected and we will say no evil words. We will remain sympathetic to that person's welfare, with a mind of good will, and with no inner hate. We will keep pervading him with an awareness imbued with good will and,

beginning with him, we will keep pervading the entire world with an awareness imbued with good will equal to the great earth—abundant, expansive, immeasurable, free from hostility, free from ill will.’ That’s how you should train yourselves....

“Monks, even if bandits were to carve you up savagely, limb by limb, with a two-handed saw, he among you who let his heart get angered even at that would not be doing my bidding. Even then you should train yourselves: ‘Our minds will be unaffected and we will say no evil words. We will remain sympathetic, with a mind of good will, and with no inner hate. We will keep pervading these people with an awareness imbued with good will and, beginning with them, we will keep pervading the entire world with an awareness imbued with good will—abundant, expansive, immeasurable, free from hostility, free from ill will.’ That’s how you should train yourselves.

“Monks, if you attend constantly to this admonition on the simile of the saw, do you see any aspects of speech, slight or gross, that you could not endure?”

“No, lord.”

“Then attend constantly to this admonition on the simile of the saw. That will be for your long-term welfare & happiness.” — *MN 21*

§ 36. “And what are the fermentations to be abandoned by tolerating? There is the case where a monk, reflecting appropriately, endures. He tolerates cold, heat, hunger, & thirst; the touch of flies, mosquitoes, wind, sun, & reptiles; ill-spoken, unwelcome words & bodily feelings that, when they arise, are painful, racking, sharp, piercing, disagreeable, displeasing, & menacing to life. The fermentations, vexation, or fever that would arise if he were not to tolerate these things do not arise for him when he tolerates them. These are called the fermentations to be abandoned by tolerating.

“And what are the fermentations to be abandoned by avoiding? There is the case where a monk, reflecting appropriately, avoids a wild elephant, a wild horse, a wild bull, a wild dog, a snake, a stump, a bramble patch, a chasm, a cliff, a cesspool, an open sewer. Reflecting appropriately, he avoids sitting in the sorts of unsuitable seats, wandering to the sorts of unsuitable habitats, and associating with the sorts of bad friends that would make his knowledgeable friends in the holy life suspect him of evil conduct. The fermentations, vexation, or fever that would arise if he were not to avoid these things do not arise for him when he avoids them. These are called the fermentations to be abandoned by avoiding.

“And what are the fermentations to be abandoned by destroying? There is the case where a monk, reflecting appropriately, does not tolerate an arisen thought of sensuality. He abandons it, destroys it, dispels it, & wipes it out of existence.

“Reflecting appropriately, he does not tolerate an arisen thought of ill will... an arisen thought of cruelty...”

“Reflecting appropriately, he does not tolerate arisen evil, unskillful mental qualities. He abandons them, destroys them, dispels them, & wipes them out of existence. The fermentations, vexation, or fever that would arise if he were not to destroy these things do not arise for him when he destroys them. These are called the fermentations to be abandoned by destroying.” — *MN 2*

§ 37. The important factors for anyone practicing to gain release from all stress and suffering are persistence and endurance, for every kind of goodness has to have obstacles blocking the way, always ready to destroy it. Even when the Buddha himself was putting his effort into the practice, the armies of Māra were right on his heels, pestering him all the time, trying to keep him from attaining his goal. Still, he never wavered, never got discouraged, never abandoned his efforts. He took his perfection of truthfulness and used it to drive away the forces of Māra until they were utterly defeated. He was willing to put his life on the line in order to do battle with the forces of Māra, his heart solid, unflinching, and brave. This was why he was eventually able to attain a glorious victory, realizing the unexcelled right self-awakening, becoming our Buddha. This is an important example that he as our “father” set for his descendants to see and to take to heart.

So when we’re intent on training our minds to be good, there are bound to be obstacles—the forces of Māra—just as in the case of the Buddha, but we simply have to slash our way through them, using our powers of endurance and the full extent of our abilities to fight them off. It’s only normal that when we have something good, there are going to be other people who want what we’ve got, in the same way that sweet fruit tends to have worms and insects trying to eat it. A person walking along the road empty-handed doesn’t attract anyone’s attention, but if we’re carrying something of value, there are sure to be others who will want what we’ve got, and will even try to steal it from us. If we’re carrying food in our hand, dogs or cats will try to snatch it. But if we don’t have any food in our hand, they won’t pounce on us.

It’s the same way when we practice. When we do good, we have to contend with obstacles if we want to succeed. We have to make our hearts hard and solid like diamond or rock, which don’t burn when you try to set them on fire. Even when they get smashed, the pieces maintain their hardness as diamond and rock. The Buddha made his heart so hard and solid that when his body was cremated, parts of it didn’t burn and still remain as relics for us to admire even today. This was through the power of his purity and truthfulness.

So we should set our minds on purifying our bodies and minds until they become so truly elemental that fire won’t burn them, just like the Buddha’s relics. Even if we can’t get them to be that hard, at least we should make them like tamarind seeds in their casing: even if insects bore through the casing and eat all the flesh of the tamarind fruit, they can’t do anything to the seeds, which maintain their hardness as always. — *Ajaan Lee: Starting Out Small*

Equanimity

§ 38. “Now what is worldly equanimity? There are these five strings of sensuality. Which five? Forms cognizable via the eye—agreeable, pleasing, charming, endearing, fostering desire, enticing; 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, fostering desire, enticing. Any equanimity arising in connection with these five strings of sensuality is called worldly equanimity.

“And what is unworldly equanimity? There is the case where, with the abandoning of pleasure & pain—as with the earlier disappearance of joys &

distresses—one enters & remains in the fourth jhāna: purity of equanimity & mindfulness, neither pleasure nor pain. This is called unworldly equanimity.”

“And what is an even more unworldly unworldly equanimity? Any equanimity that arises in one free from mental fermentation while he/she is reflecting on his/her mind that is released from greed, released from aversion, released from delusion: this is called an even more unworldly unworldly equanimity.” — *SN 36:31*

§ 39. “There is equanimity coming from multiplicity, dependent on multiplicity; and there is equanimity coming from singleness, dependent on singleness.

“And what is equanimity coming from multiplicity, dependent on multiplicity? There is equanimity with regard to forms, equanimity with regard to sounds...smells...tastes...tactile sensations [& ideas: this word appears in one of the recensions]. This is equanimity coming from multiplicity, dependent on multiplicity.

“And what is equanimity coming from singleness, dependent on singleness? There is equanimity dependent on the sphere of the infinitude of space, equanimity dependent on the sphere of the infinitude of consciousness...dependent on the sphere of nothingness...dependent on the sphere of neither perception nor non-perception. This is equanimity coming from singleness, dependent on singleness.

“By depending & relying on equanimity coming from singleness, dependent on singleness, abandon & transcend equanimity coming from multiplicity, dependent on multiplicity. Such is its abandoning, such its transcending.

“By depending & relying on non-fashioning, abandon & transcend the equanimity coming from singleness, dependent on singleness. Such is its abandoning, such its transcending.” — *MN 137*

§ 40. To purify the heart, we have to disentangle our attachments to self, to the body, to mental phenomena, and to all the objects that come passing in through the senses. Keep the mind intent on concentration. Keep it one at all times. Don't let it become two, three, four, five, etc., because once you've made the mind one, it's easy to make it zero. Simply cut off the little 'head' and pull the two ends together. But if you let the mind become many, it's a long, difficult job to make it zero.

And another thing: If you put the zero after other numbers, they become ten, twenty, thirty, forty, fifty, hundreds, thousands, on to infinity. But if you put the zero's first, even if you have ten thousand of them, they don't count. So it is with the heart: Once we've turned it from one to zero and put the zero first, then other people can praise or criticize us as they like but it won't count. Good doesn't count, bad doesn't count. This is something that can't be written, can't be read, that we can understand only for ourselves. — *Ajaan Lee: Inner Strength*