



*Merit*

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THE BUDDHA'S  
STRATEGIES  
FOR HAPPINESS

a study guide  
prepared by

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## *Introduction*

OF ALL THE CONCEPTS central to Buddhism, merit (*puñña*) is one of the least known and least appreciated in the West. This is perhaps because the pursuit of merit seems to be a lowly practice, focused on getting and “selfing,” whereas higher Buddhist practice focuses on letting go, particularly of any sense of self. Because we in the West often feel pressed for time, we don’t want to waste our time on lowly practices, and instead want to go straight to the higher levels. Yet the Buddha repeatedly warns that the higher levels cannot be practiced in a stable manner unless they develop on a strong foundation. The pursuit of merit provides that foundation. To paraphrase a modern Buddhist psychologist, one cannot wisely let go of one’s sense of self until one has developed a wise sense of self. The pursuit of merit is the Buddhist way to develop a wise sense of self.

The following readings show how this is done. They begin with a section on basic wisdom, which shows how the questions that lead ultimately to the wisdom of letting go first focus on things to hold onto: the skillful traits that, on the beginning level, provide a secure place to stand while letting go of character traits that are obviously harmful. Buddhist wisdom famously focuses on perceptions of inconstancy, stress, and not-self, but the application of that wisdom grows out of the pursuit of what is relatively constant and pleasant, and requires a mature sense of self: able to plan for the future, to anticipate dangers, to sacrifice short-term happiness for long-term happiness, to consider the needs of others, to substitute harmless pleasures for harmful ones, and to develop a strong sense of self-reliance in the pursuit of a happiness that is wise, pure, and compassionate.

The section on merit then sets out in general terms the types of meritorious activities that conduce to that happiness, focusing primarily on three: giving, virtue, and meditation. The next three sections focus on the ways in which each of these activities can be pursued so as to produce the most happiness. For instance, the section on giving discusses how the happiness of generosity can be maximized by wisely choosing the proper motivation for giving a gift, a proper gift, and a proper recipient for one’s gift. The section on virtue shows how to learn from one’s past mistakes without succumbing to debilitating feelings of guilt. The section on meditation discusses not only how the development of good will—the

meditative practice most often cited in conjunction with merit—can lead to happiness both now and in the future, but also how it can help minimize the bad results of one’s past unwise actions.

All three of these forms of merit conduce to the highest form of merit: the realization of stream-entry—entering the “stream” to nibbana—the first glimpse of the deathless. Thus the penultimate section of this study guide focuses on the happiness and well-being that derive from this attainment.

For all the rewards of meritorious action, however, the concluding section serves as a reminder that the pursuit of happiness ultimately leads beyond the pursuit of merit. In fact, this book is planned as part of a two-part series covering the Buddhist approach to the pursuit of happiness, with the second part discussing the perceptions of inconstancy, stress, and not-self as the next stage in approaching the deathless happiness attained with arahantship. Still, it would be a mistake to view the two stages as radically separate. In the course of developing a wise sense of self in the pursuit of merit, one is already learning how to let go of unwise ways of “selfing” as one learns to overcome stinginess, apathy, and hard-heartedness through the development of giving, virtue, and good will. The teachings on the three perceptions simply carry this same process of “de-selfing” for the sake of an even truer happiness to a higher pitch.

## *Basic Wisdom*

“There are some cases in which a person overcome with pain, his mind exhausted, grieves, mourns, laments, beats his breast, & becomes bewildered. Or one overcome with pain, his mind exhausted, comes to search outside, ‘Who knows a way or two to stop this pain?’ I tell you, monks, that stress results either in bewilderment or in search.” — [AN 6:63](#).

“This is the way leading to discernment: when visiting a contemplative or brahman, to ask: ‘What is skillful, venerable sir? What is unskillful? What is blameworthy? What is blameless? What should be cultivated? What should not be cultivated? What, when I do it, will be for my long-term harm & suffering? Or what, when I do it, will be for my long-term welfare & happiness?’” — [MN I35](#).

“What do you think, Rahula: What is a mirror for?”

“For reflection, sir.”

“In the same way, Rahula, bodily actions, verbal actions, & mental actions are to be done with repeated reflection.

“Whenever you want to perform a bodily action, you should reflect on it: ‘This bodily action I want to perform—would it lead to self-affliction, to the affliction of others, or to both? Is it an unskillful bodily action, with painful consequences, painful results?’ If, on reflection, you know that it would lead to self-affliction, to the affliction of others, or to both; it would be an unskillful bodily action with painful consequences, painful results, then any bodily action of that sort is absolutely unfit for you to do. But if on reflection you know that it would not cause affliction... it would be a skillful bodily action with happy consequences, happy results, then any bodily action of that sort is fit for you to do.

“While you are performing a bodily action, you should reflect on it: ‘This bodily action I am doing—is it leading to self-affliction, to the affliction of others, or to both? Is it an unskillful bodily action, with painful consequences, painful results?’ If, on reflection, you know that it is leading to self-affliction, to affliction of others, or both... you should give it up. But if on reflection you know that it is not... you may continue with it.

“Having performed a bodily action, you should reflect on it.... If, on reflection, you know that it led to self-affliction, to the affliction of others, or to both; it was an unskillful bodily action with painful consequences, painful results, then you should confess it, reveal it, lay it open to the Teacher or to a knowledgeable companion in the holy life. Having confessed it... you should exercise restraint in the future. But if on reflection you know that it did not lead to affliction... it was a skillful bodily action with happy consequences, happy results, then you should stay mentally refreshed & joyful, training day & night in skillful mental qualities.

[Similarly with verbal and mental actions, except for the last paragraph under mental action:]

“Having performed a mental action, you should reflect on it.... If, on reflection, you know that it led to self-affliction, to the affliction of others, or to both; it was an unskillful mental action with painful consequences, painful results, then you should feel distressed, ashamed, & disgusted with it. Feeling distressed... you should exercise restraint in the future. But if on reflection you know that it did not lead to affliction... it was a skillful mental action with happy consequences, happy results, then you should stay mentally refreshed & joyful, training day & night in skillful mental qualities.

“Rahula, all those contemplatives & brahmans in the course of the past who purified their bodily actions, verbal actions, & mental actions, did it through repeated reflection on their bodily actions, verbal actions, & mental actions in just this way.

“All those contemplatives & brahmans in the course of the future who will purify their bodily actions, verbal actions, & mental actions, will do it through repeated reflection on their bodily actions, verbal actions, & mental actions in just this way.

“All those contemplatives & brahmans at present who purify their bodily actions, verbal actions, & mental actions, do it through repeated reflection on their bodily actions, verbal actions, & mental actions in just this way.

“Thus, Rahula, you should train yourself: ‘I will purify my bodily actions through repeated reflection. I will purify my verbal actions through repeated reflection. I will purify my mental actions through repeated reflection.’ That’s how you should train yourself.” — [MN 61](#)

“As for the course of action that is unpleasant to do but that, when done, leads to what is profitable, it’s 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's 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](#)

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](#)

Your own self is  
your own mainstay,  
for who else could your mainstay be?  
With you yourself well-trained  
you obtain the mainstay  
hard to obtain. — [Dhp 160](#)



Your own self is  
your own mainstay.  
Your own self is  
your own guide.  
And so you should  
watch over yourself—  
as a trader, a fine steed. — *Dhp 380*

Evil is done  
by oneself,  
by oneself is one defiled.  
Evil is left undone  
by oneself,  
by oneself is one cleansed.  
Purity & impurity are one's own doing.  
No one purifies another.  
No other purifies one. — *Dhp 165*

You yourself should reprove yourself,  
should examine yourself.  
As a self-guarded monk  
with guarded self,  
mindful, you dwell at ease. — *Dhp 379*

“And what is the self as a governing principle? There is the case where a monk, having gone to a wilderness, to the foot of a tree, or to an empty dwelling, reflects on this: ‘It’s not for the sake of robes that I have gone forth from the home life into homelessness; it’s not for the sake of almsfood, for the sake of lodgings, or for the sake of this or that state of [future] becoming that I have gone forth from the home life into homelessness. Simply that I am beset by birth, aging, & death; by sorrows, lamentations, pains, distresses, & despairs; beset by stress, overcome with stress, [and I hope,] “Perhaps the end of this entire mass of suffering & stress might be known!” Now, if I were to seek the same sort of sensual pleasures that I

abandoned in going forth from home into homelessness—or a worse sort—that would not be fitting for me.’ So he reflects on this: ‘My persistence will be aroused & not lax; my mindfulness established & not confused; my body calm & not aroused; my mind centered & unified.’ Having made himself his governing principle, he abandons what is unskillful, develops what is skillful, abandons what is blameworthy, develops what is unblameworthy, and looks after himself in a pure way. This is called the self as a governing principle.” — [AN 3:40](#)

Ven. Ananda: “‘This body comes into being through conceit. And yet it is by relying on conceit that conceit is to be abandoned.’ Thus it was said. And in reference to what was it said? There is the case, sister, where a monk hears, ‘The monk named such-and-such, they say, through the ending of the effluents, has entered & remains in the effluent-free awareness-release & discernment-release, having directly known & realized them for himself right in the here & now.’ The thought occurs to him, ‘The monk named such-&-such, they say, through the ending of the effluents, has entered & remains in the effluent-free awareness-release & discernment-release, having directly known & realized them for himself right in the here & now. Then why not me?’ Then, at a later time, he abandons conceit, having relied on conceit.” — [AN 4:159](#)

Gentle sages,  
constantly restrained in body,  
go to the unwavering state  
where, having gone,  
there’s no grief. — [Dhp 225](#)

They awaken, always wide awake:  
Gotama’s disciples  
whose mindfulness, both day & night,  
is constantly immersed  
in the Buddha...the Dhamma...the Sangha.

They awaken, always wide awake:  
Gotama’s disciples  
whose mindfulness, both day & night,

is constantly immersed  
in the body. — [\*Dhp 296–299\*](#)

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\*](#)

“These four types of action have been understood, realized, & made known by me. Which four? There is action that is dark with dark result; action that is bright with bright result; action that is dark & bright with dark & bright result; and action that is neither dark nor bright with neither dark nor bright result, leading to the ending of action.

“And what is action that is dark with dark result? There is the case where a certain person fabricates an injurious bodily fabrication ... an injurious verbal fabrication... an injurious mental fabrication ... He rearises in an injurious world where he is touched by injurious contacts... He experiences feelings that are exclusively painful, like those of the beings in hell. This is called action that is dark with dark result.

“And what is action that is bright with bright result? There is the case where a certain person fabricates an uninjurious bodily fabrication... an uninjurious verbal fabrication... an uninjurious mental fabrication.... He rearises in an uninjurious world where he is touched by uninjurious contacts.... He experiences feelings that are exclusively pleasant, like those of the Ever-radiant Devas. This is called kamma that is bright with bright result.

“And what is action that is dark & bright with dark & bright result? There is the case where a certain person fabricates a bodily fabrication that is injurious & uninjurious... a verbal fabrication that is injurious & uninjurious... a mental fabrication that is injurious & uninjurious.... He rearises in an injurious &

uninjuriously world where he is touched by injurious & uninjurious contacts.... He experiences injurious & uninjurious feelings, pleasure mingled with pain, like those of human beings, some devas, and some beings in the lower realms. This is called kamma that is dark & bright with dark & bright result.

“And what is action that is neither dark nor bright with neither dark nor bright result, leading to the ending of action? The intention right there to abandon this action that is dark with dark result ... this action that is bright with bright result... this action that is dark & bright with dark & bright result. This is called action that is neither dark nor bright with neither dark nor bright result, leading to the ending of action.” — [AN4:233](#)

[A related discourse repeats most of the above, defining dark action with dark result with the following example: “There is the case of a certain person who kills living beings, steals what is not given, engages in sexual misconduct, tells lies, and drinks fermented & distilled liquors that are the basis for heedlessness,” and bright action with bright result with the following example: “There is the case of a certain person who abstains from killing living beings, abstains from stealing what is not given, abstains from engaging in sexual misconduct, abstains from telling lies, and abstains from drinking fermented & distilled liquors that are the basis for heedlessness.”] — [AN4:235](#)

“And what is action that is neither dark nor bright with neither dark nor bright result, leading to the ending of action? Right view, right resolve, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness, right concentration.” — [AN4:237](#)

Then the Blessed One gave a graduated talk to Upali the householder, i.e., a talk on giving, a talk on virtue, a talk on heaven; he proclaimed the drawbacks of, degradation in, & defilement in sensuality, and the rewards of renunciation. Then—when he knew that Upali the householder was of ready mind, malleable mind, unhindered mind, exultant mind, confident mind—he proclaimed to him the distinctive teaching of the Awakened Ones: stress, origination, cessation, path. Just as a white cloth with stains removed would rightly take dye, in the same way there arose to Upali the householder, in that very seat, the dustless, stainless Dhamma eye: Whatever is subject to origination is all subject to cessation. Then—having seen the Dhamma, having reached the Dhamma, known the Dhamma, gained a foothold in the Dhamma, having crossed over & beyond doubt, having

had no more questioning—Upali the householder gained fearlessness and was independent of others with regard to the Teacher’s message. — [MN 56](#)

For a person giving,  
merit increases.  
For one self-restraining,  
no animosity is amassed.  
One who is skillful  
leaves evil behind  
and  
—from the ending of passion,  
aversion,  
delusion—  
is totally unbound. — [Ud 8:5](#)

## *Puñña: Merit*

A blessing: friends when the need arises.  
A blessing: contentment with whatever there is.  
Merit at the ending of life is a blessing.  
A blessing: the abandoning of all suffering  
& stress.

A blessing in the world:  
reverence to your mother.  
A blessing: reverence to your father as well.  
A blessing in the world:  
reverence to a contemplative.  
A blessing: reverence for a brahmin, too.

A blessing into old age is virtue.  
A blessing: conviction established.  
A blessing: discernment attained.  
The non-doing of evil things is  
a blessing. — *Dhp* 331–333.

*This was said by the Blessed One, said by the Arahant, so I have heard: “Monks, don’t be afraid of acts of merit. This is another way of saying what is blissful, desirable, pleasing, endearing, charming—i.e., acts of merit. I am cognizant that, having long performed meritorious deeds, I long experienced desirable, pleasing, endearing, charming results. Having developed a mind of good will for seven years, then for seven aeons of contraction & expansion I didn’t return to this world. Whenever the aeon was contracting, I went to the realm of Streaming Radiance. Whenever the aeon was expanding, I reappeared in an empty Brahma-abode. There I was the Great Brahman, the Unconquered Conqueror, All-seeing, & Wielder of Power. Then for thirty-six times I was Sakka, ruler of the devas. For many hundreds of times I was a king, a wheel-turning emperor, a righteous king of Dhamma, conqueror of the four corners of the earth, maintaining stable control over the countryside, endowed with the seven treasures\*—to say nothing*

of the times I was a local king. The thought occurred to me: ‘Of what action of mine is this the fruit, of what action the result, that I now have such great power & might?’ Then the thought occurred to me: ‘This is the fruit of my three [types of] action, the result of three types of action, that I now have such great power & might: i.e., generosity, self-control, & restraint.’”

Train in acts of merit  
that bring long-lasting bliss—  
develop generosity,  
a life in tune,  
a mind of good will.  
Developing these  
three things  
that bring about bliss,  
the wise reappear  
in a world of bliss  
unalloyed.

\* N O T E : The seven treasures are a divine wheel, an ideal jewel, an ideal elephant, an ideal horse, an ideal wife, an ideal treasurer, an ideal counselor.

— *Iti 22*

Here he rejoices  
he rejoices hereafter.  
In both worlds  
the merit-maker rejoices.  
He rejoices, is jubilant,  
seeing the purity  
of his deeds.

Here he delights  
he delights hereafter.  
In both worlds  
the merit-maker delights.  
He delights at the thought,  
‘I’ve made merit.’  
Having gone to a good destination,

he delights  
all the more. — Dhp 16, 18

Be quick in doing  
what's admirable.  
Restrain your mind  
from what's evil.  
When you're slow  
in making merit,  
evil delights the mind. — Dhp 116

Even the evil  
meet with good fortune  
as long as their evil  
has yet to mature.  
But when it's matured  
that's when they meet  
with evil.

Even the good  
meet with bad fortune  
as long as their good  
has yet to mature.  
But when it's matured  
that's when they meet  
with good fortune.

Don't be heedless of evil  
(‘It won't come to *me*').  
A water jar fills,  
even with water  
falling in drops.  
With evil—even if  
bit  
by  
bit,



habitually—  
the fool fills himself full.  
Don't be heedless of merit  
(‘It won't come to *me*').  
A water jar fills,  
even with water  
falling in drops.  
With merit—even if  
bit  
by  
bit,  
habitually—  
the enlightened one fills himself full. — [\*Dhp 119–122\*](#)

*This was said by the Blessed One, said by the Arahant, so I have heard:* “There are these three grounds for meritorious activity. Which three? The ground for meritorious activity made of generosity, the ground for meritorious activity made of virtue, and the ground for meritorious activity made of development [meditation]. These are the three grounds for meritorious activity.”

Train in acts of merit  
that bring long-lasting bliss—  
develop generosity,  
a life in tune,  
a mind of good will.

Developing these  
three things  
that bring about bliss,  
the wise reappear  
in a world of bliss  
unalloyed. — [\*Iti 60\*](#)

*This was said by the Blessed One, said by the Arahant, so I have heard:* “I have seen beings who—endowed with bodily good conduct, verbal good conduct, & mental good conduct; who did not revile noble ones, who held right views and

undertook actions under the influence of right views—at the break-up of the body, after death, have re-appeared in a good destination, a heavenly world. It is not from having heard this from another contemplative or brahman that I tell you that I have seen beings who—endowed with bodily good conduct, verbal good conduct, & mental good conduct; who did not revile noble ones, who held right views and undertook actions under the influence of right views—at the break-up of the body, after death, have re-appeared in a good destination, a heavenly world. It's from having known it myself, seen it myself, realized it myself that I tell you that I have seen beings who—endowed with bodily good conduct, verbal good conduct, & mental good conduct; who did not revile noble ones, who held right views and undertook actions under the influence of right views—at the break-up of the body, after death, have re-appeared in a good destination, a heavenly world. ”

With mind rightly directed,  
speaking right speech,  
doing right deeds with the body:  
a person here of much learning,  
a doer of merit  
here in this life so short,  
at the break-up of the body,  
discerning, reappears in heaven. — *Iti 71*

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.” — [SN 3:4](#)

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, venerable sir, 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. — [SN 3:17](#)

## *Dana: Giving*

“Without abandoning these five qualities, one is incapable of entering & remaining in the first jhana... second jhana... the third jhana... the fourth jhana; incapable of realizing the fruit of stream-entry... the fruit of once-returning... the fruit of non-returning... arahantship. Which five? Stinginess as to one’s monastery [lodgings] ... one’s family [of supporters]... one’s gains... one’s status, and stinginess as to the Dhamma.” — *AN 5:256–257*

Conquer stinginess with a gift. — *Dhp 223*.

“And what is the treasure of generosity? There is the case of a disciple of the noble ones, his awareness cleansed of the stain of stinginess, living at home, freely generous, openhanded, delighting in being magnanimous, responsive to requests, delighting in the distribution of alms. This is called the treasure of generosity.” — *AN 7:6*

Then another deva exclaimed in the Blessed One’s presence:

“Giving is good, dear sir!  
Even when there’s next to nothing,  
giving is good.  
Giving with conviction is good!  
The giving of what’s righteously gained  
is good!  
And further:  
Giving with discretion is good!  
  
It’s praised by the One Well-gone:  
giving with discretion,  
to those worthy of offerings  
here in the world of the living.  
What’s given to them bears great fruit  
like seeds sown in a good field.” — *SN 1:33*

“These are the five rewards of generosity: One is dear and appealing to people at large, one is admired by good people, one’s good name is spread about, one does not stray from the rightful duties of the householder, and with the break-up of the body at death, one reappears in a good destination, a heavenly world.”

— *AN 5:35*

“If beings knew, as I know, the results of giving and sharing, they would not eat without have given, nor would the stain of miserliness overcome their minds. Even if it were their last bite, their last mouthful, they would not eat without having shared, if there were someone to receive their gift. But because beings do not know, as I know, the results of giving and sharing, they eat without have given. The stain of miserliness overcomes their minds.” — *Iti 26*

Asibandhakaputta the headman said to the Blessed One, “Venerable sir, doesn’t the Blessed One in many ways praise kindness, protection, & sympathy for families?”

“Yes, headman, the Tathagata in many ways praises kindness, protection, & sympathy for families.”

“Then how, venerable sir, is the Blessed One, together with a large community of monks, wandering on tour around Nalanda 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 aeons, 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.”

— *SN 42:9*

What the miser fears,  
that keeps him from giving,  
is the very danger that comes  
when he doesn’t give. — *SN 1:32*

No misers go  
to the world of the devas.  
Those who don't praise giving  
are fools.  
The enlightened  
express their approval for giving  
and so find ease  
in the world beyond. — [\*Dhp\* 177](#)

“In giving a meal, the donor gives five things to the recipient. Which five? He/she gives life, beauty, happiness, strength, & quick-wittedness. Having given life, he/she has a share in long life, either human or divine. Having given beauty, he/she has a share in beauty, either human or divine. Having given happiness, he/she has a share in happiness, either human or divine. Having given strength, he/she has a share in strength, either human or divine. Having given quick-wittedness, he/she has a share in quick-wittedness, either human or divine. In giving a meal, the donor gives these five things to the recipient.”

The enlightened person giving life, strength,  
beauty, quick-wittedness—  
the wise person, a giver of happiness—  
attains happiness himself.  
Having given life, strength, beauty,  
happiness, & quick-wittedness,  
he has long life & status  
wherever he arises. — [\*AN\* 5:37](#)

Then a certain devata, 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,  
you should salvage [your 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  
you leave the body  
together with your possessions.  
Knowing this, the intelligent man  
enjoys possessions & gives.

Having enjoyed & given  
in line with your means,  
uncensured you go  
to the heavenly state. — [\*SN I:41\*](#)

Now on that occasion Princess Sumana—with an entourage of 500 ladies-in-waiting riding on 500 carriages—went to where the Buddha was staying. On arrival, having bowed down, she sat to one side. As she was sitting there, she said to the Blessed One, “Suppose there were two disciples of the Blessed One, equal in conviction, virtue, and discernment, but one was a giver of alms and the other was not. At the break-up of the body, after death, they would reappear in a good destination, a heavenly world. Having become devas, would there be any distinction, any difference between the two?”

“Yes, there would,” said the Blessed One. “The one who was a giver of alms, on becoming a deva, would surpass the other in five areas: in divine life span, divine beauty, divine pleasure, divine status, and divine power...”

“And if they were to fall from there and reappear in this world: Having become human beings, would there be any distinction, any difference between the two?”



“Yes, there would,” said the Blessed One. “The one who was a giver of alms, on becoming a human being, would surpass the other in five areas: in human life span, human beauty, human pleasure, human status, and human power....”

“And if they were to go forth from home into the homeless life of a monk: Having gone forth, would there be any distinction, any difference between the two?”

“Yes, there would,” said the Blessed One. “The one who was a giver of alms, on going forth, would surpass the other in five areas: He would often be asked to make use of robes; it would be rare that he wouldn’t be asked. He would often be asked to take food... to make use of shelter... to make use of medicine; it would be rare that he wouldn’t be asked. His companions in the holy life would often treat him with pleasing actions... pleasing words... pleasing thoughts... and present him with pleasing gifts, and rarely with unpleasing....”

“And if both were to attain arahantship, would there be any distinction, any difference between their attainments of arahantship?”

“In that case, I tell you that there would be no difference between the two as to their release.”

“It’s awesome, lord, and astounding. Just this is reason enough to give alms, to make merit, in that it benefits one as a deva, as a human being, and as a monk.”

— [AN 5:31](#)

A person stashes a fund away,  
deep underground, at the water line:  
“When a need or duty arises,  
this will provide for my needs,  
for my release if I’m denounced by the king,  
molested by thieves,  
in case of debt, famine, or accidents.”  
With aims like this  
in the world  
a reserve fund is stashed away.

But no matter how well it’s stored,  
deep underground, at the water line,  
it won’t all always serve one’s need.

The fund gets shifted from its place,  
or one's memory gets confused;  
or—unseen—  
water serpents make off with it,  
spirits steal it,  
or hateful heirs run off with it.  
When one's merit's ended,  
it's totally destroyed.

But when a man or woman  
has laid aside a well-stored fund  
of generosity, virtue,  
restraint, & self-control,  
with regard to a shrine,  
the Sangha,  
a fine individual,  
guests,  
mother, father,  
or elder sibling:  
That's a well-stored fund.  
It can't be wrested away.  
It follows you along.  
When, having left this world,  
for wherever you must go,  
you take it with you.  
This fund is not held in common with others,  
& cannot be stolen by thieves.

So, enlightened, you should make merit,  
the fund that will follow you along.  
This is the fund  
that gives all they want  
to beings human, divine. — *Khp 8*

Then Janussonin the 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, “Master Gotama, you know that we brahmins give gifts, make offerings, [saying,] ‘May this gift accrue to our dead relatives. May our dead relatives partake of this gift.’ Now, Master Gotama, does that gift accrue to our dead relatives? Do our dead relatives partake of that gift?”

“In possible places, brahman, it accrues to them, but not in impossible places.”

“And which, Master Gotama, are the possible places? Which are the impossible places?”

“There is the case, brahman, where a certain person takes life, takes what is not given, engages in sexual misconduct, engages in false speech, engages in divisive speech, engages in harsh speech, engages in idle chatter, is covetous, bears ill will, and has wrong views. With the break-up of the body, after death, he reappears in hell. He lives there, he remains there, by means of whatever is the food of hell-beings. This is an impossible place for that gift to accrue to one staying there.

“Then there is the case where a certain person takes life, takes what is not given, engages in sexual misconduct, engages in false speech, engages in divisive speech, engages in harsh speech, engages in idle chatter, is covetous, bears ill will, and has wrong views. With the break-up of the body, after death, he reappears in the animal womb. He lives there, he remains there, by means of whatever is the food of common animals. This, too, is an impossible place for that gift to accrue to one staying there.

“Then there is the case where a certain person refrains from taking life, refrains from taking what is not given, refrains from sexual misconduct, refrains from false speech, refrains from divisive speech, refrains from harsh speech, refrains from idle chatter, is not covetous, bears no ill will, and has right views. With the break-up of the body, after death, he reappears in the company of human beings. He lives there, he remains there, by means of whatever is the food of human beings. This, too, is an impossible place for that gift to accrue to one staying there.

“Then there is the case where a certain person refrains from taking life, refrains from taking what is not given, refrains from sexual misconduct, refrains from false speech, refrains from divisive speech, refrains from harsh speech, refrains from idle chatter, is not covetous, bears no ill will, and has right views. With the break-up of the body, after death, he reappears in the company of the

devas. He lives there, he remains there, by means of whatever is the food of devas. This, too, is an impossible place for that gift to accrue to one staying there.

“Then there is the case where a certain person takes life, takes what is not given, engages in sexual misconduct, engages in false speech, engages in divisive speech, engages in harsh speech, engages in idle chatter, is covetous, bears ill will, and has wrong views. With the break-up of the body, after death, he reappears in the realms of the hungry shades. He lives there, he remains there, by means of whatever is the food of hungry shades. He lives there, he remains that, by means of whatever his friends or relatives give in dedication to him. This is the possible place for that gift to accrue to one staying there.

“But, Master Gotama, if that dead relative does not reappear in that possible place, who partakes of that gift?”

“Other dead relatives, brahman, who have reappeared in that possible place.”

“But, Master Gotama, if that dead relative does not reappear in that possible place, and other dead relatives have not reappeared in that possible place, then who partakes of that gift?”

“It’s impossible, brahman, it cannot be, that over this long time that possible place is devoid of one’s dead relatives.<sup>1</sup> But at any rate, the donor does not go without reward.

“Does Master Gotama describe any preparation for the impossible places?”

“Brahman, I do describe a preparation for the impossible places. There is the case where a certain person takes life, takes what is not given, engages in sexual misconduct, engages in false speech, engages in divisive speech, engages in harsh speech, engages in idle chatter, is covetous, bears ill will, and has wrong views. But he gives food, drink, cloth, vehicles, garlands, scents, creams, bed, lodging, & lamps to contemplatives & brahmans. With the break-up of the body, after death, he reappears in the company of elephants. There he receives food, drink, flowers, & various ornaments. It’s because he took life, took what is not given, engaged in sexual misconduct, engaged in false speech, engaged in divisive speech, engaged in harsh speech, engaged in idle chatter, was covetous, bore ill will, and had wrong views that he reappears in the company of elephants. But it’s because he gave food, drink, cloth, vehicles, garlands, scents, creams, bed, lodging, & lamps to contemplatives & brahmans that he receives food, drink, flowers, & various ornaments.

“Then there is the case where a certain person takes life... has wrong views. But he gives food... lamps to contemplatives & brahmans. With the break-up of the body, after death, he reappears in the company of horses... in the company of cattle... in the company of poultry. There he receives food, drink, flowers, & various ornaments.<sup>2</sup> It’s because he took life... and had wrong views that he reappears in the company of poultry. But it’s because he gave food, drink... & lamps to contemplatives & brahmans that he receives food, drink, flowers, & various ornaments.

“Then there is the case where a certain person refrains from taking life, refrains from taking what is not given, refrains from sexual misconduct, refrains from false speech, refrains from divisive speech, refrains from harsh speech, refrains from idle chatter, is not covetous, bears no ill will, and has right views. And he gives food, drink, cloth, vehicles, garlands, scents, creams, bed, lodging, & lamps to contemplatives & brahmans. With the break-up of the body, after death, he reappears in the company of human beings. There he experiences the five strings of human sensuality [delightful sights, sounds, smells, tastes, tactile sensations]. It’s because he refrained from taking what is not given, refrained from sexual misconduct, refrained from false speech, refrained from divisive speech, refrained from harsh speech, refrained from idle chatter, was not covetous, bore no ill will, and had right views that he reappears in the company of human beings. And it’s because he gave food, drink, cloth, vehicles, garlands, scents, creams, bed, lodging, & lamps to contemplatives & brahmans that he experiences the five strings of human sensuality.

“Then there is the case where a certain person refrains from taking life... and has right views. And he gives food, drink, cloth, vehicles, garlands, scents, creams, bed, lodging, & lamps to contemplatives & brahmans. With the break-up of the body, after death, he reappears in the company of devas. There he experiences the five strings of divine sensuality [delightful sights, sounds, smells, tastes, tactile sensations]. It’s because he refrained from taking what is not given... and had right views that he reappears in the company of devas. And it’s because he gave food, drink, cloth, vehicles, garlands, scents, creams, bed, lodging, & lamps to contemplatives & brahmans that he experiences the five strings of divine sensuality. But at any rate, brahman, the donor does not go without reward.”

“It’s amazing, Master Gotama, it’s astounding, how it’s enough to make one want to give a gift, enough to make one want to make an offering, where the

donor does not go without reward.”

“That’s the way it is, brahman. That’s the way it is. The donor does not go without reward.”

“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 community 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 Vinaya counts as one’s relatives all those related back through seven generations past one’s grandparents—in other words, all those descended from one’s great-great-great-great-great-great-grandparents.

2. Apparently, “ornaments” for poultry would consist of brilliant plumage. Similarly, “ornaments” for elephants, horses, & cattle might consist of attractive markings.

— *AN 10:177*

Then Ven. Sariputta, together with the lay followers from Campa, 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: “Might there be the case where 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?”

“Yes, Sariputta, there would....”

“Why, lord...?”

“Sariputta, there is the case where a person gives a gift seeking his own profit, with a mind attached [to the reward], seeking to store up for himself [with the thought], ‘I’ll enjoy this after death.’ He gives his gift—food, drink, clothing, a vehicle; a garland, perfume, & ointment; bedding, shelter, & a lamp—to a contemplative or brahman. What do you think, Sariputta? Might a person give such a gift as this?”

“Yes, lord.”

“Having given this gift seeking his own profit—with a mind attached [to the reward], seeking to store up for himself, [with the thought], ‘I’ll enjoy this after death’—on the break-up of the body, after death, he reappears in the company of the Four Great Kings. Then, having exhausted that action, that power, that status, that sovereignty, he is a returner, coming back to this world.

“Then there is the case of a person who gives a gift not seeking his own profit, not with a mind attached [to the reward], not seeking to store up for himself, nor [with the thought], ‘I’ll enjoy this after death.’ Instead, he gives a gift with the thought, ‘Giving is good.’ He gives his gift—food, drink, clothing, a vehicle; a garland, perfume, & ointment; bedding, shelter, & a lamp—to a contemplative or a brahman. What do you think, Sariputta? Might a person give such a gift as this?”

“Yes, lord.”

“Having given this gift with the thought, ‘Giving is good,’ on the break-up of the body, after death, he reappears in the company of the devas of the Thirty-three. Then, having exhausted that action, that power, that status, that sovereignty, he is a returner, coming back to this world.

“Or, instead of thinking, ‘Giving is good,’ he gives a gift 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’ ... on the break-up of the body, after death, he reappears in the company of the devas of the Hours. Then, having exhausted that action, that power, that status, that sovereignty, he is a returner, coming back to this world.

“Or, instead... he gives a gift 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’ ... on the break-up of the body, after death, he reappears in the company of the Contented devas. Then, having exhausted that action, that power, that status, that sovereignty, he is a returner, coming back to this world.

“Or, instead... he gives a gift with the thought, ‘Just as there were the great sacrifices of the sages of the past—Atthaka, Vamaka, Vamadeva, Vessamitta, Yamataggi, Angirasa, Bharadvaja, Vasettha, Kassapa, & Bhagu—in the same way will this be my distribution of gifts’ ... on the break-up of the body, after death, he reappears in the company of the devas who delight in creation. Then, having exhausted that action, that power, that status, that sovereignty, he is a returner, coming back to this world.

“Or, instead... he gives a gift with the thought, ‘When this gift of mine is given, it makes the mind serene. Gratification & joy arise’ ... on the break-up of the body, after death, he reappears in the company of the devas who have power over the creations of others. Then, having exhausted that action, that power, that status, that sovereignty, he is a returner, coming back to this world.

“Or, instead of thinking, ‘When this gift of mine is given, it makes the mind serene. Gratification & joy arise,’ he gives a gift with the thought, ‘This is an ornament for the mind, a support for the mind.’ He gives his gift—food, drink, clothing, a vehicle; a garland, perfume, & ointment; bedding, shelter, & a lamp—to a contemplative or a brahman. What do you think, Sariputta? Might a person give such a gift as this?”

“Yes, lord.”

“Having given this, not seeking his own profit, not with a mind attached [to the reward], not seeking to store up for himself, 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—Atthaka, Vamaka, Vamadeva, Vessamitta, Yamadaggi, Angirasa, Bharadvaja, Vasettha, 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,’

—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, he reappears in the company of Brahma’s Retinue. Then, having exhausted that action, that power, that status, that sovereignty, he is a non-returner. He does not come back to this world.

“This, Sariputta, 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](#)



“These five are a person of integrity’s gifts. Which five? 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](#)

“There are these five seasonable gifts. Which five? One gives to a newcomer. One gives to one going away. One gives to one who is ill. One gives in time of famine. One sets the first fruits of field & orchard in front of those who are virtuous. These are the five seasonable gifts.”

In the proper season they give—  
those with discernment,  
responsive, free from stinginess.  
Having been given in proper season,  
with hearts inspired by the Noble Ones  
—straightened, Such—

their offering bears an abundance.  
Those who rejoice in that gift  
or give assistance,  
they, too, have a share of the merit,  
and the offering isn't depleted by that.  
So, with an unhesitant mind,  
one should give where the gift bears great fruit.  
Merit is what establishes  
living beings in the next life. — [AN 5:36](#)

So Prince Payasi established a donation for brahmans, contemplatives, indigents, hoboos, paupers, & beggars. And in that donation he gave food of this sort: unhusked rice porridge together with pickle brine. And he gave rough cloth with knotted fringe. Now a brahman youth named Uttara was the superintendent of that donation. As he was giving the donation he dedicated it in this way: “Through this donation may I be associated with Prince Payasi in this life, but not in the next.” Prince Payasi heard that Uttara, when giving the donation, dedicated it in this way: “Through this donation may I be associated with Prince Payasi in this life, but not in the next.” So, having summoned him, he said to him, “Is it true, dear boy, that when giving the donation you dedicated in this way: ‘Through this donation may I be associated with Prince Payasi in this life, but not in the next?’”

“Yes, sir.”

“But why do you dedicate it in this way...? Don't we who wish to gain merit hope for the fruit of our donation?”

“But, sir, the food in the donation is like this: unhusked rice porridge together with pickle brine. You wouldn't want to touch it with your foot, much less eat it. And the rough cloth with knotted fringe: You wouldn't want to touch it with your foot, much less wear it. You are dear & charming to us, so how can we connect what is dear & charming with what is not charming?”

“Then in that case, my dear boy, establish [a donation with] the sort of food that I eat and the sort of cloth that I wear.”

Responding, “Yes, sir,” Uttara the brahman youth established [a donation with] the sort of food that Prince Payasi ate and the sort of cloth that Prince Payasi wore. Then Prince Payasi—having given the donation inattentively, having given the donation not with his own hand, having given the donation

thoughtlessly, having given the donation as if he were throwing it away—on the break-up of the body, after death, reappeared in the company of the devas of the Four Great Kings in the empty Serisaka palace. But Uttara, the brahman youth who was the superintendent of the donation—having given the donation attentively, having given the donation with his own hand, having given the donation thoughtfully, having given the donation not as if he were throwing it away—on the break-up of the body, after death, reappeared in a good destination, a heavenly world, in the company of the [higher] devas of the Thirty-three. — *DN 23*

“And how is a donation endowed with six factors? There is the case where the donor has three factors and the recipients have three. And which are the donor’s three factors. There is the case where the donor, before giving, is happy. While giving his/her mind is clear & confident. After giving, he/she is gratified. There are the donor’s three factors. And which are the recipients’ three factors? There is the case where the recipients are free from passion or are practicing for the subduing of passion; they are free of aversion or are practicing for the subduing of aversion; they are free of delusion or are practicing for the subduing of delusion. These are the recipients’ three factors.... Now, it is not easy to take the measure of the merit of a donation thus endowed with six factors as ‘just this much bonanza of merit, bonanza of skillfulness, nourishment of bliss, heavenly, ripening in bliss leading to heaven, leading to what is agreeable, pleasing, charming, happy, & beneficial.’ It is reckoned simply as a great mass of merit that is unreckonable, immeasurable.

“Just as it is not easy to take the measure of the water in the great ocean as ‘just this many pails of water or hundreds of pails of water or thousands of pails of water or hundreds of thousands of pails of water.’ It is reckoned simply as a great mass of water that is unreckonable, 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 bonanza of merit, bonanza of skillfulness, nourishment of bliss, heavenly, ripening in bliss leading to heaven, leading to what is agreeable, pleasing, charming, happy, & beneficial.’ It is reckoned simply as a great mass of merit that is unreckonable, immeasurable.” — [\*AN 6:37\*](#)

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 Savatthi. 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’.... 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 money-lender seven times in this very same Savatthi. 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.” — [SN 3:20](#)

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, I have heard that ‘Gotama the contemplative says this: “Only to me should a gift be given, and not to others. Only to my disciples should a gift be given, and not to others. Only what is given to me bears great fruit, and not what is given to others. Only what is given to my disciples bears great fruit, and not what is given to the disciples of others.”’ Now those who report this: Are they reporting the Master Gotama’s actual words, are they not misrepresenting him with what is unfactual, are they answering in line with the Dhamma, so that no one whose thinking is in line with the Dhamma will have grounds for criticizing them? For we don’t want to misrepresent the Master Gotama.”

“Vaccha, whoever says this: ‘Gotama the contemplative says this: “Only to me should a gift be given.... Only what is given to my disciples bears great fruit, and not what is given to the disciples of others,” is not reporting my actual words, is misrepresenting me with what is unfactual & untrue.

“Vaccha, whoever prevents another from giving a gift creates three obstructions, three impediments. Which three? He creates an obstruction to the merit of the giver, an obstruction to the recipient’s gains, and prior to that he undermines and harms his own self. Whoever prevents another from giving a gift creates these three obstructions, these three impediments.

“I tell you, Vaccha, even if a person throws the rinsings of a bowl or a cup into a village pool or pond, thinking, ‘May whatever animals live here feed on this,’ that would be a source of merit, to say nothing of what is given to human beings. But I do say that what is given to a virtuous person is of great fruit, and not so much what is given to an unvirtuous person.” — [AN 3:58](#)

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. 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-peaked,  
lightning-garlanded,  
thundering cloud,  
raining on the fertile earth,  
fills the plateaus & gullies,  
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." — [\*SN 3:24\*](#).

*This was said by the Blessed One, said by the Arahant, so I have heard: "There are these three supreme objects of confidence. Which three?*

"Among whatever beings there may be—footless, two-footed, four-footed, many footed; with form or formless; percipient, non-percipient, neither percipient nor non-percipient—the Tathagata, worthy & rightly self-awakened, is considered supreme. Those who have confidence in the Awakened One have confidence in what is supreme; and for those with confidence in the supreme, supreme is the result.

"Among whatever qualities there may be, fabricated or unfabricated, dispassion—the subduing of intoxication, the elimination of thirst, the uprooting of attachment, the breaking of the round, the destruction of craving, dispassion, cessation, the realization of Unbinding—is considered supreme. Those who have confidence in the quality of dispassion have confidence in what is supreme; and for those with confidence in the supreme, supreme is the result.

"Among whatever fabricated qualities there may be, the noble eightfold path—right view, right resolve, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness, right concentration—is considered supreme. Those who have confidence in the quality of the noble path have confidence in what is supreme; and for those with confidence in the supreme, supreme is the result.

"Among whatever communities or groups there may be, the Sangha of the Tathagata's disciples is considered supreme—i.e., the four [groups of noble disciples] when taken as pairs, the eight when taken as persons. Those who have confidence in the Sangha have confidence in what is supreme; and for those with confidence in the supreme, supreme will be the result.

"These, monks, are the three supreme objects of confidence."

With  
confidence,  
realizing the supreme Dhamma  
to be supreme,



confidence in the supreme Buddha,  
unsurpassed  
in deserving offerings;  
confidence in the supreme Dhamma,  
the stilling of dispassion,  
bliss;  
confidence in the supreme Sangha,  
unsurpassed  
as a field of merit;  
having given gifts to the supreme,  
one develops supreme merit,  
supreme long life & beauty,  
status, honor,  
bliss, & strength.  
Having given to the supreme,  
the wise person, centered  
in supreme Dhamma,  
whether becoming a divine or human being,  
rejoices,  
having attained the supreme. — *Iti 90*

*This was said by the Blessed One, said by the Arahant, so I have heard: “There are these two kinds of gifts: a gift of material things & a gift of the Dhamma. Of the two, this is supreme: a gift of the Dhamma. There are these two kinds of sharing: sharing of material things & sharing of the Dhamma. Of the two, this is supreme: sharing of the Dhamma. There are these two kinds of assistance: assistance with material things & assistance with the Dhamma. Of the two, this is supreme: help with the Dhamma.”*

The gift he describes  
as foremost & unsurpassed,  
the sharing the Blessed One has extolled:  
who—confident in the supreme field of merit,  
wise, discerning—  
wouldn’t give it at appropriate times?  
Both for those who proclaim it  
and those who listen,

confident in the message of the One Well-gone:  
it purifies their foremost benefit—  
those heeding the message  
of the One Well-gone. — [\*Iti 98\*](#)

“It’s not easy to teach the Dhamma to others, Ananda. The Dhamma should be taught to others only when five qualities are established within the person teaching. Which five?

“The Dhamma should be taught with the thought, ‘I will speak step-by-step’ ... ‘I will speak explaining the sequence [of cause & effect]’ ... ‘I will speak out of compassion’ ... ‘I will speak not for the purpose of material reward’ ... ‘I will speak without hurting myself or others.’” — [\*AN 5:159\*](#)

*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’s who’s a giver of everything.  
But the one who teaches the Dhamma  
is a giver of  
the Deathless.” — [\*SN 1:42\*](#)

## *Sila: Virtue*

Irrigators guide the water.  
Fletchers shape the arrow shaft.  
Carpenters shape the wood.  
Those of good practices control  
themselves. — *Dhp 145*

Through initiative, heedfulness,  
restraint, & self-control,  
the wise would make  
an island  
no flood  
can submerge. — *Dhp 25*

“And what is the treasure of virtue? There is the case where a disciple of the noble ones abstains from taking life, abstains from stealing, abstains from sexual misconduct, abstains from lying, abstains from taking intoxicants that cause heedlessness. This, monks, is called the treasure of virtue.” — *AN 7:6*

“Now what is unskillful? Taking life is unskillful, taking what is not given... sexual misconduct... lying... harsh speech... divisive tale-bearing... idle chatter is unskillful. Covetousness... ill will... wrong views are unskillful. These things are termed unskillful.

“And what is skillful? Abstaining from taking life is skillful, abstaining from taking what is not given... from sexual misconduct ... from lying... from harsh speech... from divisive tale-bearing... abstaining from idle chatter is skillful. Lack of covetousness... lack of ill will... right views are skillful. These things are termed skillful.” — *MN 9*

Then King Pasenadi Kosala, descending from the palace, 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 I was together with Queen Mallika in the upper palace. I said to her, ‘Is there anyone more dear to you than yourself?’

“‘No, your majesty,’ she answered. ‘There is no one more dear to me than myself. And what about you, your majesty? Is there anyone more dear to you than yourself?’

“‘No, Mallika. There is no one more dear to me than myself.’”

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

Searching all directions  
with your awareness,  
you find no one dearer  
than yourself.  
In the same way, others  
are fiercely dear to themselves.  
So you shouldn’t hurt others  
if you love yourself. — Ud 5:1

“There is the case where a disciple of the noble ones reflects thus: ‘I love life and don’t love death. I love happiness and abhor pain. If I—loving life and not loving death, loving happiness and abhorring pain—were to be killed, that would be displeasing & disagreeable to me. And if I were to kill another who loves life and doesn’t love death, who loves happiness and abhors pain, that would be displeasing & disagreeable to the other. What is displeasing & disagreeable to me is displeasing & disagreeable to others. How can I inflict on others what is displeasing & disagreeable to me?’ Reflecting in this way, he refrains from taking life, gets others to refrain from taking life, and speaks in praise of refraining from taking life. In this way his bodily behavior is pure in three ways.

“And further, he reflects thus: ‘If someone, by way of theft, were to take from me what I haven’t given, that would be displeasing & disagreeable to me.... If someone were to commit adultery with my wives, that would be displeasing & disagreeable to me.... If someone were to damage my well-being with a lie, that would be displeasing & disagreeable to me.... If someone were to divide me from my friends with divisive speech, that would be displeasing & disagreeable to me.... If someone were to address me with harsh speech, that would be displeasing & disagreeable to me.... If someone were to address me with idle

chatter, that would be displeasing & disagreeable to me. And if I were to address another with idle chatter, that would be displeasing & disagreeable to the other. What is displeasing & disagreeable to me is displeasing & disagreeable to others. How can I inflict on others what is displeasing & disagreeable to me?’ Reflecting in this way, he refrains from idle chatter, gets others to refrain from idle chatter, and speaks in praise of refraining from idle chatter.” — [SN 55:7](#)

“There are these five gifts, five great gifts—original, long-standing, traditional, ancient, unadulterated, unadulterated from the beginning—are not open to suspicion, will never be open to suspicion, and are unfaulted by knowledgeable contemplatives & brahmans. 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....

“Abandoning taking what is not given (stealing), he abstains from taking what is not given....

“Abandoning sexual misconduct, he abstains from sexual misconduct....

“Abandoning lying, he abstains from lying....

“Abandoning the use of intoxicants, he abstains from taking intoxicants. 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 fifth gift, the fifth 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 & brahmans.” — [AN 8:39](#)

Laying aside violence toward all living creatures,  
both the firm & unfirm in the world,  
one should not kill a living being, nor have it killed,  
nor condone killing by others.

Then the disciple should avoid  
consciously (taking) what's not given,  
—anything, anywhere—  
should not have it taken  
nor condone its taking.  
He should avoid all (taking of) what's not given.

The observant person  
should avoid uncelibate behavior  
like a pit of glowing embers.  
But if he's incapable of celibate behavior,  
he should not transgress with the wife of another.

When gone to an audience hall or assembly,  
or one-on-one, he should not tell a lie,  
nor have it told, nor condone it's being told.  
He should avoid every untruth.

Any householder who approves of this Dhamma  
should not take intoxicating drink,  
nor have others drink it, nor condone its being drunk,  
knowing that it ends in madness.  
For from intoxication, fools do evil things  
and get others, heedless, to do them.  
One should avoid this opening to demerit—  
madness, delusion—appealing to fools. — *Sn 2:14.*

“Cleansing with regard to the body, Cunda, is threefold; cleansing with regard to speech is fourfold; and cleansing with regard to the mind, threefold. And how is cleansing with regard to the body threefold? 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 the ungiven property of another, whether in a village or in the wilderness, with thievish intent. Abandoning sexual misconduct, he abstains from sexual 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 cleansing with regard to the body is threefold.

“And how is cleansing with regard to speech fourfold? 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 [i.e., a court proceeding], if he is asked as a witness, ‘Come and 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 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 harsh speech, he abstains from harsh 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, and the Vinaya. He speaks words worth treasuring, seasonable, reasonable, circumscribed, connected with the goal. This is how cleansing with regard to speech is fourfold.

“And how is cleansing with regard to the mind threefold? There is the case where a certain person is not covetous. He does not covet the property of another, thinking, ‘O, if only what belongs to another were mine!’ He is not malevolent at heart or destructive in his resolves. He thinks, ‘May these beings—free from animosity, free from oppression, and free from trouble—look after themselves with ease.’ He has right views and an unperverted outlook. He believes, ‘There is what is given, what is offered, what is sacrificed. There are fruits and results of good and bad actions. There is this world and the next world. There is mother and father. There are spontaneously reborn beings; there are contemplatives & brahmans who, living rightly and practicing rightly, proclaim this world and the next after having directly known and realized it for

themselves.’ This is how cleansing with regard to the mind is threefold.”

— *AN 10:176*

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.” — [SN 3:5](#)

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 trap set out.  
Afterwards it’s bitter for them:  
evil for them  
the result.” — [SN 3:7](#)

*This was said by the Blessed One, said by the Arahant, so I have heard:* “For the person who transgresses in one thing, I tell you, there is no evil deed that is not to be done. Which one thing? This: telling a deliberate lie.”

The person who lies,  
who transgress in this one thing,  
transcending concern for the world beyond:  
there’s no evil

he might not do. — [\*Iti 25\*](#)

“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 deprivation, a bad destination, a lower realm, 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 deprivation, a bad destination, a lower realm, hell. These are the five kinds of loss.

“There are these five ways of being consummate. Which five? Being consummate in terms of relatives, being consummate in terms of wealth, being consummate in terms of freedom from disease, being consummate in terms of virtue, being consummate in terms of views. It’s not by reason of being consummate in terms of relatives, being consummate in terms of wealth, or being consummate in terms of freedom from disease that beings—with the break-up of the body, after death—reappear in a good destination, a heavenly world. It’s by reason of being consummate in virtue and being consummate in terms of views that beings—with the break-up of the body, after death—reappear in a good destination, a heavenly world. These are the five ways of being consummate.”

— [\*AN 5:130\*](#)

“There are these five benefits in being virtuous, in being consummate in virtue. Which five? There is the case where a virtuous person, consummate in virtue, through not being heedless in his affairs amasses a great quantity of wealth.... His good name is spread about.... When approaching an assembly of nobles, brahmans, householders, or contemplatives, he does so unabashed and with assurance.... He dies without becoming delirious.... With the break-up of the body, after death, he reappears in a good destination, a heavenly world. These are the five benefits in being virtuous, in being consummate in virtue.” — [\*DN 16\*](#)

*This was said by the Blessed One, said by the Arahant, so I have heard:* “Aspiring to these three forms of bliss, a wise person should guard his virtue. Which three? [Thinking,] ‘May praise come to me,’ a wise person should guard his virtue. [Thinking,] ‘May wealth come to me,’ a wise person should guard his virtue. [Thinking,] ‘At the break-up of the body, after death, may I reappear in a good

destination, in heaven,' a wise person should guard his virtue. Aspiring to these three forms of bliss, a wise person should guard his virtue."

Intelligent,  
you should guard your virtue,  
aspiring to three forms of bliss:  
praise;  
the obtaining of wealth;  
  
and, after death, rejoicing  
in heaven.

Even if you do no evil  
but seek out one who does,  
you're suspected of evil.  
Your bad reputation  
grows.  
The sort of person you make a friend,  
the sort you seek out,  
that's the sort you yourself become—  
for your living together is of  
that sort.

The one associated with,  
the one who associates,  
the one who's touched,  
the one who touches another  
—like an arrow smeared with poison—  
contaminates the quiver.  
So, fearing contamination, the enlightened  
should not be comrades  
with evil people.

A man who wraps rotting fish  
in a blade of kusa grass  
makes the grass smelly:  
so it is  
if you seek out fools.  
But a man who wraps powdered incense

in the leaf of a tree  
makes the leaf fragrant:  
so it is  
if you seek out  
the enlightened.

So,  
knowing your own outcome  
as like the leaf-wrapper's,  
you shouldn't seek out  
those who aren't good.  
The wise would associate  
with those who are.  
Those who aren't good  
lead you to hell.  
The good help you reach  
a good destination. — *Iti 76*

“And how is one an individual who practices for his own benefit but not for that of others? There is the case where a certain individual himself abstains from the taking of life but doesn't encourage others in undertaking abstinence from the taking of life. He himself abstains from stealing but doesn't encourage others in undertaking abstinence from stealing. He himself abstains from sexual misconduct but doesn't encourage others in undertaking abstinence from sexual misconduct. He himself abstains from lying but doesn't encourage others in undertaking abstinence from lying. He himself abstains from intoxicants that cause heedlessness but doesn't encourage others in undertaking abstinence from intoxicants that cause heedlessness. That's how one is an individual who practices for his own benefit but not for that of others.

“And how is one an individual who practices for the benefit of others but not for his own? There is the case where a certain individual himself doesn't abstain from the taking of life but encourages others in undertaking abstinence from the taking of life. [Similarly with abstaining from stealing, sexual misconduct, lying, & intoxicants that cause heedlessness.] That's how one is an individual who practices for the benefit of others but not for his own.

“And how is one an individual who practices neither for his own benefit nor for that of others? There is the case where a certain individual himself doesn't

abstain from the taking of life and doesn't encourage others in undertaking abstinence from the taking of life. [Similarly with abstaining from stealing, sexual misconduct, lying, & intoxicants that cause heedlessness.] That's how one is an individual who practices neither for his own benefit nor for that of others.

“And how is one an individual who practices for his own benefit and for that of others? There is the case where a certain individual himself abstains from the taking of life and encourages others in undertaking abstinence from the taking of life. He himself abstains from stealing and encourages others in undertaking abstinence from stealing. He himself abstains from sexual misconduct and encourages others in undertaking abstinence from sexual misconduct. He himself abstains from lying and encourages others in undertaking abstinence from lying. He himself abstains from intoxicants that cause heedlessness and encourages others in undertaking abstinence from intoxicants that cause heedlessness. That's how one is an individual who practices for his own benefit and for that of others.”

— [AN4:99](#).

All  
tremble at the rod,  
all  
are fearful of death.  
Drawing the parallel to  
yourself,  
neither kill nor get others to kill.

All  
tremble at the rod,  
all  
hold their life dear.  
Drawing the parallel to  
yourself,  
neither kill nor get others to kill.

Whoever takes a rod  
to harm living beings desiring ease,  
when he himself is looking for ease,  
will meet with no ease after death.  
Whoever doesn't take a rod

to harm living beings desiring ease,  
when he himself is looking for ease,  
will meet with ease after death.

Speak harshly to no one,  
or the words will be thrown  
right back at you.  
Contentious talk is painful,  
for you get struck by rods in return.

If, like a flattened metal pot  
you don't resound,  
you've attained an Unbinding;  
in you there's found  
no contention. — *Dhp 129–134*

Whoever, with a rod,  
harasses an innocent man, unarmed,  
quickly falls into any of ten things:

harsh pains, devastation, a broken body, grave illness, mental  
derangement, trouble with the government, violent slander, relatives lost,  
property dissolved, houses burned down.

At the break-up of the body,  
this one with no discernment  
reappears in  
hell. — *Dhp 137–140*

“There are four kinds of person to be found in the world. Which four? There is the case where a certain person takes life, takes what is not given (steals), engages in sexual misconduct, lies, speaks divisively, speaks harshly, engages in idle chatter; is covetous, malevolent, & holds wrong views. On the break-up of the body, after death, he reappears in deprivation, a bad destination, a lower realm, hell.

“But there is also the case where a certain person takes life... holds wrong views [yet], on the break-up of the body, after death, he reappears in a good

destination, a heavenly world.

“And there is the case where a certain person abstains from taking life, abstains from taking what is not given... is not covetous, not malevolent, & holds right views. On the break-up of the body, after death, he reappears in a good destination, a heavenly world.

“But there is also the case where a certain person abstains from taking life, abstains from taking what is not given... is not covetous, not malevolent, & holds right views [yet], on the break-up of the body, after death, he reappears in deprivation, a bad destination, a lower realm, hell....

“In the case of the person who takes life... [yet] on the break-up of the body, after death, reappears in a good destination, a heavenly world: Either earlier he performed fine kamma that is to be felt as pleasant, or later he performed fine kamma that is to be felt as pleasant, or at the time of death he adopted & carried out right views. Because of that, on the break-up of the body, after death, he reappears in a good destination, a heavenly world. But as for the results of taking life... holding wrong views, he will feel them either right here & now, or later [in this lifetime], or following that....

“In the case of the person who abstains from taking life... but on the break-up of the body, after death, reappears in deprivation, a bad destination, a lower realm, hell: Either earlier he performed evil kamma that is to be felt as painful, or later he performed evil kamma that is to be felt as painful, or at the time of death he adopted & carried out wrong views. Because of that, on the break-up of the body, after death, he reappears in deprivation, a bad destination, a lower realm, hell. But as for the results of abstaining from taking life... holding right views, he will feel them either right here & now, or later [in this lifetime], or following that.”

— [MN 136](#)

“There are, headman, some contemplatives & brahmans who hold a doctrine & view like this: ‘All those who kill living beings experience pain & distress in the here & now. All those who take what is not given... who engage in sexual misconduct... who tell lies experience pain & distress in the here & now.’

“Now there is the case where a certain person is seen garlanded & adorned, freshly bathed & groomed, with hair & beard trimmed, enjoying the sensualities of women as if he were a king. They ask about him: ‘My good man, what has this man done that he has been garlanded & adorned... as if he were a king?’ They answer: ‘My good man, this man attacked the king’s enemy and took his life. The

king, gratified with him, rewarded him. That is why he is garlanded & adorned... as if he were a king.'

"Then there is the case where a certain person is seen bound with a stout rope with his arms pinned tightly against his back, his head shaved bald, marched to a harsh-sounding drum from street to street, crossroads to crossroads, evicted through the south gate, and beheaded to the south of the city. They ask about him: 'My good man, what has this man done that he is bound with a stout rope... and beheaded to the south of the city?' They answer: 'My good man, this man, an enemy of the king, has taken the life of a man or a woman. That is why the rulers, having had him seized, inflicted such a punishment upon him.'

"Now, what do you think, headman: Have you ever seen or heard of such a case?"

"I have seen this, lord, have heard of it, and will hear of it (again in the future)."

"So, headman, when those contemplatives & brahmans who hold a doctrine and view like this say: 'All those who kill living beings experience pain & distress in the here & now,' do they speak truthfully or falsely?" — "Falsely, lord."

"And those who babble empty falsehood: are they moral or immoral?" — "Immoral, lord."

"And those who are immoral and of evil character: are they practicing wrongly or rightly?" — "Wrongly, lord."

"And those who are practicing wrongly: do they hold wrong view or right view?" — "Wrong view, lord."

"And is it proper to place confidence in those who hold wrong view?" — "No, lord."

"Then, headman, there is the case where a certain person is seen garlanded & adorned... as if he were a king. They ask about him: 'My good man, what has this man done that he has been garlanded & adorned... as if he were a king?' They answer: 'My good man, this man attacked the king's enemy and stole a treasure. The king, gratified with him, rewarded him....'

"Then there is the case where a certain person is seen bound with a stout rope... and beheaded to the south of the city. They ask about him: 'My good man, what has this man done that he is bound with a stout rope... and beheaded to the south of the city?' They answer: 'My good man, this man, an enemy of the king, has committed a theft, stealing something from a village or a forest....'



“Then there is the case where a certain person is seen garlanded & adorned... as if he were a king. They ask about him: ‘My good man, what has this man done that he has been garlanded & adorned ... as if he were a king?’ They answer: ‘My good man, this man seduced the wives of the king’s enemy....’

“Then there is the case where a certain person is seen bound with a stout rope... and beheaded to the south of the city. They ask about him: ‘My good man, what has this man done that he is bound with a stout rope... and beheaded to the south of the city?’ They answer: ‘My good man, this man seduced women & girls of good families....’

“Then there is the case where a certain person is seen garlanded & adorned... as if he were a king. They ask about him: ‘My good man, what has this man done that he has been garlanded & adorned ... as if he were a king?’ They answer: ‘My good man, this man made the king laugh with a lie...’

“Then there is the case where a certain person is seen bound with a stout rope... and beheaded to the south of the city. They ask about him: ‘My good man, what has this man done that he is bound with a stout rope... and beheaded to the south of the city?’ They answer: ‘My good man, this man has brought the aims of a householder or a householder’s son to ruin with a lie. That is why the rulers, having had him seized, inflicted such a punishment upon him.’

“Now what do you think, headman: Have you ever seen or heard of such a case?”

“I have seen this, lord, have heard of it, and will hear of it (again in the future).”

“So, headman, when those contemplatives & brahmans who hold a doctrine & view like this, say: ‘All those who tell lies experience pain & distress in the here & now,’ do they speak truthfully or falsely?... Is it proper to place confidence in those who hold wrong view?” — “No, lord.” — *SN 42:13*

“Monks, the taking of life—when indulged in, developed, & pursued—is something that leads to hell, leads to rebirth as a common animal, leads to the realm of the hungry shades. The slightest of all the results coming from the taking of life is that, when one becomes a human being, it leads to a short life span.

“Stealing—when indulged in, developed, & pursued—is something that leads to hell, leads to rebirth as a common animal, leads to the realm of the hungry

shades. The slightest of all the results coming from stealing is that, when one becomes a human being, it leads to the loss of one's wealth.

“Sexual misconduct—when indulged in, developed, & pursued—is something that leads to hell, leads to rebirth as a common animal, leads to the realm of the hungry shades. The slightest of all the results coming from sexual misconduct is that, when one becomes a human being, it leads to rivalry & revenge.

“Telling falsehoods—when indulged in, developed, & pursued—is something that leads to hell, leads to rebirth as a common animal, leads to the realm of the hungry shades. The slightest of all the results coming from telling falsehoods is that, when one becomes a human being, it leads to being falsely accused.

“Divisive tale-bearing—when indulged in, developed, & pursued—is something that leads to hell, leads to rebirth as a common animal, leads to the realm of the hungry shades. The slightest of all the results coming from divisive tale-bearing is that, when one becomes a human being, it leads to the breaking of one's friendships.

“Harsh speech—when indulged in, developed, & pursued—is something that leads to hell, leads to rebirth as a common animal, leads to the realm of the hungry shades. The slightest of all the results coming from harsh speech is that, when one becomes a human being, it leads to unappealing sounds.

“Idle chatter—when indulged in, developed, & pursued—is something that leads to hell, leads to rebirth as a common animal, leads to the realm of the hungry shades. The slightest of all the results coming from idle chatter is that, when one becomes a human being, it leads to words that aren't worth taking to heart.

“The drinking of fermented & distilled liquors—when indulged in, developed, & pursued—is something that leads to hell, leads to rebirth as a common animal, leads to the realm of the hungry shades. The slightest of all the results coming from drinking fermented & distilled liquors is that, when one becomes a human being, it leads to mental derangement.” — [AN 8:40](#)

Then Asibandhakaputta the headman, a disciple of the Niganthas, 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 Nigantha Nataputta teach the Dhamma to his disciples?”

“Nigantha Nataputta teaches the Dhamma to his disciples in this way, lord: ‘All those who take life are destined for the plane of deprivation, are destined for

hell. All those who steal.... All those who indulge in sexual misconduct.... All those who tell lies are destined for the 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 Nigantha Nataputta 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 the plane of deprivation or destined to hell in line with Nigantha Nataputta’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?”

“... the time he spends taking life is less, lord, 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 the plane of deprivation or destined to hell in line with Nigantha Nataputta’s words.”

“What do you think, headman: If a man is one who steals... indulges in sexual misconduct... 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?”

“... the time he spends telling lies is less, lord, 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 the plane of deprivation or destined to hell in line with Nigantha Nataputta’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 the plane of deprivation, are destined for hell. All those who steal.... All those who indulge in sexual misconduct.... All those who tell lies are destined for the 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 the plane of deprivation, are destined for hell.” There are living beings that I have killed. I, too, am destined for the 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 sexual misconduct.... All those who tell lies are destined for the plane of deprivation, are destined for hell.’ There are lies that I have told. I, too, am destined for the 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 Tathagata appears in the world, worthy & rightly self-awakened, consummate in clear knowing & conduct, well-gone, a knower of the cosmos, unexcelled trainer of those to be tamed, teacher of human & divine 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 sexual misconduct, and says, ‘Abstain from indulging in sexual misconduct.’ 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 sexual misconduct... the telling of lies, and says, “Abstain from the telling of lies.” There are lies 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.” — [\*SN 42:8\*](#)

On one occasion the Blessed One was staying near Nalanda in the Pavarika 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 brahmans 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 sexual misconduct; 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 sexual misconduct; 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 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 sexual misconduct; 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 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 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 sexual misconduct; 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 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.” — [SN 42:6](#)

## *Bhavana: Meditation*

*This was said by the Blessed One, said by the Arahant, so I have heard: “All the grounds for making merit leading to spontaneously arising (in heaven) do not equal one-sixteenth of awareness-release through good will. Good will—surpassing them—shines, blazes, & dazzles.*

“Just as the radiance of all the stars does not equal one-sixteenth of the radiance of the moon, as the moon—surpassing them—shines, blazes, & dazzles, even so, all the grounds for making merit leading to spontaneously arising in heaven do not equal one-sixteenth of awareness-release through good will. Good will—surpassing them—shines, blazes, & dazzles.

“Just as in the last month of the rains, in autumn, when the sky is clear & cloudless, the sun, on ascending the sky, overpowers the space immersed in darkness, shines, blazes, & dazzles, even so, all the grounds for making merit leading to spontaneously arising in heaven do not equal one-sixteenth of awareness-release through good will. Good will—surpassing them—shines, blazes, & dazzles.

“Just as in the pre-dawn darkness the morning star shines, blazes, & dazzles, even so, all the grounds for making merit leading to spontaneously arising in heaven do not equal one-sixteenth of awareness-release through good will. Good will—surpassing them—shines, blazes, & dazzles.”

When one develops—mindful—  
good will immeasurable,  
fetters are worn through,  
on seeing the ending  
of acquisitions.

If with uncorrupted mind  
you feel good will  
for even  
one  
being,  
you become skilled from that.  
But a Noble One produces

a mind of sympathy  
for  
all  
beings,  
an abundance of merit.

Kingly seers, who conquered the earth  
swarming with beings,  
went about making sacrifices:  
the horse sacrifice, human sacrifice,  
water rites, soma rites,  
& the “Unobstructed,”  
but these don’t equal  
one sixteenth  
of a well-developed mind of good will—  
as all the constellations don’t,  
one sixteenth  
of the radiance of the moon.

One who  
neither kills  
nor gets others to kill,  
neither conquers,  
nor gets others to conquer,  
with good will for all beings,  
has no hostility with anyone  
at all. — [\*Iti 27\*](#)

“Monks, for one whose release of awareness through good will is cultivated, developed, pursued, given a means of transport, given a grounding, steadied, consolidated, and well-undertaken, eleven benefits can be expected. Which eleven?

“One sleeps easily, wakes easily, dreams no evil dreams. One is dear to human beings, dear to non-human beings. Devas protect one. Neither fire, poison, nor weapons can touch one. One’s mind gains concentration quickly. One’s complexion is bright. One dies unconfused and—if penetrating no higher—is headed for the Brahma worlds.” — [\*AN II:16\*](#)



“Now, what are the roots of unskillful things? Greed is a root of unskillful things, aversion is a root of unskillful things, delusion is a root of unskillful things. These are termed the roots of unskillful things....

“And what are the roots of skillful things? Lack of greed is a root of skillful things, lack of aversion is a root of skillful things, lack of delusion is a root of skillful things. These are termed the roots of skillful things.” — [MN 9](#)

Then the Kalamas of Kesaputta went to the Blessed One. On arrival, some of them bowed down to the Blessed One and sat to one side. Some of them exchanged courteous greetings with him and, after an exchange of friendly greetings & courtesies, sat to one side. Some of them sat to one side having saluted him with their hands palm-to-palm over their hearts. Some of them sat to one side having announced their name & clan. Some of them sat to one side in silence.

As they sat there, the Kalamas of Kesaputta said to the Blessed One, “Lord, there are some contemplatives & brahmans who come to Kesaputta. They expound & glorify their own doctrines, but as for the doctrines of others, they deprecate them, revile them, show contempt for them, & disparage them. And then other contemplatives & brahmans come to Kesaputta. They expound & glorify their own doctrines, but as for the doctrines of others, they deprecate them, revile them, show contempt for them, & disparage them. They leave us absolutely uncertain & in doubt: Which of these venerable contemplatives & brahmans are speaking the truth, and which ones are lying?”

“Of course you are uncertain, Kalamas. Of course you are in doubt. When there are reasons for doubt, uncertainty is born. So in this case, Kalamas, don’t go by reports, by legends, by traditions, by scripture, by logical conjecture, by inference, by analogies, by agreement through pondering views, by probability, or by the thought, ‘This contemplative is our teacher.’ When you know for yourselves that, ‘These qualities are unskillful; these qualities are blameworthy; these qualities are criticized by the wise; these qualities, when undertaken & carried out, lead to harm & to suffering’—then you should abandon them.

“What do you think, Kalamas? When greed arises in a person, does it arise for welfare or for harm?”

“For harm, lord.”

“And this greedy person, overcome by greed, his mind possessed by greed, kills living beings, takes what is not given, goes after another person’s wife, tells

lies, and induces others to do likewise, all of which is for long-term harm & suffering.”

“Yes, lord.”

[Similarly with aversion and delusion.]

“So, as I said, Kalamas: ‘Don’t go by reports, by legends, by traditions, by scripture, by logical conjecture, by inference, by analogies, by agreement through pondering views, by probability, or by the thought, “This contemplative is our teacher.” When you know for yourselves that, “These qualities are unskillful; these qualities are blameworthy; these qualities are criticized by the wise; these qualities, when undertaken & carried out, lead to harm & to suffering”—then you should abandon them.’ Thus was it said. And in reference to this was it said.

“Now, Kalamas, don’t go by reports, by legends, by traditions, by scripture, by logical conjecture, by inference, by analogies, by agreement through pondering views, by probability, or by the thought, ‘This contemplative is our teacher.’ When you know for yourselves that, ‘These qualities are skillful; these qualities are blameless; these qualities are praised by the wise; these qualities, when undertaken & carried out, lead to welfare & to happiness’—then you should enter & remain in them.

“What do you think, Kalamas? When lack of greed arises in a person, does it arise for welfare or for harm?”

“For welfare, lord.”

“And this ungreedy person, not overcome by greed, his mind not possessed by greed, doesn’t kill living beings, take what is not given, go after another person’s wife, tell lies, or induce others to do likewise, all of which is for long-term welfare & happiness.”

“Yes, lord.”

[Similarly with lack of aversion and lack of delusion.]

“So, as I said, Kalamas: ‘Don’t go by reports, by legends, by traditions, by scripture, by logical conjecture, by inference, by analogies, by agreement through pondering views, by probability, or by the thought, “This contemplative is our teacher.” When you know for yourselves that, “These qualities are skillful; these qualities are blameless; these qualities are praised by the wise; these qualities, when undertaken & carried out, lead to welfare & to happiness”—then you should enter & remain in them.’ Thus was it said. And in reference to this was it said.

“Now, Kalamas, one who is a disciple of the noble ones—thus devoid of greed, devoid of ill will, undeluded, alert, & resolute—keeps pervading the first direction [the east]—as well as the second direction, the third, & the fourth—with an awareness imbued with good will. Thus he keeps pervading above, below, & all around, everywhere & in every respect the all-encompassing world with an awareness imbued with good will: abundant, expansive, immeasurable, free from hostility, free from ill will.

“He keeps pervading the first direction—as well as the second direction, the third, & the fourth—with an awareness imbued with compassion. Thus he keeps pervading above, below, & all around, everywhere & in every respect the all-encompassing world with an awareness imbued with compassion: abundant, expansive, immeasurable, free from hostility, free from ill will.

“He keeps pervading the first direction—as well as the second direction, the third, & the fourth—with an awareness imbued with empathetic joy. Thus he keeps pervading above, below, & all around, everywhere & in every respect the all-encompassing world with an awareness imbued with empathetic joy: abundant, expansive, immeasurable, free from hostility, free from ill will.

“He keeps pervading the first direction—as well as the second direction, the third, & the fourth—with an awareness imbued with equanimity. Thus he keeps pervading above, below, & all around, everywhere & in every respect the all-encompassing world with an awareness imbued with equanimity: abundant, expansive, immeasurable, free from hostility, free from ill will.

“Now, Kalamas, one who is a disciple of the noble ones—his mind thus free from hostility, free from ill will, undefiled, & pure—acquires four assurances in the here-&-now:

“‘If there is a world after death, if there is the fruit of actions rightly & wrongly done, then this is the basis by which, with the break-up of the body, after death, I will reappear in a good destination, a heavenly world.’ This is the first assurance he acquires.

“‘But if there is no world after death, if there is no fruit of actions rightly & wrongly done, then here in the present life I look after myself with ease—free from hostility, free from ill will, free from trouble.’ This is the second assurance he acquires.

“‘If evil is done through acting, still I have willed no evil for anyone. Having done no evil action, from where will suffering touch me?’ This is the third assurance he acquires.

“‘But if no evil is done through acting, then I can assume myself pure in both respects.’ This is the fourth assurance he acquires.

“One who is a disciple of the noble ones—his mind thus free from hostility, free from ill will, undefiled, & pure—acquires these four assurances in the here-&-now.” — [AN 3:66](#)

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, just now in Savatthi a certain monk died after having been bitten by a snake.”

“Then it’s certain, monks, that that monk didn’t suffuse the four royal snake lineages with a mind of good will. For if he had suffused the four royal snake lineages with a mind of good will, he would not have died after having been bitten by a snake. Which four? The Virupakkha royal snake lineage, the Erapatha royal snake lineage, the Chabyaputta royal snake lineage, the Dark Gotamaka royal snake lineage. It’s certain that that monk didn’t suffuse these four royal snake lineages with a mind of good will. For if he had suffused these four royal snake lineages with a mind of good will, he would not have died after having been bitten by a snake. I allow you, monks, to suffuse these four royal snake lineages with a mind of good will for the sake of self-protection, self-guarding, self-preservation.”

I have good will for the Virupakkhas,  
good will for the Erapathas,  
good will for the Chabyaputtas,  
good will for the Dark Gotamakas.

I have good will for footless beings,  
good will for two-footed beings,  
good will for four-footed beings,  
good will for many-footed beings.

May footless beings do me no harm.  
May two-footed beings do me no harm.  
May four-footed beings do me no harm.  
May many-footed beings do me no harm.

May all creatures,

all breathing things,  
all beings  
—each & every one—  
meet with good fortune.  
May none of them come to any evil.

Immeasurable is the Buddha,  
immeasurable the Dhamma,  
immeasurable the Sangha.  
There is a measure to creeping things:  
snakes, scorpions, centipedes,  
spiders, lizards, & rats.  
I have made this safeguard,  
I have made this protection.  
May the beings depart.  
I pay homage  
to the Blessed One,  
homage  
to the seven  
rightly self-awakened ones. — [AN 4:67](#)

“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 all-encompassing 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 all-encompassing 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."

"Suppose that a man were to come along carrying lac, yellow orpiment, indigo, or crimson, saying, 'I will draw pictures in space, I will make pictures appear.' Now, what do you think—would he draw pictures in space & make pictures appear?"

"No, lord. Why is that? Because space is formless & featureless. It's not easy to draw pictures there and to make them appear. 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.... 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 all-encompassing world with an awareness imbued with good will equal to space—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 burning grass torch and saying, 'With this burning grass torch I will heat up the river Ganges and make it

boil.’ Now, what do you think—would he, with that burning grass torch, heat up the river Ganges and make it boil?”

“No, lord. Why is that? Because the river Ganges is deep & enormous. It’s not easy to heat it up and make it boil with a burning grass torch. 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.... 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 all-encompassing world with an awareness imbued with good will equal to the river Ganges—abundant, expansive, immeasurable, free from hostility, free from ill will.’ That’s how you should train yourselves.

“Suppose there were a catskin bag—beaten, well-beaten, beaten through & through, soft, silky, free of rustling & crackling—and a man were to come along carrying a stick or shard and saying, ‘With this stick or shard I will take this catskin bag—beaten, well-beaten, beaten through & through, soft, silky, free of rustling & crackling—and I will make it rustle & crackle.’ Now, what do you think—would he, with that stick or shard, take that catskin bag—beaten, well-beaten, beaten through & through, soft, silky, free of rustling & crackling—and make it rustle & crackle?”

“No, lord. Why is that? Because the catskin bag is beaten, well-beaten, beaten through & through, soft, silky, free of rustling & crackling. It’s not easy to make it rustle & crackle with a stick or shard. 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.... 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 all-encompassing world with an awareness imbued with good will equal to a catskin bag—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 into pieces with a two-handled 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 all-encompassing 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](#)

This is to be done by one skilled in aims  
appreciating the state of peace:  
Be capable, upright, & straightforward,  
easy to instruct, gentle, & not conceited,  
content & easy to support,  
with few duties, living lightly,  
with peaceful faculties, masterful,  
modest, & no greed for supporters.

Do not do the slightest thing  
that the wise would later censure.

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 irritation  
wish for another to suffer.

As a mother would risk her life  
to protect her child, her only child,  
even so should one cultivate  
an immeasurable heart  
with regard to all beings.

With good will for the entire cosmos,  
cultivate an immeasurable heart:  
Above, below, & all around,  
unobstructed, without hostility or hate.

Whether standing, walking,  
sitting, or lying down,  
as long as one is alert,  
one should be resolved on this mindfulness.  
This is called a sublime abiding  
here & now.

Not taken with views,  
but virtuous & consummate in vision,  
having subdued desire for sensual pleasures,  
one never again  
will lie in the womb. — *Khp 9*

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 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.

"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 pursuing [the practice], through developing it, through devoting oneself to 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." — [SN 47:19](#)

"Wise & mindful, you should develop immeasurable concentration [i.e., concentration based on immeasurable good will, compassion, empathetic joy, or equanimity]. When, wise & mindful, one has developed immeasurable concentration, five realizations arise right within oneself. Which five?

"The realization arises right within oneself that 'This concentration is blissful in the present and will result in bliss in the future.'

"The realization arises right within oneself that 'This concentration is noble & not connected with the baits of the flesh.'

"The realization arises right within oneself that 'This concentration is not obtained by base people.'

"The realization arises right within oneself that 'This concentration is peaceful, exquisite, the acquiring of serenity, the attainment of unity, not kept in

place by the fabrications of forceful restraint.’

“The realization arises right within oneself that ‘I enter into this concentration mindfully, and mindfully I emerge from it.’

“Wise & mindful, you should develop immeasurable concentration. When, wise & mindful, one has developed immeasurable concentration, these five realizations arise right within oneself.” — [AN 5:27](#)

“Monks, for one whose awareness-release through good will is cultivated, developed, pursued, given a means of transport, given a grounding, steadied, consolidated, and well-undertaken, eleven benefits can be expected. Which eleven?

“One sleeps easily, wakes easily, dreams no evil dreams. One is dear to human beings, dear to non-human beings. The devas protect one. Neither fire, poison, nor weapons can touch one. One’s mind gains concentration quickly. One’s complexion is bright. One dies unconfused and—if penetrating no higher—is headed for the Brahma worlds.

“These are the eleven benefits that can be expected for one whose awareness-release through good will is cultivated, developed, pursued, given a means of transport, given a grounding, steadied, consolidated, and well-undertaken.”  
— [AN II:16](#)

“Having abandoned the taking of life, he [the disciple of the noble ones] refrains from taking life... he refrains from stealing... he refrains from sexual misconduct... he refrains from lies... he refrains from divisive speech... he refrains from harsh speech... he refrains from idle chatter. Having abandoned covetousness, he becomes uncovetous. Having abandoned malevolence & anger, he becomes one with a mind of no malevolence. Having abandoned wrong views, he becomes one who has right views.

“That disciple of the noble ones, headman—thus devoid of covetousness, devoid of malevolence, unbewildered, alert, mindful—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, he keeps pervading the all-encompassing cosmos with an awareness imbued with good will—abundant, expansive, immeasurable, without hostility, without malevolence. Just as a strong conch-trumpet blower can notify the four directions without any difficulty, in the same way, when

awareness-release through good will 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... 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, expansive, immeasurable, without hostility, without malevolence. Just as a strong conch-trumpet blower can notify the four directions without any difficulty, in the same way, when awareness-release through equanimity is thus developed, thus pursued, any deed done to a limited extent no longer remains there, no longer stays there.”

— [SN 42:8](#)

“Monks, I don’t speak of the wiping out of intentional actions that have been done & accumulated without [their results] having been experienced, either in the here & now or in a further state hereafter. Nor do I speak of the act of putting an end to suffering and stress without having experienced [the results of] intentional actions that have been done & accumulated.<sup>1</sup>

“That disciple of the noble ones—thus devoid of covetousness, devoid of ill will, unbewildered, alert, mindful—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, he keeps pervading the all-encompassing cosmos with an awareness imbued with good will—abundant, expansive, immeasurable, without hostility, without ill will. He discerns, ‘Before, this mind of mine was limited & undeveloped. But now this mind of mine is immeasurable & well developed. And whatever action that was done in a measurable way does not remain there, does not linger there.’

“What do you think, monks: If that youth, from childhood, were to develop awareness-release through good will, would he do any evil action?”

“No, lord.”

“Not doing any evil action, would he touch suffering?”

“No, lord, for when one does no evil action, from where would he touch suffering?”

“This awareness-release through good will should be developed whether one is a woman or a man. Neither a woman nor a man can go taking this body along. Death, monks, is but a gap of a thought away. One [who practices this awareness-

release] discerns, 'Whatever evil action has been done by this body born of action, that will all be experienced here [in this life]. It will not come to be hereafter.' Thus developed, awareness-release through good will leads to non-returning for the monk who has gained gnosis here and has penetrated to no higher release.

"That disciple of the noble ones—thus devoid of covetousness, devoid of ill will, unbewildered, alert, mindful—keeps pervading the first direction [the east] with an awareness imbued with compassion....

"That disciple of the noble ones—thus devoid of covetousness, devoid of ill will, unbewildered, alert, mindful—keeps pervading the first direction [the east] with an awareness imbued with empathetic joy....

"That disciple of the noble ones—thus devoid of covetousness, devoid of ill will, unbewildered, alert, mindful—keeps pervading the first direction [the east] with an awareness imbued with 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, expansive, immeasurable, without hostility, without ill will. He discerns, 'Before, this mind of mine was limited & undeveloped. But now this mind of mine is immeasurable & well developed. And whatever action that was done in a measurable way does not remain there, does not linger there.'

"What do you think, monks: If that youth, from childhood, were to develop awareness-release through equanimity, would he do any evil action?"

"No, lord."

"Not doing any evil action, would he touch suffering?"

"No, lord, for when one does no evil action, from where would he touch suffering?"

"This awareness-release through equanimity should be developed whether one is a woman or a man. Neither a woman nor a man can go taking this body along. Death, monks, is but a gap of a thought away. One [who practices this awareness-release] discerns, 'Whatever evil action has been done by this body born of action, that will all be experienced here [in this life]. It will not come to be hereafter.' Thus developed, awareness-release through equanimity leads to non-returning for the monk who has gained gnosis here and has penetrated to no higher release."

NOTE: 1. F. L. Woodward—the Pali Text Society translator of the Anguttara Tens and Elevens—notes that this sutta seems patched together from various sources. As proof, he cites the abrupt breaks between this paragraph and the next, and between the next and the one following it.

—AN 10:208

“Monks, for anyone who says, ‘In whatever way a person makes kamma, that is how it is experienced,’ there is no living of the holy life, there is no opportunity for the right ending of stress. But for anyone who says, ‘When a person makes kamma to be felt in such & such a way, that is how its result is experienced,’ there is the living of the holy life, there is the opportunity for the right ending of stress.

“There is the case where a trifling evil deed done by a certain individual takes him to hell. There is the case where the very same sort of trifling deed done by another individual is experienced in the here & now, and for the most part barely appears for a moment.

“Now, a trifling evil deed done by what sort of individual takes him to hell? There is the case where a certain individual is undeveloped in body [according to [MN 36](#), this means that pleasure can invade his mind and remain there], undeveloped in virtue, undeveloped in mind [pain can invade his mind and remain there]: restricted, small-hearted, dwelling with suffering. A trifling evil deed done by this sort of individual takes him to hell.

“Now, a trifling evil deed done by what sort of individual is experienced in the here & now, and for the most part barely appears for a moment? There is the case where a certain individual is developed in body, developed in virtue, developed in mind, developed in discernment: unrestricted, large-hearted, dwelling with the immeasurable [awareness-release]. A trifling evil deed done by this sort of individual is experienced in the here & now, and for the most part barely appears for a moment.

“Suppose that a man were to drop a salt crystal into a small amount of water in a cup. What do you think? Would the water in the cup become salty because of the salt crystal, and unfit to drink?”

“Yes, lord. Why is that? There being only a small amount of water in the cup, it would become salty because of the salt crystal, and unfit to drink.”

“Now suppose that a man were to drop a salt crystal into the River Ganges. What do you think? Would the water in the River Ganges become salty because

of the salt crystal, and unfit to drink?”

“No, lord. Why is that? There being a great mass of water in the River Ganges, it would not become salty because of the salt crystal or unfit to drink.”

“In the same way, there is the case where a trifling evil deed done by one individual [the first] takes him to hell; and there is the case where the very same sort of trifling deed done by the other individual is experienced in the here & now, and for the most part barely appears for a moment....

“There is the case where a certain person is thrown into jail for half a dollar [*kahapana*], is thrown into jail for a dollar, is thrown into jail for one hundred dollars. And there is the case where another person is not thrown into jail for half a dollar, is not thrown into jail for a dollar, is not thrown into jail for one hundred dollars. Now what sort of person is thrown into jail for half a dollar... for a dollar... for one hundred dollars? There is the case where a person is poor, of little wealth, of few possessions. This is the sort of person who is thrown into jail for half a dollar... for a dollar... for one hundred dollars. And what sort of person is not thrown into jail for half a dollar... for a dollar... for one hundred dollars? There is the case where a person is wealthy, with many belongings, many possessions. This is the sort of person who is not thrown into jail for half a dollar.... for a dollar... for one hundred dollars.

“In the same way, there is the case where a trifling evil deed done by one individual takes him to hell; and there is the case where the very same sort of trifling deed done by the other individual is experienced in the here & now, and for the most part barely appears for a moment....

“It’s just as when a goat butcher is empowered to beat or bind or slay or treat as he likes a certain person who steals a goat, but is not empowered to beat or bind or slay or treat as he likes another person who steals a goat. Now, when what sort of person has stolen a goat is the goat butcher empowered to beat him or bind him or slay him or treat him as he likes? There is the case where a person is poor, of little wealth, of few possessions. This is the sort of person who, when he has stolen a goat, the goat butcher is empowered to beat or bind or slay or treat as he likes. And when what sort of person has stolen a goat is the goat butcher not empowered to beat him or bind him or slay him or treat him as he likes? There is the case where a person is wealthy, with many belongings, many possessions; a king or a king’s minister. This is the sort of person who, when he has stolen a goat, the goat butcher is not empowered to beat or bind or slay or

treat as he likes. All he can do is go with his hands clasped before his heart and beg: ‘Please, dear sir, give me a goat or the price of a goat.’

“In the same way, there is the case where a trifling evil deed done by one individual takes him to hell; and there is the case where the very same sort of trifling deed done by the other individual is experienced in the here & now, and for the most part barely appears for a moment.

“Now, a trifling evil deed done by what sort of individual takes him to hell? There is the case where a certain individual is undeveloped in body, undeveloped in virtue, undeveloped in mind, undeveloped in discernment: restricted, small-hearted, dwelling with suffering. A trifling evil deed done by this sort of individual takes him to hell.

“Now, a trifling evil deed done by what sort of individual is experienced in the here & now, and for the most part barely appears for a moment? There is the case where a certain individual is developed in body, developed in virtue, developed in mind, developed in discernment: unrestricted, large-hearted, dwelling with the immeasurable [awareness-release]. A trifling evil deed done by this sort of individual is experienced in the here & now, and for the most part barely appears for a moment.

“Monks, for anyone who says, ‘In whatever way a person makes kamma, that is how it is experienced,’ there is no living of the holy life, there is no opportunity for the right ending of stress. But for anyone who says, ‘When a person makes kamma to be felt in such & such a way, that is how its result is experienced,’ there is the living of the holy life, there is the opportunity for the right ending of stress.” — [AN 3:101](#)

“There is the case where a monk might say, ‘Although good will has been developed, pursued, handed the reins, taken as a basis, steadied, consolidated, and well-undertaken by me as my awareness-release, still ill will keeps overpowering my mind.’ He should be told, ‘Don’t say that. You shouldn’t speak in that way. Don’t misrepresent the Blessed One, for it’s not right to misrepresent the Blessed One, and the Blessed One wouldn’t say that. It’s impossible, there is no way that—when good will has been developed, pursued, handed the reins, taken as a basis, steadied, consolidated, and well-undertaken as an awareness-release—ill will would still keep overpowering the mind. That possibility doesn’t exist, for this is the escape from ill will: good will as an awareness-release.’



“Furthermore, there is the case where a monk might say, ‘Although compassion has been developed, pursued, handed the reins, taken as a basis, steadied, consolidated, and well-undertaken by me as my awareness-release, still viciousness keeps overpowering my mind.’ He should be told, ‘Don’t say that. You shouldn’t speak in that way. Don’t misrepresent the Blessed One, for it’s not right to misrepresent the Blessed One, and the Blessed One wouldn’t say that. It’s impossible, there is no way that—when compassion has been developed, pursued, handed the reins, taken as a basis, steadied, consolidated, and well-undertaken as an awareness-release—viciousness would still keep overpowering the mind. That possibility doesn’t exist, for this is the escape from viciousness: compassion as an awareness-release.’

“Furthermore, there is the case where a monk might say, ‘Although empathetic joy has been developed, pursued, handed the reins, taken as a basis, steadied, consolidated, and well-undertaken by me as my awareness-release, still resentment keeps overpowering my mind.’ He should be told, ‘Don’t say that. You shouldn’t speak in that way. Don’t misrepresent the Blessed One, for it’s not right to misrepresent the Blessed One, and the Blessed One wouldn’t say that. It’s impossible, there is no way that—when empathetic joy has been developed, pursued, handed the reins, taken as a basis, steadied, consolidated, and well-undertaken as an awareness-release—resentment would still keep overpowering the mind. That possibility doesn’t exist, for this is the escape from resentment: empathetic joy as an awareness-release.’

“Furthermore, there is the case where a monk might say, ‘Although equanimity has been developed, pursued, handed the reins, taken as a basis, steadied, consolidated, and well-undertaken by me as my awareness-release, still passion keeps overpowering my mind.’ He should be told, ‘Don’t say that. You shouldn’t speak in that way. Don’t misrepresent the Blessed One, for it’s not right to misrepresent the Blessed One, and the Blessed One wouldn’t say that. It’s impossible, there is no way that—when equanimity has been developed, pursued, handed the reins, taken as a basis, steadied, consolidated, and well-undertaken as an awareness-release—passion would still keep overpowering the mind. That possibility doesn’t exist, for this is the escape from passion: equanimity as an awareness-release.’” — [AN 6:13](#).

“And how is awareness-release through good will developed, what is its destiny, its excellence, its reward, & its consummation?

“There is the case where a monk develops *mindfulness* as a factor for Awakening accompanied by good will, 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 accompanied by good will, dependent on seclusion... dispassion... 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 good will has the beautiful as its excellence—in the case of one who has penetrated to no higher release.

“And how is awareness-release through compassion developed, what is its destiny, its excellence, its reward, & its consummation?

“There is the case where a monk develops mindfulness as a factor for Awakening accompanied by compassion... etc.... 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 heeding perceptions of diversity, thinking, ‘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.

“And how is awareness-release through empathetic joy developed, what is its destiny, its excellence, its reward, & its consummation?

“There is the case where a monk develops mindfulness as a factor for awakening accompanied by empathetic joy... etc.... 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 infinitude of space, thinking ‘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 destiny, its excellence, its reward, & its consummation?

“There is the case where a monk develops mindfulness as a factor for Awakening accompanied by equanimity... etc.... 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 infinitude of consciousness, thinking ‘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.” — [\*SN 46:54\*](#).

“There is the case where an individual keeps pervading the first direction [the east]—as well as the second direction, the third, & the fourth—with an awareness imbued with good will. Thus he keeps pervading above, below, & all around, everywhere & in every respect the all-encompassing cosmos with an awareness imbued with good will: abundant, expansive, immeasurable, free from hostility, free from ill will. He savors that, longs for that, finds satisfaction through that. Staying there—fixed on that, dwelling there often, not falling away from that—then when he dies he reappears in conjunction with the devas of Brahma’s retinue. The devas of Brahma’s retinue, monks, have a life-span of an aeon. A run-of-the-mill person, having stayed there, having used up all the life-span of those devas, goes to hell, to the animal womb, to the state of the hungry shades. But a disciple of the Blessed One, having stayed there, having used up all the life-span of those devas, is unbound right in that state of being. This, monks, is the difference, this the distinction, this the distinguishing factor, between an educated disciple of the noble ones and an uneducated run-of-the-mill person, when there is a destination, a reappearing.

“Again, there is the case where an individual keeps pervading the first direction—as well as the second direction, the third, & the fourth—with an awareness imbued with compassion.... Staying there—fixed on that, dwelling there often, not falling away from that—then when he dies he reappears in conjunction with the Abhassara [Radiant] devas.<sup>1</sup> The Abhassara devas, monks, have a life-span of two aeons. A run-of-the-mill person, having stayed there, having used up all the life-span of those devas, goes to hell, to the animal womb,

to the state of the hungry shades. But a disciple of the Blessed One, having stayed there, having used up all the life-span of those devas, is unbound right in that state of being. This, monks, is the difference, this the distinction, this the distinguishing factor, between an educated disciple of the noble ones and an uneducated run-of-the-mill person, when there is a destination, a reappearing.<sup>2</sup>

“Again, there is the case where an individual keeps pervading the first direction—as well as the second direction, the third, & the fourth—with an awareness imbued with empathetic joy.... Staying there—fixed on that, dwelling there often, not falling away from that—then when he dies he reappears in conjunction with the Subhakinha [Beautiful Black] devas. The Subhakinha devas, monks, have a life-span of four aeons. A run-of-the-mill person, having stayed there, having used up all the life-span of those devas, goes to hell, to the animal womb, to the state of the hungry shades. But a disciple of the Blessed One, having stayed there, having used up all the life-span of those devas, is unbound right in that state of being. This, monks, is the difference, this the distinction, this the distinguishing factor, between an educated disciple of the noble ones and an uneducated run-of-the-mill person, when there is a destination, a reappearing.

“Again, there is the case where an individual keeps pervading the first direction [the east]—as well as the second direction, the third, & the fourth—with an awareness imbued with equanimity. Thus he keeps pervading above, below, & all around, everywhere & in every respect the all-encompassing cosmos with an awareness imbued with equanimity: abundant, expansive, immeasurable, free from hostility, free from ill will. He savors that, longs for that, finds satisfaction through that. Staying there—fixed on that, dwelling there often, not falling away from that—then when he dies he reappears in conjunction with the Vehapphala [Sky-fruit] devas. The Vehapphala devas, monks, have a life-span of 500 aeons. A run-of-the-mill person, having stayed there, having used up all the life-span of those devas, goes to hell, to the animal womb, to the state of the hungry shades. But a disciple of the Blessed One, having stayed there, having used up all the life-span of those devas, is unbound right in that state of being. This, monks, is the difference, this the distinction, this the distinguishing factor, between an educated disciple of the noble ones and an uneducated run-of-the-mill person, when there is a destination, a reappearing.

“These are four types of individuals to be found existing in the world.”

## NOTES

1. The Abhassara, Subhakinha, and Vehapphala devas are all Brahmas on the level of form.

2. This sutta, read in conjunction with [AN 4:123](#), has given rise to the belief that the development of good will as an immeasurable state can lead only to the first jhana, and that the next two immeasurable states—compassion and empathetic joy—can lead, respectively, only to the second and third jhanas. However, as AN 8:63 shows below, all four immeasurable states can lead all the way to the fourth jhana. The difference between that discourse and this lies in how the person practicing these states relates to them. In that sutta, the person deliberately uses the state as a basis for developing all the jhanas. In this sutta, the person simply enjoys the state and remains in it.

— [AN 4:125](#)

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 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.”

“But it is in just this way that some worthless men make a request but then, having been told the Dhamma, think they should tag along right behind me.”

“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 will understand the Blessed One’s words. It may well be that I will become an heir to the Blessed One’s words.”

“Then, monk, you should train yourself thus: ‘My mind will be established inwardly, well-composed. No evil, unskillful qualities, once they have arisen, will remain consuming the mind.’ That’s how you should train yourself.

“Then you should train yourself thus: ‘Good will, as my awareness-release, will be developed, pursued, given a means of transport, given a grounding, steadied, consolidated, & well-undertaken.’ That’s how you should train yourself. When you have developed this concentration in this way, you should develop this concentration with directed thought & evaluation, you should develop it with no directed thought & a modicum of evaluation, you should develop it with no directed thought & no evaluation, you should develop it accompanied by rapture... not accompanied by rapture... endowed with a sense of enjoyment; you should develop it endowed with equanimity.

“When this concentration is thus developed, thus well-developed by you, you should then train yourself thus: ‘Compassion, as my awareness-release.... Empathetic joy, as my awareness-release.... Equanimity, as my awareness-release, will be developed, pursued, given a means of transport, given a grounding, steadied, consolidated, & well-undertaken.’ That’s how you should train yourself. When you have developed this concentration in this way, you should develop this concentration with directed thought & evaluation, you should develop it with no directed thought & a modicum of evaluation, you should develop it with no directed thought & no evaluation, you should develop it accompanied by rapture... not accompanied by rapture... endowed with a sense of enjoyment; you should develop it endowed with equanimity.

“When this concentration is thus developed, thus well-developed by you, you should then train yourself thus: ‘I will remain focused on the body in & of itself—ardent, alert, & mindful—putting aside greed & distress with reference to the world.’ That’s how you should train yourself. When you have developed this concentration in this way, you should develop this concentration with directed thought & evaluation, you should develop it with no directed thought & a modicum of evaluation, you should develop it with no directed thought & no evaluation, you should develop it accompanied by rapture... not accompanied by rapture... endowed with a sense of enjoyment; you should develop it endowed with equanimity.

“When this concentration is thus developed, thus well-developed by you, you should train yourself: ‘I will remain focused on feelings in & of themselves... the mind in & of itself... mental qualities in & of themselves—ardent, alert, & mindful—putting aside greed & distress with reference to the world.’ That’s how you should train yourself. When you have developed this concentration in this way, you should develop this concentration with directed thought & evaluation, you should develop it with no directed thought & a modicum of evaluation, you should develop it with no directed thought & no evaluation, you should develop it accompanied by rapture... not accompanied by rapture... endowed with a sense of enjoyment; you should develop it endowed with equanimity.

“When this concentration is thus developed, thus well-developed by you, then wherever you go, you will go in comfort. Wherever you stand, you will stand in comfort. Wherever you sit, you will sit in comfort. Wherever you lie down, you will lie down in comfort.”

Then that monk, 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 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 he became another one of the Arahants. — AN 8:63

“There is the case where a monk enters & remains in a certain peaceful awareness-release. He attends to the cessation of self-identification, but as he is attending to the cessation of self-identification his mind doesn’t leap up, grow confident, steadfast, or firm in the cessation of self-identification. For him the cessation of self-identification is not to be expected. Just as if a man were to grasp a branch with his hand smeared with resin, his hand would stick to it, grip it, adhere to it; in the same way, the monk enters & remains in a certain peaceful awareness-release. He attends to the cessation of self-identification, but as he is attending to the cessation of self-identification his mind doesn’t leap up, grow confident, steadfast, or firm in the cessation of self-identification. For him the cessation of self-identification is not to be expected.

“Now, there is the case where a monk enters & remains in a certain peaceful awareness-release. He attends to the cessation of self-identification, and as he is attending to the cessation of self-identification his mind leaps up, grows confident, steadfast, & firm in the cessation of self-identification. For him the cessation of self-identification is to be expected. Just as if a man were to grasp a branch with a clean hand, his hand would not stick to it, grip it, or adhere to it; in the same way, the monk enters & remains in a certain peaceful awareness-release. He attends to the cessation of self-identification, and as he is attending to the cessation of self-identification his mind leaps up, grows confident, steadfast, & firm in the cessation of self-identification. For him the cessation of self-identification is to be expected.

“Now, there is the case where a monk enters & remains in a certain peaceful awareness-release. He attends to the breaching of ignorance, but as he is attending to the breaching of ignorance his mind doesn’t leap up, grow confident, steadfast, or firm in the breaching of ignorance. For him the breaching of ignorance is not to be expected. Just as if there were a waste-water pool that had

stood for countless years, where a man were to block all the inlets and open all the outlets, and the sky were to not rain down in good streams of rain: the breaching of the waste-water pool's embankment would not be expected; in the same way, the monk enters & remains in a certain peaceful awareness-release. He attends to the breaching of ignorance, but as he is attending to the breaching of ignorance his mind doesn't leap up, grow confident, steadfast, or firm in the breaching of ignorance. For him the breaching of ignorance is not to be expected.

“Now, there is the case where a monk enters & remains in a certain peaceful awareness-release. He attends to the breaching of ignorance, and as he is attending to the breaching of ignorance his mind leaps up, grows confident, steadfast, & firm in the breaching of ignorance. For him the breaching of ignorance is to be expected. Just as if there were a waste-water pool that had stood for countless years, where a man were to open all the inlets and block all the outlets, and the sky were to rain down in good streams of rain: the breaching of the waste-water pool's embankment would be expected; in the same way, the monk enters & remains in a certain peaceful awareness-release. He attends to the breaching of ignorance, and as he is attending to the breaching of ignorance his mind leaps up, grows confident, steadfast, & firm in the breaching of ignorance. For him the breaching of ignorance is to be expected.” — [AN 4:178](#)

“There is the case where an individual keeps pervading the first direction—as well as the second direction, the third, & the fourth—with an awareness imbued with good will. Thus he keeps pervading above, below, & all around, everywhere & in every respect the all-encompassing cosmos with an awareness imbued with good will: abundant, expansive, immeasurable, free from hostility, free from ill will. He regards whatever phenomena there that are connected with form, feeling, perception, fabrications, & consciousness, as inconstant, stressful, a disease, a cancer, an arrow, painful, an affliction, alien, a disintegration, an emptiness, not-self. At the break-up of the body, after death, he reappears in conjunction with the devas of the Pure Abodes. This rebirth is not in common with run-of-the-mill people.”

[Similarly with compassion, empathetic joy, & equanimity.] — [AN 4:126](#)

“Then again, a monk keeps pervading the first direction 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, he keeps pervading the all-encompassing cosmos with an awareness imbued with good



will—abundant, expansive, immeasurable, without hostility, without ill will. He reflects on this and discerns, ‘This awareness-release through good will is fabricated & intended. Now whatever is fabricated & intended is inconstant & subject to cessation.’ Staying right there, he reaches the ending of the mental effluents. Or, if not, then—through this very Dhamma-passion, this Dhamma-delight, and from the total wasting away of the five lower fetters [self-identity views, uncertainty, grasping at habits & practices, sensual passion, and irritation]—he is due to be spontaneously reborn [in the Pure Abodes], there to be totally unbound, never again to return from that world.

“This too, householder, is a single quality declared by the Blessed One—the one who knows, the one who sees, worthy & rightly self-awakened—where the unreleased mind of a monk who dwells there heedful, ardent, & resolute becomes released, or his unended effluents go to their total ending, or he attains the unexcelled security from the yoke that he had not attained before.”

[Similarly with awareness-release through compassion, through empathetic joy, & through equanimity.] — [\*MN\* 52](#)

## *The Merit of Stream-entry*

“Sariputta, ‘The stream, the stream’: thus it is said. And what, Sariputta, is the stream?”

“This noble eightfold path, lord, is the stream: right view, right resolve, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness, right concentration.”

“Very good, Sariputta! Very good! This noble eightfold path—right view, right resolve, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness, right concentration—is the stream.” — [\*SN\* 55:5](#)

“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? Being resolved on renunciation, on non-ill will, on harmlessness: This is called right resolve.

“And what is right speech? Abstaining from lying, from divisive speech, from harsh speech, & from idle chatter: This is called right speech.

“And what is right action? Abstaining from taking life, from stealing, & from sexual intercourse: This is called right action.

“And what 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 is called right livelihood.

“And what is right effort? There is the case where a monk 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 right effort.

“And what is right mindfulness? 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... the mind in & of itself... mental qualities in & of themselves—ardent, alert, & mindful—putting aside greed & distress with reference to the world. This is called right mindfulness.

“And what is right concentration? There is the case where a monk—quite secluded from sensuality, secluded from unskillful qualities—enters & remains in the first jhana: rapture & pleasure born of seclusion, accompanied by directed thought & evaluation. With the stilling of directed thoughts & evaluations, he enters & remains in the second jhana: 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 jhana, 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 jhana: purity of equanimity & mindfulness, neither pleasure nor pain. This is called right concentration.” — [SN 45:8](#)

“There is the case where the disciple of the noble ones [here meaning a stream-enterer] is endowed with verified confidence in the Awakened One... verified confidence in the Dhamma... verified confidence in the Sangha... He/she is endowed with virtues that are appealing to the noble ones: untorn, unbroken, unspotted, unsplattered, liberating, praised by the wise, untarnished, leading to concentration.” — [AN 10:92](#)

“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 and rightly self-awakened, consummate in knowledge & conduct, well-gone, an expert with regard to the world, unexcelled as a trainer for those people fit to be tamed, the Teacher of divine & human beings, awakened, blessed.’ This is the first bonanza of merit, bonanza, of skillfulness, nourishment of bliss.

“Furthermore, the disciple of the noble ones is endowed with verified confidence in the Dhamma: ‘The Dhamma is well-expounded 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.

“Furthermore, the disciple of the noble ones is endowed with verified confidence in the Sangha: ‘The Sangha 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 Sangha of the Blessed One’s disciples: worthy of gifts, worthy of hospitality, worthy of offerings, worthy of respect, the incomparable field of merit for the world.’ This is the third bonanza of merit, bonanza, of skillfulness, nourishment of bliss.

“Furthermore, 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 wise, untarnished, 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.” — [SN 55:31](#)

[SN 55:32](#) defines the fourth bonanza of merit as follows: “Furthermore, 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.

[SN 55:33](#) defines it as follows: “Furthermore, the disciple of the noble ones is discerning, endowed with discernment of arising & passing away—noble, penetrating, leading to the right ending of stress.”

“Just as it’s not easy to take the measure of the water in the great ocean as ‘just this many pails of water or hundreds of pails of water or thousands of pails of water or hundreds of thousands of pails of water.’ It is reckoned simply as a great mass of water that is unreckonable, immeasurable. In the same way, when a disciple of the noble ones is endowed with these four bonanzas of merit, bonanzas of skillfulness, it’s not easy to take the measure of the merit as ‘just this much bonanza of merit, bonanza of skillfulness, nourishment of bliss, heavenly, ripening in bliss leading to heaven, leading to what is agreeable, pleasing, charming, happy, & beneficial.’ It is reckoned simply as a great mass of merit that is unreckonable, immeasurable.” — *SN 55:41*

[Ven. Ananda is speaking to Anathapindika concerning the first list of bonanzas of merit:] “A well-instructed disciple of the noble ones, when endowed with these four qualities, has no terror, no trepidation, no fear at death with regard to the next life.” — [SN 55:27](#)

“Then there is the case of the person who has no doubt or perplexity, who has arrived at certainty with regard to the True Dhamma. Then he comes down with a serious disease. As he comes down with a serious disease, the thought occurs to him, ‘I have no doubt or perplexity. I have arrived at certainty with regard to the True Dhamma.’ He doesn’t grieve, isn’t tormented; doesn’t weep, beat his breast, or grow delirious. This, too, is a person who, subject to death, is not afraid or in terror of death.” — [AN 4:184](#)

[The Buddha is speaking to Nandaka, the chief minister of the Licchavis, concerning the first list of bonanzas of merit:] “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.

“Furthermore, 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 brahman or contemplative. 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.” — [SN 55:30](#)

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.” — [SN 13:1](#)

“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, the 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, well-supplied & replete 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 shades, 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 shades, 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 Sangha: ‘The Sangha 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 Sangha of the Blessed One’s disciples: worthy of gifts, worthy of hospitality, worthy of offerings, worthy 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.

“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.” — [SN 55:1](#)

Sole dominion over the earth,  
going to heaven,  
lordship over all worlds:  
the fruit of Stream-entry  
excels them. — [Dhp 178](#)

## *Beyond Merit*

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." — [\*SN 2:19\*](#)

For a person of unsoddened mind,  
unassaulted awareness,  
abandoning merit & evil,  
wakeful,  
there is  
no danger  
no fear. — [\*Dhp 39\*](#)

He has gone  
beyond attachment here  
for both merit & evil—



sorrowless, dustless, & pure:  
he's what I call  
a brahman. — *Dhp 412*

## Glossary

*Arahant*: A “worthy one” or “pure one”; a person whose mind is free of defilement and is thus not subject to further rebirth. A title for the Buddha and his highest level of noble disciples.

*Asava*: 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.

*Brahma*: An inhabitant of the highest heavenly realms of form and formlessness.

*Brahman*: 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 (devata)*: Literally, “shining one.” An inhabitant of the heavenly realms.

*Dhamma*: (1) Event; action; (2) a phenomenon in and of itself; (3) mental quality; (4) doctrine, teaching; (5) *nibbana* (although there are passages describing nibbana as the abandoning of all dhammas). Sanskrit form: *Dharma*.

*Jhana*: Mental absorption. A state of strong concentration focused on a single sensation or mental notion. This term is related to the verb *jhayati*, which means to burn with a still, steady flame.

*Kamma*: Intentional action. Sanskrit form: *Karma*.

*Nibbana*: 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. Sanskrit form: *Nirvana*.

*Sangha*: Community. On the conventional level, this term denotes the communities of Buddhist monks and nuns. On the ideal level, it denotes those followers of the Buddha, lay or ordained, who have attained at least the first level of Awakening.

*Sutta*: Discourse. Sanskrit form: *Sutra*.

*Tathagata*: Literally, “one who has become authentic (*tatha-agata*)” or “one who is truly gone (*tatha-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.

*Vinaya*: The monastic discipline.

## *Abbreviations*

<i>AN</i>	<i>Anguttara Nikaya</i>
<i>Dhp</i>	<i>Dhammapada</i>
<i>DN</i>	<i>Digha Nikaya</i>
<i>Iti</i>	<i>Itivuttaka</i>
<i>Khp</i>	<i>Khuddakapatha</i>
<i>MN</i>	<i>Majjhima Nikaya</i>
<i>Mv</i>	<i>Mahavagga</i>
<i>SN</i>	<i>Samyutta Nikaya</i>
<i>Sn</i>	<i>Sutta Nipata</i>
<i>Ud</i>	<i>Udana</i>