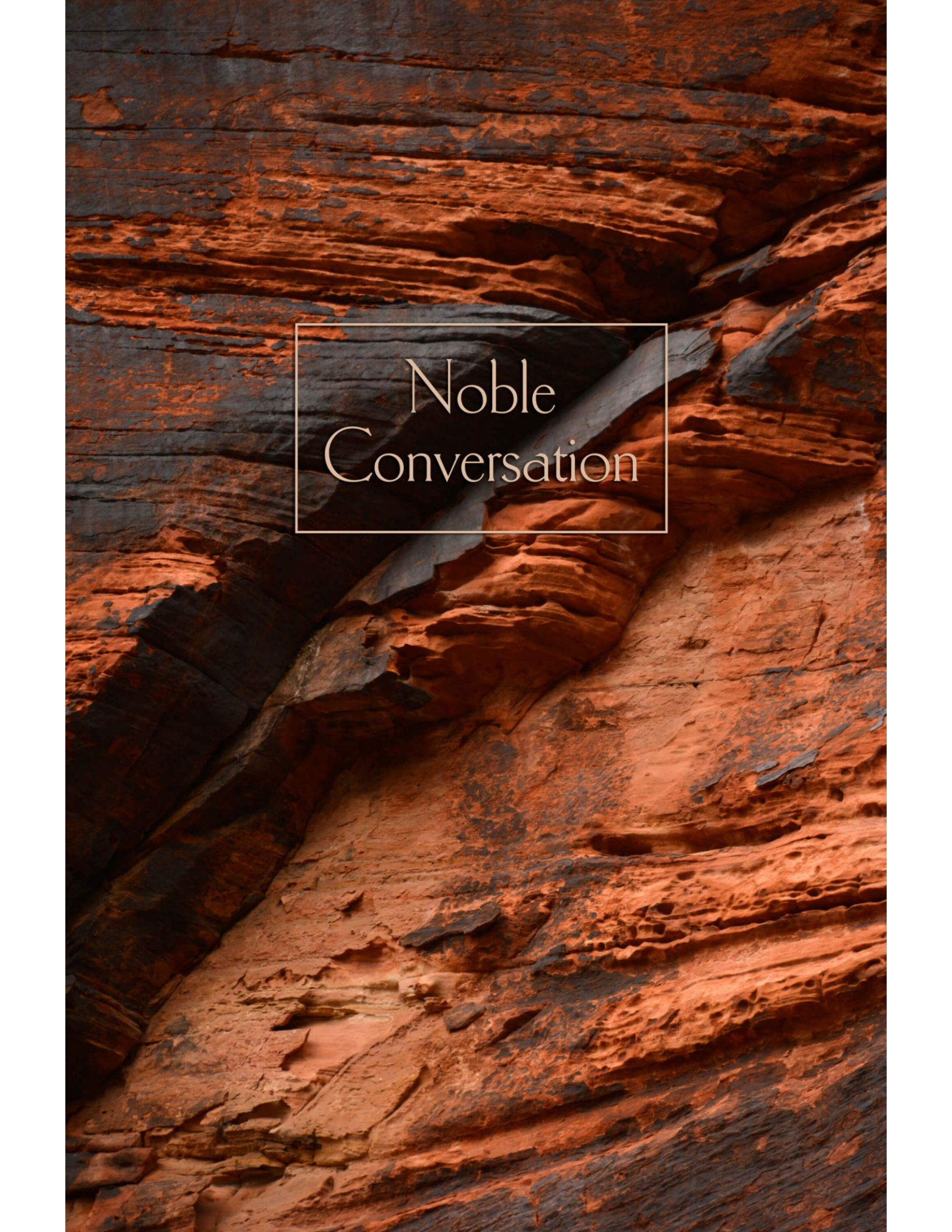




Noble Conversation

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A Study Guide

compiled by

Ṭhānissaro Bhikkhu

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Introduction

“This is the purpose for conversation, this is the purpose for consultation, this is the purpose of apprenticeship, this is the purpose for lending ear: the liberation of the mind through non-clinging.”

This quotation from chapter 12 of the Parivāra, the appendix to the Vinaya, is obviously not talking about ordinary conversation. It’s talking about the ideal type of conversation among meditators, the very opposite of idle chatter:

“Abandoning idle chatter, one abstains from idle chatter. One speaks in season, speaks what is factual, what is in accordance with the goal, the Dhamma, & the Vinaya. One speaks words worth treasuring, seasonable, reasonable, circumscribed, connected with the goal.” — MN 41

Several passages in the Canon list ten ideal topics for such conversation: modesty, contentment, seclusion, non-entanglement, arousing persistence, virtue, concentration, discernment, release, and the knowledge & vision of release. The purpose of this study guide is to illustrate each of these topics with passages from the Canon, and to provide meditators with the incentive to integrate conversation of this sort into their practice. There is some overlap between the topics listed here and those listed in two other study guides: *Recognizing the Dhamma* and *The Ten Perfections*. So some redundancy has been inevitable, but wherever possible I have also included material unavailable in those two guides.

The first passage included here, in addition to listing the ten ideal topics, also lists topics that monks and serious meditators should avoid, ranging from politics and food to theories about the creation of the world. The Commentary qualifies this list, saying that if one discusses these topics in a way connected with Dhamma—for example, pointing out the ephemeral nature of political power so as to engender a feeling of dispassion for it—then that would count as right speech, and an aid to the liberation of the mind.

I have heard that on one occasion the Blessed One was staying in Sāvattthī at Jeta’s Grove, Anāthapiṇḍika’s monastery. Now, at that time a large number of monks, after the meal, on returning from their alms round, had gathered at the meeting hall and were engaged in many kinds of bestial topics of conversation: conversation about kings, robbers, & ministers of state; armies, alarms, & battles; food & drink; clothing, furniture, garlands, & scents; relatives; vehicles; villages, towns, cities, the countryside; women & heroes; the gossip of the street & the well; tales of the dead; tales of diversity, the creation of the world & of the sea; talk of whether things exist or not.

Then the Blessed One, emerging from his seclusion in the late afternoon, went to the meeting hall and, on arrival, sat down on a seat made ready. As he sat down there, he addressed the monks: “For what topic of conversation are you gathered together here? In the midst of what topic of conversation have you been interrupted?”

“Just now, lord, after the meal, on returning from our alms round, we gathered at the meeting hall and got engaged in many kinds of bestial topics of conversation: conversation about kings, robbers, & ministers of state; armies, alarms, & battles; food & drink; clothing, furniture, garlands, & scents; relatives; vehicles; villages, towns, cities, the countryside; women & heroes; the gossip of the street & the well; tales of the dead; tales of diversity, the creation of the world & of the sea; talk of whether things exist or not.”

“It isn’t right, monks, that sons of good families, on having gone forth out of faith from home to the homeless life, should get engaged in such topics of conversation, i.e., conversation about kings, robbers, & ministers of state ... talk of whether things exist or not.

“There are these ten topics of [proper] conversation. Which ten? Talk on modesty, contentment, seclusion, non-entanglement, arousing persistence, virtue, concentration, discernment, release, and the knowledge & vision of release. These are the ten topics of conversation. If you were to engage repeatedly in these ten topics of conversation, you would outshine even the sun & moon, so mighty, so powerful—to say nothing of the wanderers of other sects.” — [*AN 10:69*](#)

I. Modesty

“‘This Dhamma is for one who is modest, not for one who is self-aggrandizing.’ Thus was it said. With reference to what was it said? There is the case where a monk, being modest, doesn’t want it to be known that ‘He is modest.’ Being content, he doesn’t want it to be known that ‘He is content.’ Being reclusive, he doesn’t want it to be known that ‘He is reclusive.’ His persistence being aroused, he doesn’t want it to be known that ‘His persistence is aroused.’ His mindfulness being established, he doesn’t want it to be known that ‘His mindfulness is established.’ His mind being centered, he doesn’t want it to be known that ‘His mind is centered.’ Being endowed with discernment, he doesn’t want it to be known that ‘He is endowed with discernment.’ Enjoying non-complication, he doesn’t want it to be known that ‘He is enjoying non-complication.’” — [AN 8:30](#)

Ven. Sumana:

When I was seven
& newly gone forth,
having conquered with my power
the great powerful serpent,
I was fetching water for my preceptor
from the great lake, Anotatta,¹
when the Teacher saw me & said:

“Look, Sāriputta, at that one,
the young boy coming there,
carrying a pot of water,
well-centered within,
his practices—inspiring;
his bearing—admirable.
He’s Anuruddha’s novice,
mature in his powers,
made thoroughbred by a thoroughbred,
good by one who is good,

tamed by Anuruddha,
trained by one whose task
is done.

He, having reached the highest peace
& realized the unshakable,
Sumana the novice
wants this:

‘Don’t let anyone know me.’” — *Thag 6:10*

NOTE

1. Anotatta: A fabulous lake located in the Himalayas, famed for the purity of its cool waters. Sumana would have had to use his psychic powers to fetch water from there.

On one occasion the Blessed One was staying near Āḷavī at the Aggāḷava Shrine. There he addressed the monks: “Monks, remember Hatthaka of Āḷavī as being endowed with seven amazing, astounding qualities. Which seven? Monks, Hatthaka of Āḷavī is endowed with conviction. He is virtuous. He has a sense of conscience. He has a sense of concern (for the results of unskillful actions). He is learned. He is generous. He is discerning. Remember Hatthaka of Āḷavī as being endowed with these seven amazing, astounding qualities.”

That is what the Blessed One said. Having said it, the One Well-going, getting up from his seat, went into his dwelling.

Then early in the morning a certain monk, having put on his robes and carrying his bowl & outer robe, went to Hatthaka of Āḷavī’s home. On arrival, he sat down on a seat made ready. Then Hatthaka of Āḷavī approached the monk and, having bowed down to him, sat to one side. As he was sitting there the monk said to him, “Friend, the Blessed One has described you as being endowed with seven amazing, astounding qualities. Which seven? ‘Hatthaka of Āḷavī is endowed with conviction. He is virtuous. He has a sense of conscience. He has a sense of concern (for the results of unskillful actions). He is learned. He is generous. He is discerning.’ Friend, the Blessed One has described you as being endowed with these seven amazing, astounding qualities.”

“I hope, sir, that there were no white-clad householders there.”

“No, friend, there were no white-clad householders there.”

“It’s good, sir, that there were no white-clad householders there.”

Then the monk, having received alms at Hatthaka of Āḷavī’s home, departed. After his meal, returning from his alms round, he went to the Blessed One. On arrival, having bowed down to the Blessed One, he sat to one side. As he was sitting there, [he told the Blessed One what had happened.]

[The Blessed One replied:] “It’s good, monk, it’s very good that the clansman is modest and does not want others to know of the skillful qualities present in him. In that case, monk, remember Hatthaka of Āḷavī as being endowed with this eighth amazing, astounding quality: modesty.” — [*AN 8:23*](#)

II. Contentment

“‘This Dhamma is for one who is content, not for one who is discontent.’ Thus was it said. With reference to what was it said? There is the case where a monk is content with any old robe cloth at all, any old almsfood, any old lodging, any old medicinal requisites for curing sickness at all.” — [*AN 8:30*](#)

“And how is a monk content? Just as a bird, wherever it goes, flies with its wings as its only burden; so too is he content with a set of robes to provide for his body and alms food to provide for his hunger. Wherever he goes, he takes only his barest necessities along. This is how a monk is content.” — [*DN 2*](#)

“There is the case where a monk is content with any old robe cloth at all. He speaks in praise of being content with any old robe cloth at all. He does not, for the sake of robe cloth, do anything unseemly or inappropriate. Not getting cloth, he isn’t agitated. Getting cloth, he uses it unattached to it, uninfatuated, guiltless, seeing the drawbacks (of attachment to it), and discerning the escape from them. He does not, on account of his contentment with any old robe cloth at all, exalt himself or disparage others. In this he is diligent, deft, alert, & mindful. This is said to be a monk standing firm in the ancient, original traditions of the noble ones.

“Then again, the monk is content with any old almsfood at all. He speaks in praise of being content with any old almsfood at all. He does not, for the sake of almsfood, do anything unseemly or inappropriate. Not getting almsfood, he isn’t agitated. Getting almsfood, he uses it unattached to it, uninfatuated, guiltless, seeing the drawbacks (of attachment to it), and discerning the escape from them. He does not, on account of his contentment with any old almsfood at all, exalt himself or disparage others. In this he is diligent, deft, alert, & mindful. This is said to be a monk standing firm in the ancient, original traditions of the noble ones.

“Then again, the monk is content with any old lodging at all. He speaks in praise of being content with any old lodging at all. He does not, for the sake of lodging, do anything unseemly or inappropriate. Not getting lodging, he isn’t agitated. Getting lodging, he uses it unattached to it, uninfatuated, guiltless, seeing the drawbacks (of attachment to it), and discerning the escape from them. He does not, on account of his contentment with any old lodging at all, exalt himself or disparage others. In this he is diligent, deft, alert, & mindful. This is said to be a monk standing firm in the ancient, original traditions of the noble ones.”

— [AN 4:28](#)

Ven. Mahā Kassapa:

Coming down from my dwelling place,
I entered the city for alms,
stood courteously next to a leper
eating his meal.
He, with his rotting hand,
tossed me a morsel of food,
and as the morsel was dropping,
a finger fell off
right there.

Sitting next to a wall,
I ate that morsel of food,
and neither while eating it,
nor having eaten,
did I feel
any disgust.

Whoever has mastered
left-over scraps for food,
smelly urine for medicine,
the foot of a tree for a dwelling,
cast-off rags for robes:
He is a man
of the four directions....

This is enough for me—
 desiring to do jhāna,
 resolute, mindful;
enough for me—
 desiring the goal,
 resolute,
 a monk;
enough for me—
 desiring comfort,
 resolute,
 in training;
enough for me—
 desiring my duty,
 resolute,
 Such....

There is no such pleasure for me
in the music of a five-piece band
as there is when my mind
 is at one,
seeing the Dhamma
 aright. — *Thag 18*

On one occasion the Blessed One was staying near Āḷavī on a spread of leaves by a cattle track in a siṃsapā forest. Then Hatthaka of Āḷavī, out roaming & rambling for exercise, saw the Blessed One sitting on a spread of leaves by the cattle track in the siṃsapā forest. On seeing him, he went to him and, on arrival, having bowed down to him, sat to one side. As he was sitting there he said to the Blessed One, “Lord, I hope the Blessed One has slept in ease.”

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

“But cold, lord, is the winter night. The ‘Between-the-Eights’ is a time of snowfall. Hard is the ground trampled by cattle hooves. Thin is the spread of leaves. Sparse are the leaves in the trees. Thin are your ochre robes. And cold blows the Verambha wind. Yet still the Blessed One says,

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

“In that case, young man, I will question you in return. Answer as you see fit. Now, what do you think: Suppose a householder or householder’s son has a house with a gabled roof, plastered inside & out, draft-free, with close-fitting door & windows shut against the wind. Inside he has a horse-hair couch spread with a long-fleeced coverlet, a white wool coverlet, an embroidered coverlet, a rug of kadali-deer hide, with a canopy above, & red cushions on either side. And there a lamp would be burning, and his four wives, with their many charms, would be attending to him. Would he sleep in ease, or not? Or how does this strike you?”

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

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

“Yes, lord.”

“As for those passion-, aversion-, delusion-born fevers—burned with which the householder or householder’s son would sleep miserably—that passion... aversion ... delusion has been abandoned by the Tathāgata, its root destroyed, like an uprooted palm tree, deprived of the conditions of existence, not destined for future arising. Therefore he sleeps in ease.

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

Having cut all ties
& subdued fear in the heart,
calmed,
he sleeps in ease,

having reached peace
of awareness.” — [AN 3:35](#)

I have heard that on one occasion the Blessed One was staying near Anupiyā in the Mango Grove. And on that occasion, Ven. Bhaddiya, Kāligodhā’s son, on going to the wilderness, to the root of a tree, or to an empty dwelling, would repeatedly exclaim, “What bliss! What bliss!”

A large number of monks heard Ven. Bhaddiya, Kāligodhā’s son, on going to the wilderness, to the root of a tree, or to an empty dwelling, repeatedly exclaim, “What bliss! What bliss!” and on hearing him, the thought occurred to them, “There’s no doubt but that Ven. Bhaddiya, Kāligodhā’s son, doesn’t enjoy leading the holy life, for when he was a householder he knew the bliss of kingship, so that now, on recollecting that when going to the wilderness, to the root of a tree, or to an empty dwelling, he is repeatedly exclaiming, ‘What bliss! What bliss!’”

So they went to the Blessed One and, on arrival, having bowed down to him, sat to one side. As they were sitting there, they told him, “Ven. Bhaddiya, Kāligodhā’s son, lord, on going to the wilderness, to the root of a tree, or to an empty dwelling, repeatedly exclaims, ‘What bliss! What bliss!’ There’s no doubt but that Ven. Bhaddiya doesn’t enjoy leading the holy life, for when he was a householder he knew the bliss of kingship, so that now, on recollecting that when going to the wilderness, to the root of a tree, or to an empty dwelling, he is repeatedly exclaiming, ‘What bliss! What bliss!’”

Then the Blessed One told a certain monk, “Come, monk. In my name, call Bhaddiya, saying, ‘The Teacher calls you, friend Bhaddiya.’”

Responding, “As you say, lord,” to the Blessed One, the monk went to Ven. Bhaddiya, Kāligodhā’s son, and on arrival he said to him, “The Teacher calls you, friend Bhaddiya.”

Responding, “As you say, my friend,” to the monk, Ven. Bhaddiya, Kāligodhā’s son, went to the Blessed One and, on arrival, having bowed down to him, sat to one side. As he was sitting there, the Blessed One said to him, “Is it true, Bhaddiya that—on going to the wilderness, to the root of a tree, or to an empty dwelling—you repeatedly exclaim, ‘What bliss! What bliss!’?”

“Yes, lord.”

“What compelling reason do you have in mind that—when going to the wilderness, to the root of a tree, or to an empty dwelling—you repeatedly exclaim, ‘What bliss! What bliss!’?”

“Before, when I had a householder, maintaining the bliss of kingship,¹ lord, I had guards posted within and without the royal apartments, within and without the city, within and without the countryside. But even though I was thus guarded, thus protected, I dwelled in fear—agitated, distrustful, & afraid. But now, on going alone to the wilderness, to the root of a tree, or to an empty dwelling, I dwell without fear, unagitated, confident, & unafraid—unconcerned, unruffled, living on the gifts of others, with my mind like a wild deer. This is the compelling reason I have in mind that—when going to the wilderness, to the root of a tree, or to an empty dwelling—I repeatedly exclaim, ‘What bliss! What bliss!’”

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

From whose heart
there is no provocation,
& for whom becoming & non-becoming
are overcome,
he— beyond fear,
blissful,
with no grief—
is one the devas can’t see. — Ud 2:10

III. Seclusion

Renouncing violence
for all living beings,
harming not even one of them,
you would not wish for offspring,
 so how a companion?
Wander alone
like a rhinoceros.

For a person by nature entangled
there are affections;
on the heels of affection, this pain.
Seeing the drawback born of affection,
wander alone
like a rhinoceros.

One whose mind
is enmeshed in sympathy
for friends & companions,
neglects the goal.
Seeing this danger in intimacy,
wander alone
like a rhinoceros.

If you gain an astute companion,
a fellow traveler, right-living, enlightened,
overcoming all troubles,
 go with him, gratified,
 mindful.

If you don't gain an astute companion,
a fellow traveler, right-living & wise,
 wander alone
like a king renouncing his kingdom,

like the elephant in the Matañga wilds,
[his herd].

We praise companionship
—yes!

Those on a par, or better,
should be chosen as friends.
If they're not to be found,
living faultlessly,
wander alone
like a rhinoceros.

Seeing radiant bracelets of gold,
well-made by a smith,
clinking, clashing,
two on an arm,
wander alone
like a rhinoceros,

[Thinking:]
“In the same way,
if I were to live with another,
there would be conversation or attachment.”
Seeing this future danger,
wander alone
like a rhinoceros.

Because sensual pleasures,
elegant, honeyed, & charming,
bewitch the mind with their manifold forms—
seeing this drawback in sensual strings—
wander alone
like a rhinoceros.

“Calamity, tumor, misfortune,
disease, an arrow, a danger for me.”
Seeing this danger in sensual strings,
wander alone
like a rhinoceros.

Cold & heat, hunger & thirst,
wind & sun, horseflies & snakes:
Enduring all these, without exception,
wander alone
like a rhinoceros.....

Avoid the evil companion
 disregarding the goal,
 intent on the discordant way.
Don't associate yourself
with someone heedless & hankering.
Wander alone
like a rhinoceros.

Consort with one who is learned,
 who maintains the Dhamma,
 a great & quick-witted friend.
Knowing the meanings,
subdue your perplexity,
[then] wander alone
like a rhinoceros.....

Unstartled, like a lion at sounds.
Unsnared, like the wind in a net.
Unsmeared, like a lotus in water:
Wander alone
like a rhinoceros.

Like a lion—forceful, strong in fang,
living as a conqueror, the king of beasts—
resort to a solitary dwelling.
Wander alone
like a rhinoceros.

At the right time consorting
with the release through goodwill,
 compassion,
 empathetic joy,
 equanimity,

unobstructed by all the world,
any world,
wander alone
like a rhinoceros.

Having let go of passion,
aversion,
delusion;
having shattered the fetters;
unfazed at the ending of life,
wander alone
like a rhinoceros.

People follow & associate
for a motive.
Friends without a motive these days
are rare.
They're shrewd for their own ends, & impure.
Wander alone
like a rhinoceros. — *Sn 1:3*

“When elephants & cow-elephants & calf-elephants & baby elephants go ahead of a wilderness tusker foraging for food and break off the tips of the grasses, the wilderness tusker feels irritated, upset, & disgusted. When elephants & cow-elephants & calf-elephants & baby elephants devour the wilderness tusker's bunches of branches, he feels irritated, upset, & disgusted. When elephants & cow-elephants & calf-elephants & baby elephants go ahead of the wilderness tusker on his way down to his bath and stir up the mud in the water with their trunks, he feels irritated, upset, & disgusted. When cow-elephants go along as the wilderness tusker is bathing and bang up against his body, he feels irritated, upset, & disgusted.

“Then the thought occurs to the wilderness tusker, ‘I now live hemmed in by elephants & cow-elephants & calf-elephants & baby elephants. I feed off grass with broken-off tips. My bunches of branches are devoured. I drink muddied water. Even when I bathe, cow-elephants go along and bang up against my body. What if I were to live alone, apart from the crowd?’

“So at a later time he lives alone, apart from the crowd. He feeds off grass with unbroken tips. His bunches of branches are undevoured. He drinks unmuddied water. When he bathes, cow-elephants don’t go along and bang up against his body. The thought occurs to him, ‘Before, I lived hemmed in by elephants & cow-elephants & calf-elephants & baby elephants. I fed off grass with broken-off tips. My bunches of branches were devoured. I drank muddied water. Even when I bathed, cow-elephants would go along and bang up against my body. But now I live alone, apart from the crowd. I feed off grass with unbroken tips. My bunches of branches are undevoured. I drink unmuddied water. When I bathe, cow-elephants don’t go along and bang up against my body.’ Breaking off a branch with his trunk and scratching his body with it, gratified, he allays his itch.

In the same way, when a monk lives hemmed in with monks, nuns, male & female lay followers, kings, royal ministers, sectarians, & their disciples, the thought occurs to him, ‘I now live hemmed in by monks, nuns, , male & female lay followers, kings, royal ministers, sectarians, & their disciples. What if I were to live alone, apart from the crowd?’

“So he seeks out a secluded dwelling: a wilderness, the shade of a tree, a mountain, a glen, a hillside cave, a charnel ground, a forest grove, the open air, a heap of straw. After his meal, returning from his alms round, he sits down, crosses his legs, holds his body erect, and brings mindfulness to the fore.

“Abandoning covetousness with regard to the world, he dwells with an awareness devoid of covetousness. He cleanses his mind of covetousness. Abandoning ill will & anger, he dwells with an awareness devoid of ill will, sympathetic with the welfare of all living beings. He cleanses his mind of ill will & anger. Abandoning sloth & drowsiness, he dwells with an awareness devoid of sloth & drowsiness, mindful, alert, percipient of light. He cleanses his mind of sloth & drowsiness. Abandoning restlessness & anxiety, he dwells undisturbed, his mind inwardly stilled. He cleanses his mind of restlessness & anxiety. Abandoning uncertainty, he dwells having crossed over uncertainty, with no perplexity with regard to skillful mental qualities. He cleanses his mind of uncertainty.

“Having abandoned these five hindrances—corruptions of awareness that weaken discernment—then quite secluded from sensuality, withdrawn from unskillful qualities, he enters & remains in the first jhāna: rapture & pleasure born of seclusion, accompanied by directed thought & evaluation. Gratified, he allays his itch.

“With the stilling of directed thoughts & evaluations, he enters & remains in the second jhāna: rapture & pleasure born of concentration, unification of awareness free from directed thought & evaluation—internal assurance. Gratified, he allays his itch.

“With the fading of rapture, he remains equanimous, mindful, & alert, and senses pleasure with the body. He enters & remains in the third jhāna, of which the noble ones declare, ‘Equanimous & mindful, he has a pleasant abiding.’ Gratified, he allays his itch.

“With the abandoning of pleasure & stress—as with the earlier disappearance of elation & distress—he enters & remains in the fourth jhāna: purity of equanimity & mindfulness, neither-pleasure-nor-pain. Gratified, he allays his itch.

“With the complete transcending of perceptions of [physical] form, with the disappearance of perceptions of resistance, and not heeding perceptions of diversity, (perceiving), ‘Infinite space,’ he enters & remains in the dimension of the infinitude of space. Gratified, he allays his itch.

“With the complete transcending of the dimension of the infinitude of space, (perceiving), ‘Infinite consciousness,’ he enters & remains in the dimension of the infinitude of consciousness. Gratified, he allays his itch.

“With the complete transcending of the dimension of the infinitude of consciousness, (perceiving), ‘There is nothing,’ he enters & remains in the dimension of nothingness. Gratified, he allays his itch.

“With the complete transcending of the dimension of nothingness, he enters & remains in the dimension of neither perception nor non-perception. Gratified, he allays his itch.

“With the complete transcending of the dimension of neither perception nor non-perception, he enters & remains in the cessation of perception & feeling. And, having seen [that] with discernment, his effluents are completely ended. Gratified, he allays his itch.” — [AN 9:40](#)

“Nāgita, there is the case where I see a monk sitting in concentration in a village dwelling. The thought occurs to me, ‘Soon a monastery attendant will disturb this venerable one in some way, or a novice will, and rouse him from his concentration.’ And so I am not pleased with that monk’s village-dwelling.

“But then there is the case where I see a monk sitting, nodding, in the wilderness. The thought occurs to me, ‘Soon this venerable one will dispel his drowsiness & fatigue and attend to the wilderness-perception,¹ (his mind) unified.’ And so I am pleased with that monk’s wilderness-dwelling.

“Then there is the case where I see a wilderness monk sitting unconcentrated in the wilderness. The thought occurs to me, ‘Soon this venerable one will center his unconcentrated mind, or protect his concentrated mind.’ And so I am pleased with that monk’s wilderness-dwelling.

“Then there is the case where I see a wilderness monk sitting in concentration in the wilderness. The thought occurs to me, ‘Soon this venerable one will release his unreleased mind, or protect his released mind.’ And so I am pleased with that monk’s wilderness-dwelling.²

“Then there is the case where I see a village-dwelling monk who receives robes, alms food, shelter, & medicinal requisites for curing the sick. Receiving, as he likes, those gains, offerings, & fame, he neglects seclusion, he neglects isolated forest & wilderness dwellings. He makes his living by visiting villages, towns, & cities. And so I am not pleased with that monk’s village-dwelling.

“Then there is the case where I see a wilderness monk who receives robes, alms food, shelter, & medicinal requisites for curing the sick. Fending off those gains, offerings, & fame, he doesn’t neglect seclusion, doesn’t neglect isolated forest & wilderness dwellings. And so I am pleased with that monk’s wilderness-dwelling.

“But when I am traveling along a road and see no one in front or behind me, at that time I have my ease, even when urinating & defecating.” — [AN 6:42](#)

Then a large number of monks went to the Blessed One and, on arrival, having bowed down to him, sat to one side. As they were sitting there, they informed him: “Lord, there is a certain monk by the name of Elder who lives alone and extols the virtues of living alone.”

Then the Blessed One told a certain monk, “Come, monk. In my name, call the monk named Elder, saying, ‘The Teacher calls you, my friend.’”

...

Then Ven. Elder went to the Blessed One and, on arrival, having bowed down to him, sat to one side. As he was sitting there, the Blessed One said to him, “Is it true, Elder, that you live alone and extol the virtues of living alone?”

“Yes, lord.”

“But how do you live alone and extol the virtues of living alone?”

“Lord, alone I enter the village for alms, alone I return, alone I sit withdrawn [in meditation], alone I do walking meditation. That is how I live alone and extol the virtues of living alone.”

“There is that way of living alone, Elder. I don’t say that there isn’t. Still, listen well to how your living alone is perfected in its details, and pay close attention. I will speak.”

“As you say, lord,” Ven. Elder responded.

The Blessed One said: “And how is living alone perfected in its details? There is the case where whatever is past is abandoned, whatever is future is relinquished, and any passion & desire with regard to states of being attained in the present is well subdued. That is how living alone is perfected in its details.”

That is what the Blessed One said. Having said it, the One Well-gone further said this:

“All-conquering,
all-knowing, intelligent;
with regard to all things,
unadhering;
all-abandoning,
released in the ending of craving:
him I call

a man who lives
alone.” — [*SN 21:10*](#)

“With craving his companion, a man
wanders on a long, long time.
Neither in this state here
nor anywhere else
does he go beyond
the wandering- on.
Knowing this drawback—
that craving brings stress into play—
free from craving,
devoid of clinging,
mindful, the monk
lives the mendicant life.” — [*Iti 15*](#)

Then Ven. Migajāla went to the Blessed One and on arrival, having bowed down to him, sat to one side. As he was sitting there he said to the Blessed One: “‘A person living alone. A person living alone,’ thus it is said. To what extent, lord, is one a person living alone, and to what extent is one a person living with a companion?”

“Migajāla, there are forms cognizable via the eye—agreeable, pleasing, charming, endearing, fostering desire, enticing—and a monk relishes them, welcomes them, & remains fastened to them. As he relishes them, welcomes them, & remains fastened to them, delight arises. There being delight, he is impassioned. Being impassioned, he is fettered. A monk joined with the fetter of delight is said to be living with a companion.

[Similarly with sounds, aromas, flavors, tactile sensations, & ideas.]

“A person living in this way—even if he frequents isolated forest & wilderness dwellings, with an unpopulated atmosphere, lying far from humanity, appropriate for seclusion—is still said to be living with a companion. Why is that? Because craving is his companion, and it has not been abandoned by him. Thus he is said to be living with a companion.

“Now, there are forms cognizable via the eye—agreeable, pleasing, charming, endearing, fostering desire, enticing—and a monk does not

relish them, welcome them, or remain fastened to them. As he doesn't relish them, welcome them, or remain fastened to them, delight ceases. There being no delight, he is not impassioned. Being not impassioned, he is not fettered. A monk disjoined from the fetter of delight is said to be living alone.

[Similarly with sounds, aromas, flavors, tactile sensations, & ideas.]

“A person living in this way—even if he lives near a village, associating with monks & nuns, with male & female lay followers, with kings & royal ministers, with sectarians & their disciples—is still said to be living alone. A person living alone is said to be a monk. Why is that? Because craving is his companion, and it has been abandoned by him. Thus he is said to be living alone.” — [SN 35:63](#)

IV. Non-entanglement

I have heard that on one occasion the Blessed One was staying near Sāvattthī at Jeta’s Grove, Anāthapiṇḍika’s monastery. And on that occasion a certain lay follower from Icchānaṅgalaka had arrived in Sāvattthī on some business affairs. Having settled his affairs in Sāvattthī, he went to the Blessed One and, on arrival, having bowed down to him, sat to one side. As he was sitting there, the Blessed One said to him, “At long last you have managed to come here.”

“For a long time, lord, have I wanted to come see the Blessed One, but being involved in one business affair after another, I have not been able to do so.”

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

How blissful it is, for one who has nothing,
who has mastered the Dhamma,
is learned.

See him suffering, one who has something,
a person bound in body
with people. — *Ud 2:5*

I have heard that on one occasion the Blessed One was staying near Sāvattthī at Jeta’s Grove, Anāthapiṇḍika’s monastery. And on that occasion the young wife of a certain wanderer was pregnant and on the verge of delivery. So she said to the wanderer, “Go, brahman, get some oil for my delivery.”

When this was said, the wanderer said to her, “But where can I get any oil?”

A second time, she said to him, “Go, brahman, get some oil for my delivery.”

A second time, he said to her, “But where can I get any oil?”

A third time, she said to him, “Go, brahman get some oil for my delivery.”

Now on that occasion at the storehouse of King Pasenadi Kosala contemplatives & brahmans were being given as much oil or ghee as they needed to drink, but not to take away. So the thought occurred to the wanderer, “At present at the storehouse of King Pasenadi Kosala contemplatives & brahmans are being given as much oil or ghee as they need to drink, but not to take away. Suppose, having gone there, I were to drink as much oil as I need and, on returning home, vomiting it up, were to give it to use at this delivery?”

So, having gone to the storehouse of King Pasenadi Kosala, he drank as much oil as he needed but, on returning home, was unable to bring it up or pass it down. So he rolled back & forth, suffering from fierce pains, sharp & severe. Then early in the morning the Blessed One adjusted his under robe and—carrying his bowl & robes—went into Sāvatthī for alms. He saw the wanderer rolling back & forth, suffering from fierce pains, sharp & severe.

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

How blissful it is, for one who has nothing.
Attainers-of-wisdom
are people with nothing.
See him suffering, one who has something,
a person bound in mind
with people. — [Ud 2:6](#)

“‘This Dhamma is for one who is reclusive, not for one who is entangled.’ Thus was it said. With reference to what was it said? There is the case where a monk, when living in seclusion, is visited by monks, nuns, lay men, lay women, kings, royal ministers, sectarians & their disciples. With his mind bent on seclusion, tending toward seclusion, inclined toward seclusion, aiming at seclusion, relishing renunciation, he converses with them only as much is necessary for them to take their leave.” — [AN 8:30](#)

V. Persistence

“‘This Dhamma is for one whose persistence is aroused, not for one who is lazy.’ Thus was it said. With reference to what was it said? There is the case where a monk keeps his persistence aroused for abandoning unskillful mental qualities and taking on skillful mental qualities. He is steadfast, solid in his effort, not shirking his duties with regard to skillful mental qualities.” — [*AN 8:30*](#)

“Monks, I have known two qualities through experience: discontent with regard to skillful qualities and unrelenting exertion. Relentlessly I exerted myself, (thinking,) ‘Gladly would I let the flesh & blood in my body dry up, leaving just the skin, tendons, & bones, but if I have not attained what can be reached through manly firmness, manly persistence, manly striving, there will be no relaxing my persistence.’ From this heedfulness of mine was attained awakening. From this heedfulness of mine was attained the unexcelled freedom from bondage.

“You, too, monks, should relentlessly exert yourselves, (thinking,) ‘Gladly would we let the flesh & blood in our bodies dry up, leaving just the skin, tendons, & bones, but if we have not attained what can be reached through manly firmness, manly persistence, manly striving, there will be no relaxing our persistence.’ You, too, in no long time will enter & remain in the supreme goal of the holy life for which clansmen rightly go forth from home into homelessness, directly knowing & realizing it for yourselves in the here & now.” — [*AN 2:5*](#)

As if struck by a sword,
as if his head were on fire,
a monk should live the wandering life
—mindful—
for the abandoning of sensual passion. — [*Thag 1:39*](#)

“These are the five factors for exertion. Which five?

[a] “There is the case where a monk has conviction, is convinced of the Tathāgata’s awakening: ‘Indeed, the Blessed One is pure 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.’

[b] “The monk is free from illness & discomfort, endowed with good digestion—not too cold, not too hot, of moderate strength—fit for exertion.

[c] “He is neither fraudulent nor deceitful. He declares himself to the Teacher or to his wise friends in the holy life in line with what he actually is.

[d] “He keeps his persistence aroused for abandoning unskillful mental qualities and taking on skillful mental qualities. He is steadfast, solid in his effort, not shirking his duties with regard to skillful mental qualities.

[e] “He is discerning, endowed with discernment leading to the arising of the goal—noble, penetrating, leading to the right ending of stress.

“These are the five factors for exertion.” — [AN 5:53](#)

“Then again, the monk finds pleasure & delight in developing [skillful mental qualities], finds pleasure & delight in abandoning [unskillful mental qualities]. He does not, on account of his pleasure & delight in developing & abandoning, exalt himself or disparage others. In this he is diligent, deft, alert, & mindful. This is said to be a monk standing firm in the ancient, original traditions of the noble ones.” — [AN 4:28](#)

“And how is a monk devoted to wakefulness? There is the case where a monk during the day, sitting & pacing back & forth, cleanses his mind of any qualities that would hold the mind in check. During the first watch of the night [dusk to 10 p.m.], sitting & pacing back & forth, he cleanses his mind of any qualities that would hold the mind in check. During the second watch of the night [10 p.m. to 2 a.m.], reclining on his right side, he takes up the lion’s posture, one foot placed on top of the other, mindful, alert, with his mind set on getting up [either as soon as he awakens or at a particular time]. During the last watch of the night [2 a.m. to dawn], sitting & pacing back & forth, he cleanses his mind of any

qualities that would hold the mind in check. This is how a monk is devoted to wakefulness.” — [AN 4:37](#)

The Buddha:

To me—
my mind resolute in exertion
near the river Nerañjarā,
making a great effort,
doing jhāna
to attain rest from the yoke—

Nāmuci¹ came,
speaking words of compassion:
“You are ashen, thin.
Death is in
your presence.

Death
has 1,000 parts of you.
Only one part
is your life.
Live, good sir!
Life is better.

Alive,
you can do
acts of merit.
Your living the holy life
and performing the fire sacrifice
will heap up much merit.

What use is exertion to you?
Hard to follow
—the path of exertion—
hard to do, hard
to sustain.”

Saying these verses,
Māra stood in the Awakened One’s presence.
And to that Māra, speaking thus,

the Blessed One
said this:

“Kinsman of the heedless,
 Evil One,
come here for whatever purpose:
I haven’t, for merit,
even the least bit of need.
Those who have need of merit:
Those are the ones
Māra’s fit to address.

In me are conviction
 austerity,
 persistence,
 discernment.

Why, when my mind is resolute,
do you petition me
 to live?

This wind could burn up
 even river currents.

Why, when my mind is resolute,
shouldn’t my blood dry away?
As my blood dries up,
gall & phlegm dry up.
as muscles waste away,
the mind grows clearer;
mindfulness, discernment,
concentration stand
 more firm.

Staying in this way,
attaining the ultimate feeling,²
the mind has no interest
in sensuality.

See:
 a being’s
 purity!

Sensual passions are your first army.
Your second is called Discontent.
Your third is Hunger & Thirst.
Your fourth is called Craving.
Fifth is Sloth & Torpor.
Sixth is called Cowardice.
Your seventh is Uncertainty.
Dismissiveness & Stubbornness, your eighth.
Gains, Offerings, Fame, & Status
wrongly gained,
and whoever would praise self
& disparage others:

That, Nāmuci, is your army,
the Dark One's commando force.
A coward can't defeat it,
but one having defeated it
gains bliss.
Do I carry muñja grass?³
I spit on my life.
Death in battle would be better for me
than that I, defeated,
survive.

Sinking here, they don't appear,
some brahmans & contemplatives.
They don't know the path
by which those with good practices
go.

Seeing the bannered force
on all sides—
the troops, Māra
along with his mount—
I go into battle.
May they not budge me
from
my spot.

That army of yours,
that the world with its devas
can't overcome,
I will smash with discernment—
as an unfired pot with a stone.

Making my resolve mastered,
mindfulness well-established,
I will go about, from kingdom to kingdom,
training many disciples.
They—heedful, resolute in mind,
doing my bidding—
despite your wishes, will go
where, having gone,
there's no grief.”

Māra:

“For seven years, I’ve dogged
the Blessed One’s steps,
but haven’t gained an opening
in the One Self-Awakened
& glorious.
A crow circled a stone
the color of fat
—’Maybe I’ve found
something tender here.
Maybe there’s something delicious’—
but not getting anything delicious there,
the crow went away.
Like the crow attacking the rock,
I weary myself with Gotama.”

As he was overcome with sorrow,
his lute fell from under his arm.
Then he, the despondent spirit,
right there
disappeared. — [*Sn* 3:2](#)

NOTES

1. Māra.
2. The highest equanimity that can be attained through jhāna.
3. Muñja grass was the ancient Indian equivalent of a white flag. A warrior expecting that he might have to surrender would take muñja grass into battle with him. If he did surrender, he would lie down with the muñja grass in his mouth. The Buddha, in asking this rhetorical question, is indicating that he is not the type of warrior who would carry muñja grass. If defeated, he would rather die than surrender.

“Monks, there are these four courses of action. Which four? There is the course of action that is unpleasant to do and that, when done, leads to what is unprofitable. There is the course of action that is unpleasant to do but that, when done, leads to what is profitable. There is the course of action that is pleasant to do but that, when done, leads to what is unprofitable. There is the course of action that is pleasant to do and that, when done, leads to what is profitable.

“Now as for the course of action that is unpleasant to do and that, when done, leads to what is unprofitable, one considers it as not worth doing for both reasons: because the course of action is unpleasant to do, one considers it as not worth doing; and because the course of action, when done, leads to what is unprofitable, one considers it as not worth doing. Thus one considers it as not worth doing for both reasons.

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

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

is unprofitable.’ So he does it, and thus the doing of that course of action leads to what is unprofitable for him. But a wise person reflects, ‘Even though this course of action is pleasant to do, still when it is done it leads to what is unprofitable.’ So he doesn’t do it, and thus the non-doing of that course of action leads to what is profitable for him.

“As for the course of action that is pleasant to do and that, when done, leads to what is profitable, one considers it as worth doing for both reasons: because the course of action is pleasant to do, one considers it as worth doing; and because the course of action, when done, leads to what is profitable, one considers it as worth doing. Thus one considers it as worth doing for both reasons.

“These are the four courses of action.” — [AN 4:115](#)

“Even if a monk is not skilled in the ways of the minds of others [not skilled in reading the minds of others], he should train himself: ‘I will be skilled in reading my own mind.’

“And how is a monk skilled in reading his own mind? Imagine a young woman—or man—youthful, fond of adornment, examining the image of her own face in a bright, clean mirror or bowl of clear water: If she saw any dirt or blemish there, she would try to remove it. If she saw no dirt or blemish there, she would be pleased, her resolves fulfilled: ‘How fortunate I am! How clean I am!’ In the same way, a monk’s self-examination is very productive in terms of skillful qualities (if he conducts it in this way): ‘Do I usually remain covetous or not? With thoughts of ill will or not? Overcome by sloth & drowsiness or not? Restless or not? Uncertain or gone beyond uncertainty? Angry or not? With soiled thoughts or unsoiled thoughts? With my body aroused or unaroused? Lazy or with persistence aroused? Unconcentrated or concentrated?’

“If, on examination, a monk knows, ‘I usually remain covetous, with thoughts of ill will, overcome by sloth & drowsiness, restless, uncertain, angry, with soiled thoughts, with my body aroused, lazy, or unconcentrated,’ then he should put forth extra desire, effort, diligence, endeavor, relentlessness, mindfulness, & alertness for the abandoning of those very same evil, unskillful qualities. Just as when a person whose turban or head was on fire would put forth extra desire, effort, diligence,

endeavor, relentlessness, mindfulness, & alertness to put out the fire on his turban or head; in the same way, the monk should put forth extra desire, effort, diligence, endeavor, relentlessness, mindfulness, & alertness for the abandoning of those very same evil, unskillful qualities.

“But if, on examination, a monk knows, ‘I usually remain uncovetous, without thoughts of ill will, free of sloth & drowsiness, not restless, gone beyond uncertainty, not angry, with unsoiled thoughts, with my body unaroused, with persistence aroused, & concentrated,’ then his duty is to make an effort in maintaining those very same skillful qualities to a higher degree for the ending of the effluents.” — [*AN 10:51*](#)

[Ven. Mahā Kassapa:] “There is the case where a monk thinks, ‘The arising of unarisen evil, unskillful qualities would lead to what is unbeneficial,’ yet he arouses no ardency. ‘The non-abandoning of arisen evil, unskillful qualities would lead to what is unbeneficial,’ yet he arouses no ardency. ‘The non-arising of unarisen skillful qualities would lead to what is unbeneficial,’ yet he arouses no ardency. ‘The ceasing of arisen skillful qualities would lead to what is unbeneficial,’ yet he arouses no ardency. This is what it means to be a person without ardency.

“And how is one a person without compunction? There is the case where a monk thinks, ‘The arising of unarisen evil, unskillful qualities would lead to what is unbeneficial,’ yet he feels no compunction. ‘The non-abandoning of arisen evil, unskillful qualities.... The non-arising of unarisen skillful qualities.... The ceasing of arisen skillful qualities would lead to what is unbeneficial,’ yet he feels no compunction. This is what it means to be a person without compunction. This is how a person without ardency, without compunction, is incapable of self-awakening, incapable of unbinding, incapable of attaining the unexcelled security from bondage.

“And how is a person ardent? There is the case where a monk thinks, ‘The arising of unarisen evil, unskillful qualities would lead to what is unbeneficial,’ and he arouses ardency. ‘The non-abandoning of arisen evil, unskillful qualities.... The non-arising of unarisen skillful qualities.... The ceasing of arisen skillful qualities would lead to what is unbeneficial,’ and he arouses ardency. This is what it means to be ardent.

“And how is a person with compunction? There is the case where a monk thinks, ‘The arising of unarisen evil, unskillful qualities would lead to what is unbeneficial,’ and he feels compunction. ‘The non-abandoning of arisen evil, unskillful qualities.... The non-arising of unarisen skillful qualities.... The ceasing of arisen skillful qualities would lead to what is unbeneficial,’ and he feels compunction. This is what it means to be with compunction. This is how a person with ardency & compunction is capable of self-awakening, capable of unbinding, capable of attaining the unexcelled security from bondage.” — [*SN 16:2*](#)

[Ven. Sāriputta:] “When an individual, being blemished, doesn’t discern that ‘I have an inner blemish,’ it can be expected of him that he will not generate desire, endeavor, or arouse persistence for the abandoning of that blemish. He will die with passion, with aversion, with delusion—blemished & with a mind defiled.

“Just like a bronze bowl brought back from a shop or a family of smiths all covered with dust & dirt, that the owners would neither use nor clean, but would throw away in a dusty place: Wouldn’t that bronze bowl eventually become even more dirty & defiled with time?”

[Ven. Mahā Moggallāna:] “Yes, my friend.”

[Ven. Sāriputta:] “In the same way, friend, when an individual, being blemished, doesn’t discern as it has come to be that ‘I have an inner blemish,’ it can be expected of him that he will not generate desire, endeavor, or arouse persistence for the abandoning of that blemish. He will die with passion, with aversion, with delusion—blemished & with a mind defiled.

“Then again, when an individual, being blemished, discerns as it has come to be that ‘I have an inner blemish,’ it can be expected of him that he will generate desire, endeavor, & arouse persistence for the abandoning of that blemish. He will die without passion, without aversion, without delusion—unblemished & with a mind undefiled.

“Just like a bronze bowl brought back from a shop or a family of smiths all covered with dust & dirt, that the owners would both use & clean, and would not throw away in a dusty place: Wouldn’t that bronze bowl eventually become clean & pure with time?”

[Ven. Mahā Moggallāna:] “Yes, my friend.”

[Ven. Sāriputta:] “In the same way, friend, when an individual, being blemished, discerns as it has come to be that ‘I have an inner blemish,’ it can be expected of him that he will generate desire, endeavor, & arouse persistence for the abandoning of that blemish. He will die without passion, without aversion, without delusion—unblemished & with a mind undefiled.

“Then again, when an individual, being unblemished, doesn’t discern as it has come to be that ‘I have no inner blemish,’ it can be expected of him that he will attend to the theme of beauty. As he attends to the theme of beauty, passion will assault his mind. He will die with passion, with aversion, with delusion—blemished & with a mind defiled.

“Just like a bronze bowl brought back from a shop or a family of smiths clean & pure, that the owners would neither use nor clean, but would throw away in a dusty place. Wouldn’t that bronze bowl eventually become dirty & defiled with time?”

[Ven. Mahā Moggallāna:] “Yes, my friend.”

[Ven. Sāriputta:] “In the same way, when an individual, being unblemished, doesn’t discern as it has come to be that ‘I have no inner blemish,’ it can be expected of him that he will attend to the theme of beauty. As he attends to the theme of beauty, passion will assault his mind. He will die with passion, with aversion, with delusion—blemished & with a mind defiled.

“Then again, when an individual, being unblemished, discerns as it has come to be that ‘I have no inner blemish,’ it can be expected of him that he will not attend to the theme of beauty. As he doesn’t attend to the theme of beauty, passion won’t assault his mind. He will die without passion, without aversion, without delusion—unblemished & with a mind undefiled.

“Just like a bronze bowl brought back from a shop or a family of smiths clean & pure, that the owners would both use & clean, and would not throw away in a dusty place: Wouldn’t that bronze bowl eventually become even more clean & pure with time?”

[Ven. Mahā Moggallāna:] “Yes, my friend.”

[Ven. Sāriputta:] “In the same way, friend, when an individual, being unblemished, discerns as it has come to be that ‘I have no inner blemish,’

it can be expected of him that he will not attend to the theme of beauty. As he doesn't attend to the theme of beauty, passion won't assault his mind. He will die without passion, without aversion, without delusion—unblemished & with a mind undefiled.

“This, friend Moggallāna, is the reason, this is the cause why, of the two individuals who are blemished, one is called the inferior man and one is called the superior man. This is the reason, this is the cause why, of the two individuals who are unblemished, one is called the inferior man and one is called the superior man.”

[Ven. Mahā Moggallāna:] “‘Blemish, blemish’ it’s said. What does ‘blemish’ stand for?”

[Ven. Sāriputta:] “The influences of evil, unskillful wishes: That’s what ‘blemish’ stands for.” — [*MN*5](#)

“Udāyin, there are these four types of people to be found existing in the world. Which four? There is the case where a certain person is practicing for the abandoning & relinquishing of acquisitions. As he is practicing for the abandoning & relinquishing of acquisitions, memories & resolves associated with acquisitions assail him. He tolerates them. He doesn't abandon them, destroy them, dispel them, or wipe them out of existence. I tell you, Udāyin, that this sort of person is associated, not dissociated. Why is that? Because I have known the diversity of faculties with regard to this type of person.

“Then again, there is the case where a certain person practicing for the abandoning & relinquishing of acquisitions...is assailed by memories & resolves associated with the acquisitions. He doesn't tolerate them. He abandons them, destroys them, dispels them, & wipes them out of existence. I tell you, Udāyin, that this sort of person is associated, not dissociated. Why is that? Because I have known the diversity of faculties with regard to this type of person.

“Then again, there is the case where a certain person is practicing for the abandoning & relinquishing of acquisitions.... Owing to lapses in mindfulness from time to time, he is assailed by memories & resolves associated with acquisitions. Slow is the arising of his mindfulness, but then he quickly abandons [those memories & resolves], destroys them, dispels them, & wipes them out of existence. Just as when two or three

drops of water fall onto an iron pan heated all day: Slow is the falling of the drops of water, but they quickly vanish & disappear. In the same way...slow is the arising of his mindfulness, but then he quickly abandons [those memories & resolves], destroys them, dispels them, & wipes them out of existence. I tell you, Udāyin, that this sort of person is associated, not dissociated. Why is that? Because I have known the diversity of faculties with regard to this type of person.

“Then again, there is the case where a certain person, realizing that acquisitions are the root of suffering & stress, is without acquisitions, released in the ending of acquisitions. I tell you, Udāyin, that this sort of person is dissociated, not associated. Why is that? Because I have known the diversity of faculties with regard to this type of person.” — [MN 66](#)

“Monks, there are these eight grounds for laziness. Which eight?

[1] “There is the case where a monk **has some work to do**. The thought occurs to him: ‘I will have to do this work. But when I have done this work, my body will be tired. Why don’t I lie down?’ So he lies down. He doesn’t make an effort for the attaining of the as-yet-unattained, the reaching of the as-yet-unreached, the realization of the as-yet-unrealized. This is the first ground for laziness.

[2] “Then there is the case where a monk **has done some work**. The thought occurs to him: ‘I have done some work. Now that I have done work, my body is tired. Why don’t I lie down?’ So he lies down....

[3] “Then there is the case where a monk **has to go on a journey**. The thought occurs to him: ‘I will have to go on this journey. But when I have gone on the journey, my body will be tired. Why don’t I lie down?’ So he lies down....

[4] “Then there is the case where a monk **has gone on a journey**. The thought occurs to him: ‘I have gone on a journey. Now that I have gone on a journey, my body is tired. Why don’t I lie down?’ So he lies down....

[5] “Then there is the case where a monk, having gone for alms in a village or town, **doesn’t get as much coarse or refined food as he would like for his fill**. The thought occurs to him: ‘I, having gone for alms in a village or town, haven’t gotten as much coarse or refined food as I would like for my fill. This body of mine is tired & unsuitable for work. Why don’t I lie down?’ So he lies down....

[6] “Then there is the case where a monk, having gone for alms in a village or town, **gets as much coarse or refined food as he would like for his fill**. The thought occurs to him: ‘I, having gone for alms in a village or town, have gotten as much coarse or refined food as I would like for my fill. This body of mine is heavy & unsuitable for work—stuffed with beans, as it were. Why don’t I lie down?’ So he lies down....

[7] “Then there is the case where a monk **comes down with a slight illness**. The thought occurs to him: ‘I have come down with a slight illness. There’s a need to lie down.’ So he lies down....

[8] “Then there is the case where a monk **has recovered from his illness, not long after his recovery**. The thought occurs to him: ‘I have recovered from my illness. It’s not long after my recovery. This body of mine is weak & unsuitable for work. Why don’t I lie down?’ So he lies down. He doesn’t make an effort for the attaining of the as-yet-unattained, the reaching of the as-yet-unreached, the realization of the as-yet-unrealized. This is the eighth ground for laziness.

“These are the eight grounds for laziness.

“There are these eight grounds for the arousal of energy. Which eight?

[1] “There is the case where a monk **has some work to do**. The thought occurs to him: ‘I will have to do this work. But when I am doing this work, it won’t be easy to attend to the Buddha’s message. Why don’t I make an effort beforehand for the attaining of the as-yet-unattained, the reaching of the as-yet-unreached, the realization of the as-yet-unrealized?’ So he makes an effort for the attaining of the as-yet-unattained, the reaching of the as-yet-unreached, the realization of the as-yet-unrealized. This is the first ground for the arousal of energy.

[2] “Then there is the case where a monk **has done some work**. The thought occurs to him: ‘I have done some work. While I was doing work, I couldn’t attend to the Buddha’s message. Why don’t I make an effort for the attaining of the as-yet-unattained, the reaching of the as-yet-unreached, the realization of the as-yet-unrealized?’ So he makes an effort for the attaining of the as-yet-unattained, the reaching of the as-yet-unreached, the realization of the as-yet-unrealized. This is the second ground for the arousal of energy.

[3] “Then there is the case where a monk **has to go on a journey**. The thought occurs to him: ‘I will have to go on this journey. But when I am

going on the journey, it won't be easy to attend to the Buddha's message. Why don't I make an effort beforehand for the attaining of the as-yet-unattained, the reaching of the as-yet-unreached, the realization of the as-yet-unrealized?' So he makes an effort for the attaining of the as-yet-unattained, the reaching of the as-yet-unreached, the realization of the as-yet-unrealized. This is the third ground for the arousal of energy.

[4] "Then there is the case where a monk **has gone on a journey**. The thought occurs to him: 'I have gone on a journey. While I was going on the journey, I couldn't attend to the Buddha's message. Why don't I make an effort for the attaining of the as-yet-unattained, the reaching of the as-yet-unreached, the realization of the as-yet-unrealized?' So he makes an effort for the attaining of the as-yet-unattained, the reaching of the as-yet-unreached, the realization of the as-yet-unrealized. This is the fourth ground for the arousal of energy.

[5] "Then there is the case where a monk, having gone for alms in a village or town, **doesn't get as much coarse or refined food as he would like for his fill**. The thought occurs to him: 'I, having gone for alms in a village or town, haven't gotten as much coarse or refined food as I would like for my fill. This body of mine is light & suitable for work. Why don't I make an effort for the attaining of the as-yet-unattained, the reaching of the as-yet-unreached, the realization of the as-yet-unrealized?' So he makes an effort for the attaining of the as-yet-unattained, the reaching of the as-yet-unreached, the realization of the as-yet-unrealized. This is the fifth ground for the arousal of energy.

[6] "Then there is the case where a monk, having gone for alms in a village or town, **gets as much coarse or refined food as he would like for his fill**. The thought occurs to him: 'I, having gone for alms in a village or town, have gotten as much coarse or refined food as I would like for my fill. This body of mine is light & suitable for work. Why don't I make an effort for the attaining of the as-yet-unattained, the reaching of the as-yet-unreached, the realization of the as-yet-unrealized?' So he makes an effort for the attaining of the as-yet-unattained, the reaching of the as-yet-unreached, the realization of the as-yet-unrealized. This is the sixth ground for the arousal of energy.

[7] "Then there is the case where a monk **comes down with a slight illness**. The thought occurs to him: 'I have come down with a slight

illness. Now, there's the possibility that it could get worse. Why don't I make an effort beforehand for the attaining of the as-yet-unattained, the reaching of the as-yet-unreached, the realization of the as-yet-unrealized?' So he makes an effort for the attaining of the as-yet-unattained, the reaching of the as-yet-unreached, the realization of the as-yet-unrealized. This is the seventh ground for the arousal of energy.

[8] "Then there is the case where a **monk has recovered from his illness, not long after his recovery**. The thought occurs to him: 'I have recovered from my illness. It's not long after my recovery. Now, there's the possibility that the illness could come back. Why don't I make an effort beforehand for the attaining of the as-yet-unattained, the reaching of the as-yet-unreached, the realization of the as-yet-unrealized?' So he makes an effort for the attaining of the as-yet-unattained, the reaching of the as-yet-unreached, the realization of the as-yet-unrealized. This is the eighth ground for the arousal of energy.

"These are the eight grounds for the arousal of energy." — [AN 8:95](#)

As Ven. Soṇa was meditating in seclusion [after doing walking meditation until the skin of his soles was split & bleeding], this train of thought arose in his awareness: "Of the Blessed One's disciples who have aroused their persistence, I am one, but my mind is not released from the fermentations through lack of clinging/sustenance. Now, my family has enough wealth that it would be possible to enjoy wealth & make merit. What if I were to disavow the training, return to the lower life, and to enjoy wealth & make merit?"

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

“Yes, lord.”

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

“Yes, lord.”

“...And when the strings of your vina were too taut, was your vina in tune & playable?”

“No, lord.”

“...And when the strings of your vina were too loose, was your vina in tune & playable?”

“No, lord.”

“...And when the strings of your vina were neither too taut nor too loose, but tuned (lit: ‘established’) to be right on pitch, was your vina in tune & playable?”

“Yes, lord.”

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

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

So after that, Ven. Soṇa determined the right pitch for his persistence, attuned the pitch of the [five] faculties [to that], and there picked up his theme. Dwelling alone, secluded, heedful, ardent, & resolute, he in no long time reached & remained in the supreme goal of the holy life for which clansmen rightly go forth from home into homelessness, knowing & realizing it for himself in the here & now. He knew: “Birth is ended, the holy life fulfilled, the task done. There is nothing further for the sake of this world.” And thus Ven. Soṇa became another one of the arahants. —

[AN 6:55](#)

“There are these four right exertions. Which four? 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. These are the four right exertions.

“Just as the River Ganges flows to the east, slopes to the east, inclines to the east, in the same way when a monk develops & pursues the four right exertions, he flows to unbinding, slopes to unbinding, inclines to unbinding.” — SN 49:1

“There are these four exertions. Which four? The exertion to guard, the exertion to abandon, the exertion to develop, & the exertion to maintain.

“And what is the exertion to guard? There is the case where a monk, on seeing a form with the eye, doesn’t grasp at any theme or variations by which—if he were to dwell without restraint over the faculty of the eye—evil, unskillful qualities such as greed or distress might assail him. He practices with restraint. He guards the faculty of the eye. He achieves restraint with regard to the faculty of the eye. (Similarly with the ear, nose, tongue, body, & intellect.) This is called the exertion to guard.

“And what is the exertion to abandon? There is the case where a monk doesn’t acquiesce to a thought of sensuality that has arisen [in him]. He abandons it, destroys it, dispels it, wipes it out of existence. He doesn’t acquiesce to a thought of ill will... a thought of harmfulness... any evil, unskillful qualities that have arisen [in him]. He abandons them, destroys them, dispels them, wipes them out of existence. This is called the exertion to abandon.

“And what is the exertion to develop? There is the case where a monk develops the *mindfulness* factor for awakening dependent on seclusion... dispassion... cessation, resulting in letting go. He develops the *analysis of qualities* factor for awakening... the *persistence* factor for awakening... the *rapture* factor for awakening... the *calm* factor for awakening... the *concentration* factor for awakening... the *equanimity* factor for awakening dependent on seclusion... dispassion... cessation, resulting in letting go. This is called the exertion to develop.

“And what is the exertion to maintain? There is the case where a monk maintains a favorable theme of concentration—the skeleton perception, the worm-eaten perception, the livid perception, the festering perception, the falling-apart perception, the bloated perception. This is called the exertion to maintain.

“These are the four exertions:

“Guarding & abandoning,
developing & maintaining:
these four exertions, taught
by the Kinsman of the Sun
[the Buddha].

A monk who strives
ardently at them
reaches the ending
of stress.” — *AN 4:14*

“The ending of the effluents is for one who knows & sees, I tell you, not for one who does not know & does not see. For one who knows what & sees what? Appropriate attention & inappropriate attention. When a monk attends inappropriately, unarisen effluents arise, and arisen effluents increase. When a monk attends appropriately, unarisen effluents do not arise, and arisen effluents are abandoned. There are effluents that are to be abandoned by seeing, those that are to be abandoned by restraining, those that are to be abandoned by using, those that are to be abandoned by tolerating, those that are to be abandoned by avoiding, those that are to be abandoned by destroying, and those that are to be abandoned by developing.

[1] “And what are the effluents that are to be abandoned by seeing? There is the case where an uninstructed, run-of-the-mill person... doesn’t discern what ideas are fit for attention, or what ideas are unfit for attention. This being so, he doesn’t attend to ideas fit for attention, and attends [instead] to ideas unfit for attention. And what are the ideas unfit for attention that he attends to? Whatever ideas such that, when he attends to them, the unarisen effluent of sensuality arises, and the arisen effluent of sensuality increases; the unarisen effluent of becoming...the

unarisen effluent of ignorance arises, and the arisen effluent of ignorance increases....

This is how he attends inappropriately: ‘Was I in the past? Was I not in the past? What was I in the past? How was I in the past? Having been what, what was I in the past? Shall I be in the future? Shall I not be in the future? What shall I be in the future? How shall I be in the future? Having been what, what shall I be in the future?’ Or else he is inwardly perplexed about the immediate present: ‘Am I? Am I not? What am I? How am I? Where has this being come from? Where is it bound?’”

As he attends inappropriately in this way, one of six kinds of view arises in him: The view *I have a self* arises in him as true & established, or the view *I have no self*... or the view *It is precisely by means of self that I perceive self*... or the view *It is precisely by means of self that I perceive not-self*... or the view *It is precisely by means of not-self that I perceive self* arises in him as true & established, or else he has a view like this: *This very self of mine—the knower that is sensitive here & there to the ripening of good & bad actions—is the self of mine that is constant, everlasting, eternal, not subject to change, and will endure as long as eternity.* This is called a thicket of views, a wilderness of views, a contortion of views, a writhing of views, a fetter of views. Bound by a fetter of views, the uninstructed run-of-the-mill person is not freed from birth, aging, & death, from sorrow, lamentation, pain, distress, & despair. He is not freed, I tell you, from stress.

“The well-instructed disciple of the noble ones...discerns what ideas are fit for attention, and what ideas are unfit for attention. This being so, he doesn’t attend to ideas unfit for attention, and attends [instead] to ideas fit for attention....And what are the ideas fit for attention that he attends to? Whatever ideas such that, when he attends to them, the unarisen effluent of sensuality doesn’t arise, and the arisen effluent of sensuality is abandoned; the unarisen effluent of becoming...the unarisen effluent of ignorance doesn’t arise, and the arisen effluent of ignorance is abandoned....

He attends appropriately, *This is stress... This is the origination of stress... This is the cessation of stress... This is the way leading to the cessation of stress.* As he attends appropriately in this way, three fetters are abandoned in him: identity-view, doubt, and grasping at precepts &

practices. These are called the effluents that are to be abandoned by seeing.

[2] “And what are the effluents that are to be abandoned by restraining? There is the case where a monk, reflecting appropriately, dwells restrained with the restraint of the eye-faculty. The effluents, vexation, or fever that would arise if he were to dwell unrestrained with the restraint of the eye-faculty don’t arise for him when he dwells restrained with the restraint of the eye-faculty. (Similarly with the ear, nose, tongue, body, & intellect-faculties.) These are called the effluents that are to be abandoned by restraining.

[3] “And what are the effluents that are to be abandoned by using? There is the case where a monk, reflecting appropriately, uses the robe simply to counteract cold, to counteract heat, to counteract the touch of flies, mosquitoes, wind, sun, & reptiles; simply for the purpose of covering the parts of the body that cause shame.

“Reflecting appropriately, he uses alms food, not playfully, nor for intoxication, nor for putting on bulk, nor for beautification; but simply for the survival & continuance of this body, for ending its afflictions, for the support of the holy life, thinking, ‘Thus will I destroy old feelings [of hunger] and not create new feelings [from overeating]. I will maintain myself, be blameless, & live in comfort.’

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

“Reflecting appropriately, he uses medicinal requisites for curing illness simply to counteract any pains of illness that have arisen and for maximum freedom from disease.

“The effluents, vexation, or fever that would arise if he were not to use these things [in this way] do not arise for him when he uses them [in this way]. These are called the effluents that are to be abandoned by using.

[4] “And what are the effluents that are to be abandoned by tolerating? There is the case where a monk, reflecting appropriately, endures. He tolerates cold, heat, hunger, & thirst; the touch of flies, mosquitoes, wind, sun, & reptiles; ill-spoken, unwelcome words & bodily feelings that, when they arise, are painful, racking, sharp, piercing,

disagreeable, displeasing, & menacing to life. The effluents, vexation, or fever that would arise if he were not to tolerate these things do not arise for him when he tolerates them. These are called the effluents that are to be abandoned by tolerating.

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

[6] “And what are the effluents that are to be abandoned by destroying? There is the case where a monk, reflecting appropriately, doesn’t tolerate an arisen thought of sensuality. He abandons it, destroys it, dispels it, & wipes it out of existence. (Similarly with thoughts of ill will, thoughts of cruelty, & evil, unskillful mental qualities.) The effluents, vexation, or fever that would arise if he were not to destroy these things do not arise for him when he destroys them. These are called the effluents that are to be abandoned by destroying.

[7] “And what are the effluents that are to be abandoned by developing? There is the case where a monk, reflecting appropriately, develops *mindfulness* as a factor for awakening dependent on seclusion... dispassion... cessation, resulting in letting go. He develops *analysis of qualities* as a factor for awakening... *persistence*... *rapture*... *calm*... *concentration*... *equanimity* as a factor for awakening dependent on seclusion... dispassion... cessation, resulting in letting go. The effluents, vexation, or fever that would arise if he were not to develop these qualities do not arise for him when he develops them. These are called the effluents that are to be abandoned by developing.

“When a monk’s effluents that should be abandoned by seeing have been abandoned by seeing,

his effluents that should be abandoned by restraining have been abandoned by restraining,

his effluents that should be abandoned by using have been abandoned by using,

his effluents that should be abandoned by tolerating have been abandoned by tolerating,

his effluents that should be abandoned by avoiding have been abandoned by avoiding,

his effluents that should be abandoned by destroying have been abandoned by destroying,

his effluents that should be abandoned by developing have been abandoned by developing,

then he is called a monk who dwells restrained with the restraint of all the effluents. He has severed craving, thrown off the fetters, and—through the right penetration of conceit—has made an end of suffering & stress.” — [MN 2](#)

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

“Suppose that a man is in love with a woman, his mind ensnared with intense desire & passion. He sees her standing with another man, chatting, joking, & laughing. What do you think, monks: Would he... feel sorrow, lamentation, pain, distress, & despair?”

“Yes, lord....”

“Now suppose the thought were to occur to him, ‘I am in love with this woman.... When I see her standing with another man, chatting, joking, & laughing, I feel sorrow, lamentation, pain, distress, & despair. Why don’t I abandon my desire & passion for that woman?’ So he abandons his desire & passion for that woman, and afterwards sees her standing with another man, chatting, joking, & laughing. What do you think, monks: Would he... feel sorrow, lamentation, pain, distress, & despair?”

“No, lord....”

“In the same way, the monk, when not loaded down, doesn’t load himself down with pain, nor does he reject pleasure that accords with the Dhamma, although he is not infatuated with that pleasure.... He exerts a fabrication against the [first] cause of stress... and develops equanimity with regard to the [second] cause of stress.... Thus the stress [coming from any cause of the first sort] is abolished... & the stress [coming from any cause of the second sort] is abolished.

“Then again, the monk notices this: ‘When I live according to my pleasure, unskillful mental qualities increase in me & skillful qualities decline. When I exert myself with stress & pain, though, unskillful qualities decline in me & skillful qualities increase. Why don’t I exert myself with stress & pain?’ So he exerts himself with stress & pain, and while he is exerting himself with stress & pain, unskillful qualities decline in him, & skillful qualities increase. Then at a later time he would no longer exert himself with stress & pain. Why is that? Because he has attained the goal for which he was exerting himself with stress & pain....

“Suppose that a fletcher were to heat & warm an arrow shaft between two flames, making it straight & pliable. Then at a later time he would no longer heat & warm the shaft between two flames, making it straight & pliable. Why is that? Because he has attained the goal for which he was heating & warming the shaft.... In the same way, the monk... no longer exerts himself with stress & pain. Why is that? Because he has attained the goal for which he was exerting himself with stress & pain.” — [*MN 101*](#)

[A deva:] “Tell me, dear sir, how you crossed over the flood.”

[The Buddha:] “I crossed over the flood without pushing forward, without staying in place.”

[The deva:] “But how did you cross over the flood without pushing forward, without staying in place?”

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

The deva:

At long last I see
an honorable one, totally unbound,
who without pushing forward,
without staying in place,
has crossed over
the entanglements of the world. — [*SN 1:1*](#)

VI. Virtue

Better than a hundred years
lived without virtue, uncentered, is
one day
lived by a virtuous person
absorbed in jhāna. — *Dhp 110*

Virtue is a blessing
into old age. — *Dhp 333*

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

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

“Then again, abandoning taking what is not given (stealing), the disciple of the noble ones abstains from taking what is not given. 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 second gift, the second great gift...

“Then again, abandoning illicit sex, the disciple of the noble ones abstains from illicit sex. 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 third gift, the third great gift....

“Then again, abandoning lying, the disciple of the noble ones abstains from lying. 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 fourth gift, the fourth great gift....

“Then again, abandoning the use of intoxicants, the disciple of the noble ones 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 brahmans & contemplatives.” — [AN8:39](#)

“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 a plane of 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 a plane of 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](#)

“Abandoning false speech, he abstains from false speech. He speaks the truth, holds to the truth, is firm, reliable, no deceiver of the world.

“Abandoning divisive speech he abstains from divisive speech. What he has heard here he doesn’t tell there to break those people apart from these people here. What he has heard there he doesn’t tell here to break these people apart from those people there. Thus reconciling those who have broken apart or cementing those who are united, he loves concord, delights in concord, enjoys concord, speaks things that create concord.

“Abandoning abusive speech, he abstains from abusive speech. He speaks words that are soothing to the ear, that are affectionate, that go to the heart, that are polite, appealing & pleasing to people at large.

“Abandoning idle chatter, he abstains from idle chatter. He speaks in season, speaks what is factual, what is in accordance with the goal, the Dhamma, & the Vinaya. He speaks words worth treasuring, seasonable, reasonable, circumscribed, connected with the goal.” — [AN 10:99](#)

“Abandoning sexual misconduct, he abstains from sexual misconduct. He doesn’t 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.

“Abandoning false speech, he 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 royal court proceeding], if he is asked as a witness, ‘Come & tell, good man, what you know’: If he doesn’t know, he says, ‘I don’t know.’ If he does know, he says, ‘I know.’ If he hasn’t seen, he says, ‘I haven’t seen.’ If he has seen, he says, ‘I have seen.’ Thus he doesn’t consciously tell a lie for his own sake, for the sake of another, or for the sake of any reward.” *[This paragraph is missing in the PTS translation.]* — [AN 10:165](#)

“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](#)

At that time Ven. Rāhula was staying at the Mango Stone. Then the Blessed One, arising from his seclusion in the late afternoon, went to where Ven. Rāhula was staying at the Mango Stone. Ven. Rāhula saw him coming from afar and, on seeing him, set out a seat & water for washing the feet. The Blessed One sat down on the seat set out and, having sat down, washed his feet. Ven. Rāhula, bowing down to the Blessed One, sat down to one side.

Then the Blessed One, having left a little bit of the remaining water in the water dipper, said to Ven. Rāhula, “Rāhula, do you see this little bit of remaining water left in the water dipper?”

“Yes sir.”

“That’s how little of a contemplative (*sāmañña*) there is in anyone who feels no shame at telling a deliberate lie.”

Having tossed away the little bit of remaining water, the Blessed One said to Ven. Rāhula, “Rāhula, do you see how this little bit of remaining water is tossed away?”

“Yes, sir.”

“Whatever there is of a contemplative in anyone who feels no shame at telling a deliberate lie is tossed away just like that.”

Having turned the water dipper upside down, the Blessed One said to Ven. Rāhula, “Rāhula, do you see how this water dipper is turned upside down?”

“Yes, sir.”

“Whatever there is of a contemplative in anyone who feels no shame at telling a deliberate lie is turned upside down just like that.”

Having turned the water dipper right-side up, the Blessed One said to Ven. Rāhula, “Rāhula, do you see how empty & hollow this water dipper is?”

“Yes, sir.”

“Whatever there is of a contemplative in anyone who feels no shame at telling a deliberate lie is empty & hollow just like that.”

“Rāhula, it’s like a royal elephant: immense, pedigreed, accustomed to battles, its tusks like chariot poles. Having gone into battle, it uses its forefeet & hindfeet, its forequarters & hindquarters, its head & ears & tusks & tail, but will simply hold back its trunk. The elephant trainer notices that and thinks, ‘This royal elephant has not given up its life to the king.’ But when the royal elephant... having gone into battle, uses its forefeet & hindfeet, its forequarters & hindquarters, its head & ears & tusks & tail & his trunk, the trainer notices that and thinks, ‘This royal elephant has given up its life to the king. There is nothing it will not do.’

“The same holds true with anyone who feels no shame in telling a deliberate lie: There is no evil, I tell you, he will not do. Thus, Rāhula, you should train yourself, ‘I will not tell a deliberate lie even in jest.’” —

[MN 61](#)

Then, after the night had passed, the Blessed One early in the morning put on his robes and, carrying his bowl and outer robe, went to Prince Abhaya’s home. On arrival, he sat down on a seat made ready. Prince Abhaya, with his own hand, served & satisfied the Blessed One with fine staple & non-staple foods. Then, when the Blessed One had eaten and had removed his hand from his bowl, Prince Abhaya took a lower seat

and sat down to one side. As he was sitting there he said to the Blessed One, “Venerable sir, would the Tathāgata say words that are unendearing & disagreeable to others?”

“Prince, there is no categorical yes-or-no answer to that.”

“Then right here, venerable sir, the Nigaṇṭhas are destroyed.”

“But prince, why do you say, ‘Then right here, venerable sir, the Nigaṇṭhas are destroyed’?”

“Just yesterday, venerable sir, I went to Nigaṇṭha Nāṭaputta and ... he said to me ... ‘Come now, prince. Go to the contemplative Gotama and on arrival say this: “Venerable sir, would the Tathāgata say words that are unendearing & disagreeable to others?” If the contemplative Gotama, thus asked, answers, “The Tathāgata would say words that are unendearing & disagreeable to others,” then you should say, “Then how is there any difference between you, venerable sir, and run-of-the-mill people? For even run-of-the-mill people say words that are unendearing & disagreeable to others.” But if the contemplative Gotama, thus asked, answers, “The Tathāgata would not say words that are unendearing & disagreeable to others,” then you should say, “Then how, venerable sir, did you say of Devadatta that ‘Devadatta is headed for destitution, Devadatta is headed for hell, Devadatta will boil for an eon, Devadatta is incurable’? For Devadatta was upset & disgruntled at those words of yours.” When the contemplative Gotama is asked this two-pronged question by you, he won’t be able to swallow it down or spit it up. Just as if a two-horned chestnut were stuck in a man’s throat: he would not be able to swallow it down or spit it up. In the same way, when the contemplative Gotama is asked this two-pronged question by you, he won’t be able to swallow it down or spit it up.”

Now at that time a baby boy was lying face-up on the prince’s lap. So the Blessed One said to the prince, “What do you think, prince: If this young boy, through your own negligence or that of the nurse, were to take a stick or a piece of gravel into its mouth, what would you do?”

“I would take it out, venerable sir. If I couldn’t get it out right away, then holding its head in my left hand and crooking a finger of my right, I would take it out, even if it meant drawing blood. Why is that? Because I have sympathy for the young boy.”

“In the same way, prince:

[1] In the case of words that the Tathāgata knows to be unfactual, untrue, unbeneficial (or: not connected with the goal), unendearing & disagreeable to others, he doesn't say them.

[2] In the case of words that the Tathāgata knows to be factual, true, unbeneficial, unendearing & disagreeable to others, he doesn't say them.

[3] In the case of words that the Tathāgata knows to be factual, true, beneficial, but unendearing & disagreeable to others, he has a sense of the proper time for saying them.

[4] In the case of words that the Tathāgata knows to be unfactual, untrue, unbeneficial, but endearing & agreeable to others, he doesn't say them.

[5] In the case of words that the Tathāgata knows to be factual, true, unbeneficial, but endearing & agreeable to others, he doesn't say them.

[6] In the case of words that the Tathāgata knows to be factual, true, beneficial, and endearing & agreeable to others, he has a sense of the proper time for saying them. Why is that? Because the Tathāgata has sympathy for living beings.” — [MN 58](#)

Vassakāra the brahman, the minister to the king of Magadha, approached the Blessed One and, on arrival, exchanged courteous greetings with him. After an exchange of friendly greetings & courtesies, he sat down to one side. As he was sitting there he said to the Blessed One: “I am of the view, of the opinion, that when anyone speaks of what he has seen, [saying,] ‘Thus have I seen,’ there is no fault in that. When anyone speaks of what he has heard, [saying,] ‘Thus have I heard,’ there is no fault in that. When anyone speaks of what he has sensed, [saying,] ‘Thus have I sensed,’ there is no fault in that. When anyone speaks of what he has cognized, [saying,] ‘Thus have I cognized,’ there is no fault in that.”

[The Blessed One responded:] “I don't say, brahman, that everything that has been seen should be spoken about. Nor do I say that everything that has been seen should not be spoken about. [Similarly with what has been heard, sensed, or cognized.] “When, for one who speaks of what has been seen, unskillful mental qualities increase and skillful mental qualities decrease, then that sort of thing should not be spoken about. But when, for one who speaks of what has been seen, unskillful mental

qualities decrease and skillful mental qualities increase, then that sort of thing should be spoken about. [Similarly with what has been heard, sensed, or cognized.]”

Then Vassakāra the brahman, delighting & rejoicing in the Blessed One’s words, got up from his seat and left. — [*AN* 4:183](#)

VII. Concentration

Visākha: “Now what is concentration, what qualities are its themes, what qualities are its requisites, and what is its development?”

Sister Dhammadinnā: “Singleness of mind is concentration; the four frames of reference are its themes; the four right exertions are its requisites; and any cultivation, development, & pursuit of these qualities is its development.” — [*MN* 44](#).

“You should train yourself thus: ‘Goodwill, 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.” — *AN 8:63*

“Having abandoned the five hindrances—imperfections of awareness that weaken discernment—the 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...mind...mental qualities in & of themselves—ardent, alert, & mindful—putting aside greed & distress with reference to the world. Just as if an elephant trainer were to plant a large post in the ground and were to bind a forest elephant to it by the neck in order to break it of its forest habits, its forest memories & resolves, its distraction, fatigue, & fever over leaving the forest, to make it delight in the town and to inculcate in it habits congenial to human beings; in the same way, these four frames of reference are bindings for the awareness of the disciple of the noble ones, to break him of his household habits, his household memories &

resolves, his distraction, fatigue, & fever over leaving the household life, for the attainment of the right method and the realization of Unbinding.

“Then the Tathāgata trains him further: ‘Come, monk, remain focused on the body in & of itself, but do not think any thoughts connected with the body. Remain focused on feelings in & of themselves, but do not think any thoughts connected with feelings. Remain focused on the mind in & of itself, but do not think any thoughts connected with mind. Remain focused on mental qualities in & of themselves, but do not think any thoughts connected with mental qualities.’ With the stilling of directed thought & evaluation, he enters the second jhāna....” — [*MN 125*](#)

“Ānanda, there is the case of a monk who remains focused on the body in & of itself—ardent, alert, & mindful—putting aside greed & distress with reference to the world. As he remains thus focused on the body in & of itself, a fever based on the body arises within his body, or there is sluggishness in his awareness, or his mind becomes scattered externally. He should then direct his mind to any inspiring theme [Comm: such as recollection of the Buddha]. As his mind is directed to any inspiring theme, delight arises within him. In one who feels delight, rapture arises. In one whose mind is enraptured, the body grows serene. His body serene, he feels pleasure. As he feels pleasure, his mind grows concentrated. He reflects, ‘I have attained the aim to which my mind was directed. Let me withdraw [my mind from the inspiring theme].’ He withdraws & engages neither in directed thought nor in evaluation. He discerns, ‘I am not thinking or evaluating. I am inwardly mindful & at ease.’

[Similarly with the other frames of reference.]

“This, Ānanda, is development based on directing. And what is development based on not directing? A monk, when not directing his mind to external things, discerns, ‘My mind is not directed to external things. It is not attentive to what is in front or behind. It is released & undirected. And furthermore I remain focused on the body in & of itself. I am ardent, alert, mindful, & at ease.’

“When not directing his mind to external things, he discerns, ‘My mind is not directed to external things. It is not attentive to what is in front or behind. It is released & undirected. And furthermore I remain focused on

feelings... mind...mental qualities in & of themselves. I am ardent, alert, mindful, & at ease.’

“This, Ānanda, is development based on not directing.” — [SN 47:10](#)

“Now, how is mindfulness of in-&-out breathing developed & pursued so as to bring the four establishing of mindfulness to their culmination?

“There is the case where a monk, having gone to the wilderness, to the shade of a tree, or to an empty building, sits down folding his legs crosswise, holding his body erect, and setting mindfulness to the fore. Always mindful, he breathes in; mindful he breathes out.

“[1] Breathing in long, he discerns that he is breathing in long; or breathing out long, he discerns that he is breathing out long. [2] Or breathing in short, he discerns that he is breathing in short; or breathing out short, he discerns that he is breathing out short. [3] He trains himself to breathe in sensitive to the entire body, and to breathe out sensitive to the entire body. [4] He trains himself to breathe in calming bodily fabrication, and to breathe out calming bodily fabrication.

“[5] He trains himself to breathe in sensitive to rapture, and to breathe out sensitive to rapture. [6] He trains himself to breathe in sensitive to pleasure, and to breathe out sensitive to pleasure. [7] He trains himself to breathe in sensitive to mental fabrications, and to breathe out sensitive to mental fabrications. [8] He trains himself to breathe in calming mental fabrication, and to breathe out calming mental fabrication.

“[9] He trains himself to breathe in sensitive to the mind, and to breathe out sensitive to the mind. [10] He trains himself to breathe in gladdening the mind, and to breathe out gladdening the mind. [11] He trains himself to breathe in concentrating the mind, and to breathe out concentrating the mind. [12] He trains himself to breathe in releasing the mind, and to breathe out releasing the mind.

“[13] He trains himself to breathe in focusing on inconstancy, and to breathe out focusing on inconstancy. [14] He trains himself to breathe in focusing on dispassion [*literally*, fading], and to breathe out focusing on dispassion. [15] He trains himself to breathe in focusing on cessation, and to breathe out focusing on cessation. [16] He trains himself to breathe in focusing on relinquishment, and to breathe out focusing on relinquishment.

“[I] Now, on whatever occasion a monk breathing in long discerns that he is breathing in long; or breathing out long, discerns that he is breathing out long; or breathing in short, discerns that he is breathing in short; or breathing out short, discerns that he is breathing out short; trains himself to breathe in...&... out sensitive to the entire body; trains himself to breathe in...&...out calming bodily fabrication: On that occasion the monk remains focused on the *body* in & of itself—ardent, alert, & mindful—subduing greed & distress with reference to the world. I tell you, monks, that this—the in-&-out breath—is classed as a body among bodies, which is why the monk on that occasion remains focused on the body in & of itself—ardent, alert, & mindful—putting aside greed & distress with reference to the world.

“[II] On whatever occasion a monk trains himself to breathe in...&...out sensitive to rapture; trains himself to breathe in...&...out sensitive to pleasure; trains himself to breathe in...&...out sensitive to mental fabrication; trains himself to breathe in...&...out calming mental fabrication: On that occasion the monk remains focused on *feelings* in & of themselves—ardent, alert, & mindful—subduing greed & distress with reference to the world. I tell you, monks, that this—close attention to in-&-out breaths—is classed as a feeling among feelings,⁶ which is why the monk on that occasion remains focused on feelings in & of themselves—ardent, alert, & mindful—putting aside greed & distress with reference to the world.

“[III] On whatever occasion a monk trains himself to breathe in...&... out sensitive to the mind; trains himself to breathe in...&...out gladdening the mind; trains himself to breathe in...&...out concentrating the mind; trains himself to breathe in...&...out releasing the mind: On that occasion the monk remains focused on the *mind* in & of itself—ardent, alert, & mindful—subduing greed & distress with reference to the world. I don’t say that there is mindfulness of in-&-out breathing in one of confused mindfulness and no alertness, which is why the monk on that occasion remains focused on the mind in & of itself—ardent, alert, & mindful—putting aside greed & distress with reference to the world.

“[IV] On whatever occasion a monk trains himself to breathe in...&... out focusing on inconstancy; trains himself to breathe in...&...out focusing on dispassion; trains himself to breathe in...&...out focusing on

cessation; trains himself to breathe in...&...out focusing on relinquishment: On that occasion the monk remains focused on *mental qualities* in & of themselves—ardent, alert, & mindful—subduing greed & distress with reference to the world. He who sees clearly with discernment the abandoning of greed & distress is one who oversees with equanimity, which is why the monk on that occasion remains focused on mental qualities in & of themselves—ardent, alert, & mindful—putting aside greed & distress with reference to the world.

“This is how mindfulness of in-&-out breathing is developed & pursued so as to bring the four establishings of mindfulness to their culmination.” — [*MN 118*](#)

“A monk endowed with these five qualities is incapable of entering & remaining in right concentration. Which five? He cannot withstand [the impact of] sights, he cannot withstand sounds... aromas... tastes... tactile sensations. A monk endowed with these five qualities is not capable of entering & remaining in right concentration.

“A monk endowed with these five qualities is capable of entering & remaining in right concentration. Which five? He can withstand [the impact of] sights... sounds... aromas... tastes... tactile sensations. A monk endowed with these five qualities is capable of entering & remaining in right concentration.” — *AN 5:113*

“A monk who has not abandoned these six qualities is incapable of entering & remaining in the first jhāna. Which six? Sensual desire, ill will, sloth & drowsiness, restlessness & anxiety, uncertainty, and not seeing well with right discernment, as they have come to be, the drawbacks of sensual pleasures....

“A monk who has not abandoned these six qualities is incapable of entering & remaining in the first jhāna. Which six? Thoughts of sensuality, thoughts of ill will, thoughts of harmfulness, perceptions of sensuality, perceptions of ill will, perceptions of harmfulness.” — [*AN 6:73=74*](#)

“A monk endowed with these six qualities is capable of mastering strength in concentration. Which six?

“There is the case where a monk is skilled in the attaining of concentration, in the maintenance of concentration, & in the exit from concentration. He is deliberate in doing it, persevering in doing it, and amenable to doing it.

“A monk endowed with these six qualities is capable of mastering strength in concentration.” — *AN 6:72*

“When a monk is intent on the heightened mind, there are five themes he should attend to at the appropriate times. Which five?

“There is the case where evil, unskillful thoughts—connected with desire, aversion, or delusion—arise in a monk while he is referring to & attending to a particular theme. He should attend to another theme, apart from that one, connected with what is skillful. When he is attending to this other theme... those evil, unskillful thoughts... are abandoned & subside. With their abandoning, he steadies his mind right within, settles it, unifies it, & concentrates it. Just as a skilled carpenter or his apprentice would use a small peg to knock out, drive out, & pull out a large one; in the same way... he steadies his mind right within, settles it, unifies it, & concentrates it.

“If evil, unskillful thoughts—connected with desire, aversion, or delusion—still arise in the monk while he is attending to this other theme, connected with what is skillful, he should scrutinize the drawbacks of those thoughts: ‘Truly, these thoughts of mine are unskillful... blameworthy... these thoughts of mine result in stress.’ As he is scrutinizing their drawbacks... those evil, unskillful thoughts... are abandoned & subside. With their abandoning, he steadies his mind right within, settles it, unifies it, & concentrates it. Just as a young woman—or man—fond of adornment, would be horrified, humiliated, & disgusted if the carcass of a snake or a dog or a human being were hung from her neck; in the same way... the monk steadies his mind right within, settles it, unifies it, & concentrates it.

“If evil, unskillful thoughts—connected with desire, aversion or delusion—still arise in the monk while he is scrutinizing the drawbacks of those thoughts, he should pay no mind & pay no attention to those thoughts. As he is paying no mind & paying no attention to them... those evil, unskillful thoughts are abandoned & subside. With their

abandoning, he steadies his mind right within, settles it, unifies it, & concentrates it. Just as a man with good eyes, not wanting to see forms that had come into range, would close his eyes or look away; in the same way... the monk steadies his mind right within, settles it, unifies it, & concentrates it.

“If evil, unskillful thoughts—connected with desire, aversion or delusion—still arise in the monk while he is paying no mind & paying no attention to those thoughts, he should attend to the relaxing of thought-fabrication with regard to those thoughts. As he is attending to the relaxing of thought-fabrication with regard to those thoughts... those evil, unskillful thoughts are abandoned & subside. With their abandoning, he steadies his mind right within, settles it, unifies it, & concentrates it. Just as the thought would occur to a man walking quickly, ‘Why am I walking quickly? Why don’t I walk slowly?’ So he walks slowly. The thought occurs to him, ‘Why am I walking slowly? Why don’t I stand?’ So he stands. The thought occurs to him, ‘Why am I standing? Why don’t I sit down?’ So he sits down. The thought occurs to him, ‘Why am I sitting? Why don’t I lie down?’ So he lies down. In this way, giving up the grosser posture, he takes up the more refined one. In the same way... the monk steadies his mind right within, settles it, unifies it, & concentrates it.

“If evil, unskillful thoughts—connected with desire, aversion or delusion—still arise in the monk while he is attending to the relaxing of thought-fabrication with regard to those thoughts, then—with his teeth clenched & his tongue pressed against the roof of his mouth—he should beat down, constrain, & crush his mind with his awareness. As—with his teeth clenched & his tongue pressed against the roof of his mouth—he is beating down, constraining, & crushing his mind with his awareness... those evil, unskillful thoughts are abandoned & subside. With their abandoning, he steadies his mind right within, settles it, unifies it, & concentrates it. Just as a strong man, seizing a weaker man by the head or the throat or the shoulders, would beat him down, constrain, & crush him; in the same way... the monk steadies his mind right within, settles it, unifies it, & concentrates it.

“Now when a monk...attending to another theme... scrutinizing the drawbacks of those thoughts... paying no mind & paying no attention to those thoughts... attending to the relaxing of thought-fabrication with

regard to those thoughts... beating down, constraining & crushing his mind with his awareness... steadies his mind right within, settles it, unifies it, & concentrates it: He is then called a monk with mastery over the ways of thought sequences. He thinks whatever thought he wants to, and doesn't think whatever thought he doesn't. He has severed craving, thrown off the fetters, and—through the right penetration of conceit—has made an end of suffering & stress.” — [MN 20](#)

“There are these gross impurities in gold: dirty sand, gravel, & grit. The dirt-washer or his apprentice, having placed [the gold] in a vat, washes it again & again until he has washed them away.

“When he is rid of them, there remain the moderate impurities in the gold: coarse sand & fine grit. He washes the gold again & again until he has washed them away.

“When he is rid of them, there remain the fine impurities in the gold: fine sand & black dust. The dirt-washer or his apprentice washes the gold again & again until he has washed them away.

“When he is rid of them, there remains just the gold dust. The goldsmith or his apprentice, having placed it in a crucible, blows on it again & again to blow away the dross. The gold, as long as it has not been blown on again & again to the point where the impurities are blown away, as long as it is not refined & free from dross, is not pliant, malleable, or luminous. It is brittle and not ready to be worked. But there comes a time when the goldsmith or his apprentice has blown on the gold again & again until the dross is blown away. The gold...is then refined, free from dross, pliant, malleable, & luminous. It is not brittle, and is ready to be worked. Then whatever sort of ornament he has in mind—whether a belt, an earring, a necklace, or a gold chain—the gold would serve his purpose.

“In the same way, there are these gross impurities in a monk intent on heightened mind: misconduct in body, speech, & mind. These the monk—aware & able by nature—abandons, destroys, dispels, wipes out of existence. When he is rid of them, there remain in him the moderate impurities: thoughts of sensuality, ill will, & harmfulness. These he... wipes out of existence. When he is rid of them there remain in him the fine impurities: thoughts of his caste, thoughts of his home district,

thoughts related to not wanting to be despised. These he... wipes out of existence.

“When he is rid of them, there remain only thoughts of the Dhamma. His concentration is neither calm nor refined, it has not yet attained serenity or unity, and is kept in place by the fabrication of forceful restraint. But there comes a time when his mind grows steady inwardly, settles down, grows unified & concentrated. His concentration is calm & refined, has attained serenity & unity, and is no longer kept in place by the fabrication of forceful restraint. Then whichever of the six higher knowledges he turns his mind to know & realize, he can witness them for himself whenever there is an opening.” — *AN 3:100*

“A monk intent on heightened mind should attend periodically to three themes: He should attend periodically to the theme of concentration; he should attend periodically to the theme of uplifted energy; he should attend periodically to the theme of equanimity. If the monk intent on heightened mind were to attend solely to the theme of concentration, it’s possible that his mind would tend to laziness. If he were to attend solely to the theme of uplifted energy, it’s possible that his mind would tend to restlessness. If he were to attend solely to the theme of equanimity, it’s possible that his mind would not be rightly concentrated for the ending of the effluents. But when he attends periodically to the theme of concentration, attends periodically to the theme of uplifted energy, attends periodically to the theme of equanimity, his mind is pliant, malleable, luminous, & not brittle. It is rightly concentrated for the ending of the effluents.

“Just as if a goldsmith or goldsmith’s apprentice were to set up a smelter. Having set up the smelter, he would fire the receptacle. Having fired the receptacle, he would take hold of some gold with his tongs and place it in the receptacle. Periodically he would blow on it, periodically sprinkle it with water, periodically examine it closely. If he were solely to blow on it, it’s possible that the gold would burn up. If he were solely to sprinkle it with water, it’s possible that the gold would grow cold. If he were solely to examine it closely, it’s possible that the gold would not come to full perfection. But when he periodically blows on it, periodically sprinkles it with water, periodically examines it closely, the gold becomes pliant, malleable, & luminous. It is not brittle, and is ready to be worked.

Then whatever sort of ornament he has in mind—whether a belt, an earring, a necklace, or a gold chain—the gold would serve his purpose.

“In the same way, a monk intent on heightened mind should attend periodically to three themes: He should attend periodically to the theme of concentration; he should attend periodically to the theme of uplifted energy; he should attend periodically to the theme of equanimity. If the monk intent on heightened mind were to attend solely to the theme of concentration, it’s possible that his mind would tend to laziness. If he were to attend solely to the theme of uplifted energy, it’s possible that his mind would tend to restlessness. If he were to attend solely to the theme of equanimity, it’s possible that his mind would not be rightly concentrated for the ending of the effluents. But when he attends periodically to the theme of concentration, attends periodically to the theme of uplifted energy, attends periodically to the theme of equanimity, his mind is pliant, malleable, luminous, and not brittle. It is rightly concentrated for the ending of the effluents.

“And then whichever of the higher knowledges he turns his mind to know & realize, he can witness them for himself whenever there is an opening.” — [*AN 3:103*](#)

“There are these four developments of concentration. Which four? There is the development of concentration that, when developed & pursued, leads to a pleasant abiding in the here & now. There is the development of concentration that... leads to the attainment of knowledge & vision. There is the development of concentration that... leads to mindfulness & alertness. There is the development of concentration that, when developed & pursued, leads to the ending of the effluents.

“And what is the development of concentration that, when developed & pursued, leads to a pleasant abiding in the here & now? There is the case where a monk—quite secluded from sensuality, secluded from unskillful qualities—enters & remains in the first jhāna: rapture & pleasure born of seclusion, accompanied by directed thought & evaluation. With the stilling of directed thoughts & evaluations, he enters & remains in the second jhāna: rapture & pleasure born of concentration, unification of awareness free from directed thought & evaluation—

internal assurance. With the fading of rapture he remains equanimous, mindful, & alert, and senses pleasure with the body. He enters & remains in the third jhāna, of which the noble ones declare, ‘Equanimous & mindful, he has a pleasant abiding.’ With the abandoning of pleasure & pain—as with the earlier disappearance of elation & distress—he enters & remains in the fourth jhāna: purity of equanimity & mindfulness, neither pleasure nor pain. This is the development of concentration that... leads to a pleasant abiding in the here & now.

“And what is the development of concentration that... leads to the attainment of knowledge & vision? There is the case where a monk attends to the perception of light and is resolved on the perception of daytime [at any hour of the day]. Day [for him] is the same as night, night is the same as day. By means of an awareness open & unhampered, he develops a brightened mind. This is the development of concentration that... leads to the attainment of knowledge & vision.

“And what is the development of concentration that... leads to mindfulness & alertness? There is the case where feelings are known to the monk as they arise, known as they persist, known as they subside. Perceptions are known to him as they arise, known as they persist, known as they subside. Thoughts are known to him as they arise, known as they persist, known as they subside. This is the development of concentration that... leads to mindfulness & alertness.

“And what is the development of concentration that... leads to the ending of the effluents? There is the case where a monk remains focused on arising & falling away with reference to the five clinging-aggregates: ‘Such is form, such its origination, such its disappearance. Such is feeling... Such is perception... Such are fabrications... Such is consciousness, such its origination, such its disappearance.’ This is the development of concentration that... leads to the ending of the effluents.

“These are the four developments of concentration.” — [*AN 4:41*](#)

“Now what, monks, is five-factored noble right concentration? There is the case where a monk—quite secluded from sensuality, secluded from unskillful qualities—enters & remains in the first jhāna: rapture & pleasure born from seclusion, accompanied by directed thought & evaluation. He permeates & pervades, suffuses & fills this very body with

the rapture & pleasure born from withdrawal. There is nothing of his entire body unpervaded by rapture & pleasure born from seclusion.

“Just as if a skilled bathman or bathman’s apprentice would pour bath powder into a brass basin and knead it together, sprinkling it again & again with water, so that his ball of bath powder—saturated, moisture-laden, permeated within & without—would nevertheless not drip; even so, the monk permeates... this very body with the rapture & pleasure born from seclusion. There is nothing of his entire body unpervaded by rapture & pleasure born from seclusion. This is the first development of the five-factored noble right concentration.

“Then again, with the stilling of directed thoughts & evaluations, he enters & remains in the second jhāna: rapture & pleasure born from concentration, unification of awareness free from directed thought & evaluation—internal assurance. He permeates & pervades, suffuses & fills this very body with the rapture & pleasure born of composure. There is nothing of his entire body unpervaded by rapture & pleasure born of composure.

“Just like a lake with spring-water welling up from within, having no inflow from east, west, north, or south, and with the skies periodically supplying abundant showers, so that the cool fount of water welling up from within the lake would permeate & pervade, suffuse & fill it with cool waters, there being no part of the lake unpervaded by the cool waters; even so, the monk permeates... this very body with the rapture & pleasure born from concentration. There is nothing of his entire body unpervaded by rapture & pleasure born from concentration. This is the second development of the five-factored noble right concentration.

“And furthermore, with the fading of rapture he remains equanimous, mindful, & alert, and senses pleasure with the body. He enters & remains in the third jhāna, of which the noble ones declare, ‘Equanimous & mindful, he has a pleasant abiding.’ He permeates & pervades, suffuses & fills this very body with the pleasure divested of rapture, so that there is nothing of his entire body unpervaded with pleasure divested of rapture.

“Just as in a blue-, white-, or red-lotus pond, there may be some of the blue, white, or red lotuses which, born & growing in the water, stay immersed in the water and flourish without standing up out of the water, so that they are permeated & pervaded, suffused & filled with cool water

from their roots to their tips, and nothing of those blue, white, or red lotuses would be unpervaded with cool water; even so, the monk permeates... this very body with the pleasure divested of rapture. There is nothing of his entire body unpervaded with pleasure divested of rapture. This is the third development of the five-factored noble right concentration.

“And furthermore, with the abandoning of pleasure & pain—as with the earlier disappearance of elation & distress—he enters & remains in the fourth jhāna: purity of equanimity & mindfulness, neither-pleasure-nor-pain. He sits, permeating the body with a pure, bright awareness, so that there is nothing of his entire body unpervaded by pure, bright awareness.

“Just as if a man were sitting wrapped from head to foot with a white cloth so that there would be no part of his body to which the white cloth did not extend; even so, the monk sits, permeating his body with a pure, bright awareness. There is nothing of his entire body unpervaded by pure, bright awareness. This is the fourth development of the five-factored noble right concentration.

“And furthermore, the monk has his theme of reflection well in hand, well attended to, well considered, well tuned [well penetrated] by means of discernment.

“Just as if one person were to reflect on another, or a standing person were to reflect on a sitting person, or a sitting person were to reflect on a person lying down; even so, monks, the monk has his theme of reflection well in hand, well attended to, well pondered, well tuned by means of discernment. This is the fifth development of the five-factored noble right concentration.

“When a monk has developed & pursued the five-factored noble right concentration in this way, then whichever of the six higher knowledges he turns his mind to know & realize, he can witness them for himself whenever there is an opening.

“Imagine a water jar, set on a stand, brimful of water so that a crow could drink from it. If a strong man were to tip it in any way at all, would water spill out?”

“Yes, lord.”

“In the same way, when a monk has developed & pursued the five-factored noble right concentration in this way, then whichever of the six higher knowledges he turns his mind to know & realize, he can witness them for himself whenever there is an opening.

“Imagine a rectangular water tank—set on level ground, bounded by dikes—brimful of water so that a crow could drink from it. If a strong man were to loosen the dikes anywhere at all, would water spill out?

“Yes, lord....”

“Imagine a chariot on level ground at four crossroads, harnessed to thoroughbreds, waiting with whips lying ready, so that a skilled driver, a trainer of tamable horses, might mount and—taking the reins with his left hand and the whip with his right—drive out & back, to whatever place and by whichever road he liked; in the same way, when a monk has developed & pursued the five-factored noble right concentration in this way, then whichever of the six higher knowledges he turns his mind to know & realize, he can witness them for himself whenever there is an opening.” — [AN 5:28](#)

[Vassakāra:] “Once, Ven. Ānanda, Ven. Gotama was living at Vesāli in the Hall with the peaked roof in the Great Forest. I went to where he was staying in the Great Forest...and there he spoke in a variety of ways on jhāna. Ven. Gotama was both endowed with jhāna and made jhāna his habit. In fact, he praised all sorts of jhāna.”

[Ven. Ānanda:] “It wasn’t the case that the Blessed One praised all sorts of jhāna, nor did he criticize all sorts of jhāna. And what sort of jhāna didn’t he praise? There is the case where a certain person dwells with his awareness overcome by sensual passion, obsessed with sensual passion. He doesn’t discern the escape, as it actually is present, from sensual passion once it has arisen. Making that sensual passion the focal point, he absorbs himself with it, besorbs, resorbs, & supersorbs himself with it.

“He dwells with his awareness overcome by ill will... sloth & drowsiness... restlessness & anxiety... uncertainty, obsessed with uncertainty. He doesn’t discern the escape, as it actually is present, from uncertainty once it has arisen. Making that uncertainty the focal point, he

absorbs himself with it, besorbs, resorbs, & supersorbs himself with it. This is the sort of jhāna that the Blessed One did not praise.

“And what sort of jhāna did he praise? There is the case where a monk—quite secluded from sensuality, secluded from unskillful qualities—enters & remains in the first jhāna...the second jhāna... the third jhāna... the fourth jhāna: purity of equanimity & mindfulness, neither pleasure nor pain. This is the sort of jhāna that the Blessed One praised.

[Vassakāra:] “It would seem, Ven. Ānanda, that the Ven. Gotama criticized the jhāna that deserves criticism, and praised that which deserves praise.” — [*MN 108*](#)

“Suppose there was a mountain cow—foolish, inexperienced, unfamiliar with her pasture, unskilled in roaming on rugged mountains—and she were to think, ‘What if I were to go in a direction I have never gone before, to eat grass I have never eaten before, to drink water I have never drunk before!’ She would lift her hind hoof without having placed her front hoof firmly and [as a result] would not get to go in a direction she had never gone before, to eat grass she had never eaten before, or to drink water she had never drunk before. And as for the place where she was standing when the thought occurred to her, ‘What if I were to go where I have never been before... to drink water I have never drunk before,’ she would not return there safely. Why is that? Because she is a foolish, inexperienced mountain cow, unfamiliar with her pasture, unskilled in roaming on rugged mountains.

“In the same way, there are cases where a monk—foolish, inexperienced, unfamiliar with his pasture, unskilled in... entering & remaining in the first jhāna: rapture & pleasure born from seclusion, accompanied by directed thought & evaluation—doesn’t stick with that theme, doesn’t develop it, pursue it, or establish himself firmly in it. The thought occurs to him, ‘What if I, with the stilling of directed thoughts & evaluations, were to enter & remain in the second jhāna: rapture & pleasure born from concentration, unification of awareness free from directed thought & evaluation—internal assurance.’ He is not able... to enter & remain in the second jhāna.... The thought occurs to him, ‘What if I...were to enter & remain in the first jhāna.... He is not able... to enter & remain in the first jhāna. This is called a monk who has slipped & fallen

from both sides, like the mountain cow, foolish, inexperienced, unfamiliar with her pasture, unskilled in roaming on rugged mountains.

“But suppose there was a mountain cow—wise, experienced, familiar with her pasture, skilled in roaming on rugged mountains—and she were to think, ‘What if I were to go in a direction I have never gone before, to eat grass I have never eaten before, to drink water I have never drunk before!’ She would lift her hind hoof only after having placed her front hoof firmly and [as a result] would get to go in a direction she had never gone before... to drink water she had never drunk before. And as for the place where she was standing when the thought occurred to her, ‘What if I were to go in a direction I have never gone before... to drink water I have never drunk before,’ she would return there safely. Why is that? Because she is a wise, experienced mountain cow, familiar with her pasture, skilled in roaming on rugged mountains.

“In the same way, there are some cases where a monk—wise, experienced, familiar with his pasture, skilled in...entering & remaining in the first jhāna... sticks with that theme, develops it, pursues it, & establishes himself firmly in it. The thought occurs to him, ‘What if I... were to enter & remain in the second jhāna....’ Without jumping at the second jhāna, he—with the stilling of directed thoughts & evaluations—enters & remains in the second jhāna. He sticks with that theme, develops it, pursues it, & establishes himself firmly in it. The thought occurs to him, ‘What if I... were to enter & remain in the third jhāna’.... Without jumping at the third jhāna, he... enters & remains in the third jhāna. He sticks with that theme, develops it, pursues it, & establishes himself firmly in it. The thought occurs to him, ‘What if I... were to enter & remain in the fourth jhāna’.... Without jumping at the fourth jhāna, he... enters & remains in the fourth jhāna. He sticks with that theme, develops it, pursues it, & establishes himself firmly in it.

“The thought occurs to him, ‘What if I, with the complete transcending of perceptions of [physical] form, with the disappearance of perceptions of resistance, and not heeding perceptions of diversity, [perceiving], “Infinite space,” were to enter & remain in the dimension of the infinitude of space.’ Without jumping at the dimension of the infinitude of space, he... enters & remains in dimension of the infinitude

of space. He sticks with that theme, develops it, pursues it, & establishes himself firmly in it.

“The thought occurs to him, ‘What if I, with the complete transcending of the dimension of the infinitude of space, [perceiving], “Infinite consciousness,” were to enter & remain in the dimension of the infinitude of consciousness.’ Without jumping at the dimension of the infinitude of consciousness, he... enters & remains in dimension of the infinitude of consciousness. He sticks with that theme, develops it, pursues it, & establishes himself firmly in it.

“The thought occurs to him, ‘What if I, with the complete transcending of the dimension of the infinitude of consciousness, [perceiving], “There is nothing,” were to enter & remain in the dimension of nothingness.’ Without jumping at the dimension of nothingness, he... enters & remains in dimension of nothingness. He sticks with that theme, develops it, pursues it, & establishes himself firmly in it.

“The thought occurs to him, ‘What if I, with the complete transcending of the dimension of nothingness, were to enter & remain in the dimension of neither perception nor non-perception.’ Without jumping at the dimension of neither perception nor non-perception, he... enters & remains in the dimension of neither perception nor non-perception. He sticks with that theme, develops it, pursues it, & establishes himself firmly in it.

“The thought occurs to him, ‘What if I, with the complete transcending of the dimension of neither perception nor non-perception, were to enter & remain in the cessation of perception & feeling.’ Without jumping at the cessation of perception & feeling, he... enters & remains in the cessation of perception & feeling.

“When a monk enters & emerges from that very attainment, his mind is pliant & malleable. With his pliant, malleable mind, limitless concentration is well developed. With his well developed, limitless concentration, then whichever of the six higher knowledges he turns his mind to know & realize, he can witness them for himself whenever there is an opening.” — [AN 9:35](#)

“Suppose that an archer or archer’s apprentice were to practice on a straw man or mound of clay, so that after a while he would become able

to shoot long distances, to fire accurate shots in rapid succession, and to pierce great masses. In the same way, there is the case where a monk... enters & remains in the first jhāna: rapture & pleasure born from seclusion, accompanied by directed thought & evaluation. He regards whatever phenomena there that are connected with form, feeling, perceptions, fabrications, & consciousness, as inconstant, stressful, a disease, a cancer, an arrow, painful, an affliction, alien, a disintegration, a void, not-self. He turns his mind away from those phenomena, and having done so, inclines his mind to the property of deathlessness: ‘This is peace, this is exquisite—the resolution of all fabrications; the relinquishment of all acquisitions; the ending of craving; dispassion; cessation; Unbinding.’

“Staying right there, he reaches the ending of the mental effluents. Or, if not, then through this very Dhamma-passion, this Dhamma-delight, and through the total wasting away of the first of the five Fetters [self-identity views, grasping at precepts & practices, uncertainty, sensual passion, and irritation]—he is due to be reborn [in the Pure Abodes], there to be totally unbound, never again to return from that world.

[Similarly with the other levels of jhāna and formless attainments up through the dimension of nothingness.] — [AN 9:36](#)

VIII. Discernment

Three types of discernment:

discernment that comes from listening (*sutamaya-paññā*),

discernment that comes from thinking (*cintāmaya-paññā*),

discernment that comes from developing (*bhāvanāmaya-paññā*).

— [*DN 33*](#)

“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, having been done by me, will be for my long-term harm & suffering? Or what, having been done by me, will be for my long-term welfare & happiness?’” — [*MN 135*](#)

“And what is the food for the arising of unarisen *analysis of qualities* as a factor for awakening, or for the growth & increase of analysis of qualities... once it has arisen? There are mental qualities that are skillful & unskillful, blameworthy & blameless, gross & refined, siding with darkness & with light. To foster appropriate attention to them: This is the food for the arising of unarisen analysis of qualities as a factor for awakening, or for the growth & increase of analysis of qualities... once it has arisen.” — [*SN 46:51*](#)

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

“And what is the right view that is without effluents, transcendent, a factor of the path? The discernment, the faculty of discernment, the

strength of discernment, analysis of qualities as a factor for Awakening, the path factor of right view in one developing the noble path whose mind is noble, whose mind is free from effluents, who is fully possessed of the noble path. This is the right view that is without effluents, transcendent, a factor of the path....

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

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

“One tries to abandon wrong resolve & to enter into right resolve: This is one’s right effort. One is mindful to abandon wrong resolve & to enter & remain in right resolve: This is one’s right mindfulness. Thus these three qualities—right view, right effort, & right mindfulness—run & circle around right resolve.” — [*MN 117*](#)

“And what is the faculty of discernment? There is the case where a monk, a disciple of the noble ones, is discerning, endowed with discernment of arising & passing away—noble, penetrating, leading to the right ending of stress. He discerns, as it has come to be: ‘This is stress...This is the origination of stress...This is the cessation of stress... This is the path of practice leading to the cessation of stress.’ This is called the faculty of discernment.” — [*SN 48:10*](#)

When you see with discernment,
‘All fabrications are inconstant’....
‘All fabrications are stressful’....
‘All phenomena are not-self’—
you grow disenchanted with stress.

This is the path
to purity. — [*Dhp 277–279*](#)

“‘Stress should be known. The cause by which stress comes into play should be known. The diversity in stress should be known. The result of stress should be known. The cessation of stress should be known. The path of practice for the cessation of stress should be known.’ Thus it has been said. Why was it said?

“Birth is stress, aging is stress, death is stress; sorrow, lamentation, pain, distress, & despair are stress; association with what is not loved is stress, separation from what is loved is stress, not getting what is wanted is stress. In short, the five aggregates for sustenance are stress.

“And what is the cause by which stress comes into play? Craving is the cause by which stress comes into play.

“And what is the diversity in stress? There is major stress & minor, slowly fading & quickly fading. This is called the diversity in stress.

“And what is the result of stress? 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.

“And what is the cessation of stress? From the cessation of craving is the cessation of stress; and just this noble eightfold path is the path of practice leading to the cessation of stress: right view, right aspiration, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness, right concentration.” — [AN 6:63](#)

Ven. Kaccāyana: “Lord, ‘right view, right view,’ it is said. To what extent is there right view?”

The Buddha: “By & large, Kaccāyana, this world is supported by [takes as its object] a polarity, that of existence & non-existence. But when one sees the origination of the world as it actually is with right discernment, ‘non-existence’ with reference to the world does not occur to one. When one sees the cessation of the world as it actually is with right discernment, ‘existence’ with reference to the world does not occur to one.

“By & large, Kaccāyana, this world is in bondage to attachments, clingings [sustenance’s], & biases. But one such as this does not get

involved with or cling to these attachments, clingings, fixations of awareness, biases, or latent tendencies; nor is he resolved on “my self.” He has no uncertainty or doubt that mere stress, when arising, is arising; stress, when passing away, is passing away. In this, one’s knowledge is independent of others. It is to this extent, Kaccāyana, that there is right view.” — [*SN 12:15*](#)

Then Anāthapiṇḍika the householder went to where the wanderers of other persuasions were staying. On arrival he greeted them courteously. After an exchange of friendly greetings & courtesies, he sat down to one side. As he was sitting there, the wanderers said to him, ‘Tell us, householder, what views the contemplative Gotama has.’

‘Venerable sirs, I don’t know entirely what views the Blessed One has.’

‘Well, well. So you don’t know entirely what views the contemplative Gotama has. Then tell us what views the monks have.’

‘I don’t even know entirely what views the monks have.’

‘So you don’t know entirely what views the contemplative Gotama has or even that the monks have. Then tell us what views you have.’

‘It wouldn’t be difficult for me to expound to you what views I have. But please let the venerable ones expound each in line with his position, and then it won’t be difficult for me to expound to you what views I have.’

When this had been said, one of the wanderers said to Anāthapiṇḍika the householder, ‘*The cosmos is eternal*. Only this is true; anything otherwise is worthless. This is the sort of view I have.’

Another wanderer said to Anāthapiṇḍika, ‘*The cosmos is not eternal*. Only this is true; anything otherwise is worthless. This is the sort of view I have.’

Another wanderer said, ‘*The cosmos is finite...*’...‘*The cosmos is infinite...*’...‘*The soul & the body are the same...*’...‘*The soul is one thing and the body another...*’...‘*After death a Tathāgata exists...*’...‘*After death a Tathāgata does not exist...*’...‘*After death a Tathāgata both does & does not exist...*’...‘*After death a Tathāgata neither does nor does not exist*. Only this is true; anything otherwise is worthless. This is the sort of view I have.’

When this had been said, Anāthapiṇḍika the householder said to the wanderers, ‘As for the venerable one who says, “*The cosmos is eternal*. Only this is true; anything otherwise is worthless. This is the sort of view I have,” his view arises from his own inappropriate attention or in dependence on the words of another. Now this view has been brought into being, is fabricated, willed, dependently co-arisen. Whatever has been brought into being, is fabricated, willed, dependently co-arisen, that is inconstant. Whatever is inconstant is stress. This venerable one thus adheres to that very stress, submits himself to that very stress.’ (Similarly for the other positions.)

When this had been said, the wanderers said to Anāthapiṇḍika the householder, ‘We have each & every one expounded to you in line with our own positions. Now tell us what views you have.’

‘Whatever has been brought into being, is fabricated, willed, dependently co-arisen, that is inconstant. Whatever is inconstant is stress. Whatever is stress is not mine, is not what I am, is not my self. This is the sort of view I have.’

‘So, householder, whatever has been brought into being, is fabricated, willed, dependently co-arisen, that is inconstant. Whatever is inconstant is stress. You thus adhere to that very stress, submit yourself to that very stress.’

‘Venerable sirs, whatever has been brought into being, is fabricated, willed, dependently co-arisen, that is inconstant. Whatever is inconstant is stress. Whatever is stress is not mine, is not what I am, is not my self. Having seen this well with right discernment as it actually is present, I also discern the higher escape from it as it actually is present.’

When this had been said, the wanderers fell silent, abashed, sitting with their shoulders drooping, their heads down, brooding, at a loss for words. Anāthapiṇḍika the householder, perceiving that the wanderers were silent, abashed...at a loss for words, got up & left. — AN 9:93

IX. Release

“Just as the ocean has a single taste—that of salt—in the same way, this Dhamma & Vinaya has a single taste: the taste of release.” — [Ud 5:5](#)

“Defiled by passion, the mind is not released. Defiled by ignorance, discernment does not develop. Thus from the fading of passion is there awareness-release. From the fading of ignorance is there discernment-release.” — [AN 2:30](#)

[From a list of the powers available to one who has mastered jhāna:]

“If he wants, then through the ending of the mental effluents, he enters & remains in the effluent-free awareness-release & discernment-release, having directly known and realized them for himself right in the here & now. He can witness this for himself whenever there is an opening.” — [AN 9:35](#)

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

“There is the case where a monk develops *mindfulness* as a factor for awakening accompanied by goodwill, dependent on seclusion... dispassion... cessation, resulting in letting go. He develops *analysis of qualities... persistence... rapture... calm... concentration... equanimity* as a factor for awakening accompanied by goodwill, 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, the awareness-release through goodwill has

the beautiful as its excellence—in the case of one who has penetrated to no higher release.

“And how is the awareness-release through compassion developed, what is its destiny, what is 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 dimension of the infinitude of space. I tell you, monks, the awareness-release through compassion has the dimension of the infinitude of space as its excellence—in the case of one who has penetrated to no higher release.

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

“There is the case where a monk develops mindfulness as a factor for awakening accompanied by appreciation...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 dimension of infinitude of space, thinking ‘Infinite consciousness,’ he enters & remains in the dimension of the infinitude of consciousness. I tell you, monks, the awareness-release through appreciation has the dimension of the infinitude of consciousness as its excellence—in the case of one who has penetrated to no higher release.

“And how is the awareness-release through equanimity developed, what is its destiny, what is 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 dimension of infinitude of consciousness, thinking ‘There is nothing,’ he enters & remains in the dimension of nothingness. I

tell you, monks, the awareness-release through equanimity has the dimension of nothingness as its excellence—in the case of one who has penetrated to no higher release.” — [*SN 46:54*](#)

“Monks, these six properties are means of escape. Which six?

“There is the case where a monk might say, ‘Although goodwill 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 slander the Blessed One, for it’s not right to slander the Blessed One, and the Blessed One wouldn’t say that. It’s impossible, there is no way that—when goodwill 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: goodwill as an awareness-release.’

“Then again, 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.... 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.’

“Then again, 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.... 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.’

“Then again, 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.... 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.’

“Then again, there is the case where a monk might say, ‘Although the signless has been developed, pursued, handed the reins, taken as a basis, steadied, consolidated, and well-undertaken by me as my awareness-release, still my consciousness follows the drift of signs.’ He should be told, ‘Don’t say that.... It’s impossible, there is no way that—when the signless has been developed, pursued, handed the reins, taken as a basis, steadied, consolidated, and well-undertaken as an awareness-release—consciousness would follow the drift of signs. That possibility doesn’t exist, for this is the escape from all signs: the signless as an awareness-release.’

“Then again, there is the case where a monk might say, ‘Although “I am” is gone, and I do not assume that “I am this,” still the arrow of uncertainty & perplexity keeps overpowering my mind.’ He should be told, ‘Don’t say that. You shouldn’t speak in that way. Don’t slander the Blessed One, for it’s not right to slander the Blessed One, and the Blessed One wouldn’t say that. It’s impossible, there is no way that—when “I am” is gone, and “I am this” is not assumed—the arrow of uncertainty & perplexity would keep overpowering the mind. That possibility doesn’t exist, for this is the escape from the arrow of uncertainty & perplexity: the uprooting of the conceit, “I am”.’

“These, monks, are six properties that are means of escape.” — [AN 6:13](#)

On one occasion Ven. Godatta was living near Macchikāsaṇḍa in the Wild Mango Grove. Then Citta the householder went to him and, on arrival, having bowed down to him, sat to one side. As he was sitting

there, Ven. Godatta said to him, “Householder, the immeasurable awareness-release, the nothingness awareness-release, the emptiness awareness-release, the signless awareness-release: Are these phenomena different in meaning and different in name, or are they one in meaning and different only in name?”

“Venerable sir, there is a line of reasoning by which these phenomena are different in meaning and different in name, and there is a line of reasoning by which they are one in meaning and different only in name.

“And what is the line of reasoning by which they are different in meaning and different in name? There is the case where a monk keeps pervading the first direction [the east] with an awareness imbued with 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 keeps pervading the first direction with an awareness imbued with compassion ... appreciation ... 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. This is called the immeasurable awareness-release.

“And what is the nothingness awareness-release? There is the case where a monk, with the complete transcending of the dimension of the infinitude of consciousness, thinking, ‘There is nothing,’ enters & remains in the dimension of nothingness. This is called the nothingness awareness-release.

“And what is the emptiness awareness-release? There is the case where a monk, having gone into the wilderness, to the root of a tree, or into an empty dwelling, considers this: ‘This is empty of self or of anything pertaining to self.’ This is called the emptiness awareness-release.

“And what is the signless awareness-release? There is the case where a monk, not attending to any sign (object of awareness) enters & remains in the signless concentration of awareness. This is called the signless awareness-release.

“This, venerable sir, is the line of reasoning by which these phenomena are different in meaning and different in name.

“And what, venerable sir, is the line of reasoning by which they are one in meaning and different only in name? Passion, venerable sir, is a making of measurement, aversion a making of measurement, delusion a making of measurement. For a monk whose effluents are ended these have been abandoned, their root destroyed, made like a palmyra stump, deprived of the conditions of existence, not destined for future arising. To the extent that there are immeasurable awareness-releases, the unprovokable awareness-release is declared supreme. And that unprovokable awareness-release is empty of passion, empty of aversion, empty of delusion.

“Passion is a something, aversion a something, delusion a something. For a monk whose effluents are ended these have been abandoned, their root destroyed, made like a palmyra stump, deprived of the conditions of existence, not destined for future arising. To the extent that there are nothingness awareness-releases, the unprovokable awareness-release is declared supreme. And that unprovokable awareness-release is empty of passion, empty of aversion, empty of delusion.

“Passion is a making of signs, aversion a making of signs, delusion a making of signs. For a monk whose effluents are ended these have been abandoned, their root destroyed, made like a palmyra stump, deprived of the conditions of existence, not destined for future arising. To the extent that there are signless awareness-releases, the unprovokable awareness-release is declared supreme. And that unprovokable awareness-release is empty of passion, empty of aversion, empty of delusion.

“This, venerable sir, is the line of reasoning by which these phenomena are one in meaning and different only in name.”

“It’s a gain for you, householder, a great gain: what your eye of discernment plumbs in the deep word of the Buddha.” — [*SN 41:7*](#)

Ven. Udāyin: “‘Discernment-released, discernment-released,’ it is said. To what extent is one described by the Blessed One as discernment-released?”

Ven. Ānanda: “There is the case, my friend, where a monk, secluded from sensuality, secluded from unskillful qualities, enters & remains in

the first jhāna: rapture & pleasure born from seclusion, accompanied by directed thought & evaluation. And he knows it through discernment. It's to this extent that one is described with explication by the Blessed One as discernment-released. [Similarly with the other levels of jhāna.]” — [AN 9:44](#).

Ven. Udāyin: “‘Released both ways, released both ways,’ it is said. To what extent is one described by the Blessed One as released both ways?”

Ven. Ānanda: “There is the case, my friend, where a monk, secluded from sensuality, secluded from unskillful qualities, enters & remains in the first jhāna: rapture & pleasure born of seclusion, accompanied by directed thought & evaluation. He remains touching with his body in whatever way there is an opening there, and he knows it through discernment. It's to this extent that one is described with explication by the Blessed One as released both ways. [Similarly with the other levels of jhāna.]” — [AN 9:45](#)

Then, on the attainment of arahantship, this thought occurred to Ven. Soṇa: “What if I were to go to the Blessed One and, on arrival, to declare gnosis in his presence?” So he then 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: “When a monk is an arahant, with his effluents ended, one who has reached fulfillment, done the task, laid down the burden, attained the true goal, totally destroyed the fetter of becoming, and is released through right gnosis, he is dedicated to six things: renunciation, seclusion, the unafflicted, the ending of craving, the ending of clinging/sustenance, & non-deludedness.

“Now it may occur to a certain venerable one to think, ‘Perhaps it is entirely dependent on conviction that this venerable one is dedicated to renunciation,’ but it should not be seen in that way. The monk whose effluents are ended, having fulfilled [the holy life], does not see in himself anything further to do, or anything further to add to what he has done. It is because of the ending of passion, because of his being free of passion, that he is dedicated to renunciation. It is because of the ending of aversion, because of his being free of aversion, that he is dedicated to renunciation. It is because of the ending of delusion, because of his being free of delusion, that he is dedicated to renunciation.

“Now it may occur to a certain venerable one to think, ‘Perhaps it is because he desires gain, honor, & fame that this venerable one is dedicated to seclusion’ ... ‘Perhaps it is because he falls back on attachment to precepts & practices as being essential that he is dedicated to the unafflicted,’ but it should not be seen in that way. The monk whose effluents are ended, having fulfilled [the holy life], does not see in himself anything further to do, or anything further to add to what he has done. It is because of the ending of passion, because of his being free of passion, that he is dedicated to the unafflicted. It is because of the ending of aversion, because of his being free of aversion, that he is dedicated to the unafflicted. It is because of the ending of delusion, because of his being free of delusion, that he is dedicated to the unafflicted.

“It is because of the ending of passion, because of his being free of passion ... because of the ending of aversion, because of his being free of aversion ... because of the ending of delusion, because of his being free of delusion, that he is dedicated to the ending of craving ... to the ending of clinging/sustenance ... to non-deludedness.

“Even if powerful forms cognizable by the eye come into the visual range of a monk whose mind is thus rightly released, his mind is neither overpowered nor even engaged. Being still, having reached imperturbability, he focuses on their passing away. And even if powerful sounds... aromas... flavors... tactile sensations Even if powerful ideas cognizable by the intellect come into the mental range of a monk whose mind is thus rightly released, his mind is neither overpowered nor even engaged. Being still, having reached imperturbability, he focuses on their passing away.

“Just as if there were a mountain of rock—without cracks, without fissures, one solid mass—and then from the east there were to come a powerful storm of wind & rain: the mountain would neither shiver nor quiver nor shake. And then from the west... the north... the south there were to come a powerful storm of wind & rain: the mountain would neither shiver nor quiver nor shake. In the same way, even if powerful forms cognizable by the eye come into the visual range of a monk whose mind is thus rightly released, his mind is neither overpowered nor even engaged. Being still, having reached imperturbability, he focuses on their passing away. And even if powerful sounds... aromas... flavors... tactile

sensations.... Even if powerful ideas cognizable by the intellect come into the mental range of a monk whose mind is thus rightly released, his mind is neither overpowered nor even engaged. Being still, having reached imperturbability, he focuses on their passing away.”

When one’s awareness is dedicated
to renunciation, seclusion,
the unafflicted, the ending of clinging,
the ending of craving, & non-deludedness,
seeing the arising of the sense media,
the mind is rightly released.

For that monk, rightly released,
his heart at peace,
there’s nothing to be done,
nothing to add
to what’s done.

As a single mass of rock isn’t moved by the wind,
even so all forms, flavors, sounds,
aromas, contacts,
ideas desirable & not,
have no effect on one who is Such.

The mind
—still, totally released—
focuses on
their passing away. — [AN 6:55](#)

X. Knowledge & Vision of Release

“Just as if there were a pool of water in a mountain glen—clear, limpid, and unsullied—where a man with good eyesight standing on the bank could see shells, gravel, and pebbles, and also shoals of fish swimming about and resting, and it would occur to him, ‘This pool of water is clear, limpid, and unsullied. Here are these shells, gravel, and pebbles, and also these shoals of fish swimming about and resting.’ In the same way—with his mind thus concentrated, purified, and bright, unblemished, free from defects, pliant, malleable, steady, and attained to imperturbability—the monk directs and inclines it to the knowledge of the ending of the mental effluents. He discerns, as it is actually present, that ‘This is stress... This is the origination of stress... This is the cessation of stress... This is the way leading to the cessation of stress... These are effluents... This is the origination of effluents... This is the cessation of effluents... This is the way leading to the cessation of effluents.’ His heart, thus knowing, thus seeing, is released from the effluent of sensuality, the effluent of becoming, the effluent of ignorance. With release, there is the knowledge, ‘Released.’ He discerns that ‘Birth is ended, the holy life fulfilled, the task done. There is nothing further for this world.’” — [*DN 2*](#)

“Vision arose, clear knowing arose, discernment arose, knowledge arose, illumination arose within me with regard to things never heard before: ‘This is the noble truth of stress....This noble truth of stress is to be comprehended....This noble truth of stress has been comprehended.... This is the noble truth of the origination of stress....This noble truth of the origination of stress is to be abandoned....This noble truth of the origination of stress has been abandoned....This is the noble truth of the cessation of stress....This noble truth of the cessation of stress is to be realized....This noble truth of the cessation of stress has been realized.... This is the noble truth of the path of practice leading to the cessation of stress....This noble truth of the path of practice leading to the cessation of stress is to be developed....This noble truth of the path of practice leading to the cessation of stress has been developed.’

And, monks, as long as this knowledge & vision of mine—with its three rounds & twelve permutations concerning these four noble truths as they actually are—was not pure, I did not claim to have directly awakened to the unexcelled right self-awakening....But as soon as this knowledge & vision of mine—with its three rounds & twelve permutations concerning these four noble truths as they actually are—*was* truly pure, only then did I claim to have directly awakened to the unexcelled right self-awakening...The knowledge & vision arose in me: ‘Unshakable is my release. This is the last birth. There is now no further becoming.’” — [SN 56:11](#)

“What a Tathāgata sees is this: ‘Such is form, such its origin, such its disappearance; such is feeling, such its origin, such its disappearance; such is perception...such are mental fabrications...such is consciousness, such its origin, such its disappearance.’ Because of this, I say, a Tathāgata—with the ending, fading out, cessation, renunciation, & relinquishment of all supposings, all excogitations, all I-making & mine-making & obsessions with conceit—is, through lack of clinging/sustenance, released.”

“But, Master Gotama, the monk whose mind is thus released: Where does he reappear?”

“‘Reappear,’ Vaccha, doesn’t apply.”

“In that case, Master Gotama, he does not reappear.”

“‘Does not reappear,’ Vaccha, doesn’t apply.”

“...both does & does not reappear.”

“...doesn’t apply.”

“...neither does nor does not reappear.”

“...doesn’t apply.”

“How is it, Master Gotama, when Master Gotama is asked if the monk reappears ... does not reappear ... both does & does not reappear ... neither does nor does not reappear, he says, ‘... doesn’t apply’ in each case. At this point, Master Gotama, I am befuddled; at this point, confused. The modicum of clarity coming to me from your earlier conversation is now obscured.”

“Of course you’re befuddled, Vaccha. Of course you’re confused. Deep, Vaccha, is this phenomenon, hard to see, hard to realize, tranquil, refined, beyond the scope of conjecture, subtle, to-be-experienced by the wise. For those with other views, other practices, other satisfactions, other aims, other teachers, it is difficult to know. That being the case, I will now put some questions to you. Answer as you see fit. How do you construe this, Vaccha: If a fire were burning in front of you, would you know that, ‘This fire is burning in front of me’?”

“...yes...”

“And suppose someone were to ask you, Vaccha, ‘This fire burning in front of you, dependent on what is it burning?’ Thus asked, how would you reply?”

“...I would reply, ‘This fire burning in front of me is burning dependent on grass & timber as its sustenance.’”

“If the fire burning in front of you were to go out, would you know that, ‘This fire burning in front of me has gone out’?”

“...yes...”

“And suppose someone were to ask you, ‘This fire that has gone out in front of you, in which direction from here has it gone? East? West? North? Or south?’ Thus asked, how would you reply?”

“That doesn’t apply, Master Gotama. Any fire burning dependent on a sustenance of grass & timber, being unnourished—from having consumed that sustenance and not being offered any other—is classified simply as ‘out’ (unbound).”

“Even so, Vaccha, any physical form by which one describing the Tathāgata would describe him: That the Tathāgata has abandoned, its root destroyed, like an uprooted palm tree, deprived of the conditions of existence, not destined for future arising. Freed from the classification of form, Vaccha, the Tathāgata is deep, boundless, hard to fathom, like the sea. ‘Reappears’ doesn’t apply. ‘Does not reappear’ doesn’t apply. ‘Both does & does not reappear’ doesn’t apply. ‘Neither reappears nor does not reappear’ doesn’t apply.

“Any feeling.... Any perception.... Any mental fabrication....

“Any consciousness by which one describing the Tathāgata would describe him: That the Tathāgata has abandoned, its root destroyed, like

an uprooted palm tree, deprived of the conditions of existence, not destined for future arising. Freed from the classification of consciousness, Vaccha, the Tathāgata is deep, boundless, hard to fathom, like the sea.”

— MN 72