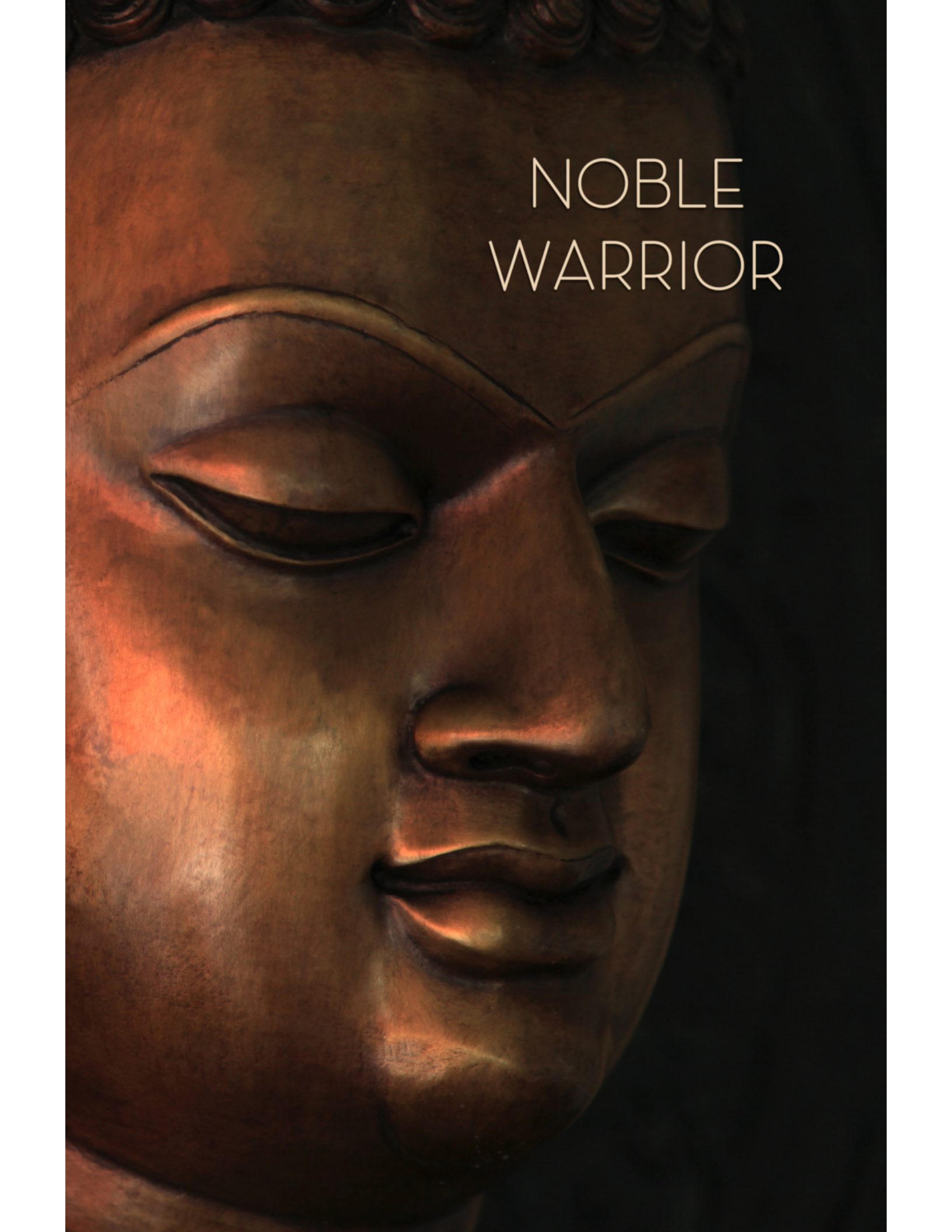


A close-up, high-contrast photograph of a bronze Buddha's face. The Buddha is shown in a three-quarter profile view, looking slightly downwards and to the right. The eyes are closed, and the expression is serene. The lighting is dramatic, coming from the left, which highlights the texture of the bronze and the contours of the face, while the right side and the background are in deep shadow. The top of the head, showing the beginning of the curly hair (ushnisha), is visible at the very top of the frame.

NOBLE WARRIOR

Noble Warrior

A LIFE OF THE BUDDHA
COMPILED FROM THE PĀLI CANON

by

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&

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Introduction

The Buddha, as a teacher, was adamant about the power of action, and focused special attention on what skillful actions could accomplish in bringing about a true and unchanging happiness. So it's only natural to want to know what he himself did, and what he was able to accomplish through his actions. An account of his life allows people who are not yet convinced of his awakening to assess him as a teacher and the value of his teachings, to see if he practiced what he taught and if it was a good thing that he did so. It also allows those of us who *are* convinced of his awakening to learn by example what the Buddha regarded as skillful action and to gain inspiration from the way he lived his life.

This is why many biographies of the Buddha have been composed over the millennia. Ironically, the most authoritative source for learning about the Buddha's accomplishments, the Pāli Canon, contains chronological accounts of only a few parts of his life: his birth, his quest for awakening, the first year or so immediately after his awakening, and then the last year of his life. There is a wealth of material on the intervening years, but by and large it's fragmentary. There are a few long narrative accounts, but although they scrupulously tell where the events they narrate took place, they make little or no attempt to indicate when. Only rarely does a passage state that the Buddha was young or old at the time of the incidents it reports. The early parts of the Canon relate some of the important events in the very early and late periods of his life—such as his return to his family, the ordination of his step-brother, the death of his two chief disciples, and the death of one of his major supporters, King Bimbisāra—only in bits and pieces. They say nothing of his interactions with his wife, either before or after his awakening, and don't even mention her name.

Most biographers have thus chosen to fill in the blanks. This is a tendency that began in the early centuries of the tradition, as the genres of literary biography and the epic developed in India, and Buddhists felt a need to provide their Teacher with an aesthetically and dramatically satisfying life in line with these genres. Some of these accounts found

their way into later additions to the Canon, such as the Apadānas. Later still, the authors of the Pāli commentaries—systematic explanations of the Canon that postdate the Canon by many centuries—added even more dramatic incidents in their account of the Buddha’s life, along with a detailed account of where the Buddha spent his various Rains retreats every year from the time of his awakening to that of his passing away. There is, however, no clear evidence in the early parts of the Canon to substantiate these additions to the Buddha’s story.

But even though these parts of the Canon don’t provide enough evidence for a strictly chronological biography, they do contain ample material for a thematic one, i.e., an account that focuses on themes and activities that ran throughout the Buddha’s life. That is the style of biography we have attempted here.

Taking passages from what, on the grounds of internal consistency, we regard as the early parts of the Canon—listed on the Abbreviations page—we have organized these passages in a way that highlights the Buddha’s three main accomplishments:

- finding the path to the awakening that puts an end to suffering, and following that path all the way to the goal;
- teaching the path to awakening to his contemporaries, both human and divine, creating a living apprenticeship devoted to training others in the path to awakening, too; and
- establishing a body of teachings and disciplinary rules—called the Dhamma and Vinaya—to provide a structure for this apprenticeship so that the True Dhamma would last a long time, enabling future generations to follow the path to awakening for many centuries.

We have collected passages exclusively from the Canon, interspersing them with a minimum amount of explanatory material. The explanations are drawn from our own observations drawn from the Canon and from other sources. Where they derive from other sources, we have indicated that fact. These explanations have been set in this sans-serif typeface so as to keep them distinct from the canonical passages, thus allowing the compilers of the Canon, as much as possible, to speak for themselves.

Some people have questioned the historical reliability of the Canon’s accounts—usually on subjective grounds—but we have yet to encounter any solid evidence that the canonical sources we have cited are not

trustworthy. There is no archeological or textual evidence to contradict any of the Canon's accounts. And as for objections to the Canon's frequent reference to psychic powers or to beings on other levels of the cosmos, on the grounds that such things are inconsistent with a modern deterministic and materialist view of reality: That view of reality has never been proven—and it never will be—despite the many false claims that it is “scientific.” The Canon itself shows that there is nothing especially modern about it. It existed in the time of the Buddha, and the Buddha explicitly rejected it both because it didn't lead to skillful behavior and because it offered no possibility for a path to the end of suffering ([MN 60](#); [AN 3:62](#)), which was the whole point of his life and teaching.

The Canon states that psychic powers, including knowledge of other levels of the cosmos, were a necessary part of the Buddha's awakening, in that he had to know these things if he was going to teach others, but they are not necessary for the awakening of his disciples ([SN 12:70](#)). Nevertheless, for those who do experience these things in the course of their practice, the Canon gives useful lessons in how not to be waylaid by them, so that they can act as aids rather than as obstacles to awakening.

That said, there are some passages in the Canon's narratives of the Buddha's life—especially in the passage recounting his birth—that stretch the credulity even of those who have no trouble accepting the existence of psychic powers and other levels of the cosmos. Fortunately, the ability to benefit from the Buddha's teaching does not depend on accepting everything reported in the Canon. As it itself says, legends and traditions can be mistaken, and the true worth of a tradition is measured by the actions its teachings inspire. This means that the essence of the Dhamma reported in the Canon lies in the teachings it presents—both directly, in instructions, and indirectly, through narratives—that can actually be put into practice, to see if they lead to skillful results.

This is an area where the Canon excels. The useful and honorable values it conveys, both in the Buddha's teachings and through the stories of his accomplishments, deserve to be kept alive so that they can be put to the test.

The Canon portrays not only the Buddha's actions, but also the environment in which he acted. Narratives in the suttas, or discourses, introduce us to the individuals and the issues he was responding to in

teaching the Dhamma, allowing us to see which questions he felt were important to answer, and which were best left aside as irrelevant to the message he was trying to convey. The suttas also show us the opposing viewpoints of contemporary teachers so that we can assess the extent to which his awakening and his Dhamma were genuinely new within his cultural context. By clearly delineating what the Dhamma is *not*, these accounts also help to clarify what the Dhamma *is*. And they teach us an important lesson about the Buddha as a debater, firm but fair in arguing with his opponents, and always keeping their genuine best interests in mind. In a similar vein, narratives in the Vinaya show us the incidents he was responding to when legislating rules for the monastic Saṅgha, as well as the standards he wanted the rules to embody.

Although many of the passages in the suttas and Vinaya were composed by his followers from the point of view of an omniscient narrator—a role attributed to Ven. Ānanda for the suttas, and to Ven. Upāli for the Vinaya—the Canon also reports more personal perspectives on the Buddha's accomplishments, sometimes from the point of view of individual followers, sometimes from that of his opponents, and sometimes from the Buddha himself.

The Buddha's own observations on his accomplishments are of special interest. As he taught his son, Ven. Rāhula, actions are best judged in terms of the motivation underlying them—what they are intended to accomplish—and at the actual results they produce. For this reason, we have focused attention on the Buddha's own reports of what he was trying to accomplish in his search for awakening, what he learned from his awakening, what standards he used to judge his awakening as valid and complete; what he was trying to accomplish by teaching, what he felt his duties as teacher were, and how he judged the success of his efforts.

In the case of the awakening, it's easy to find answers to these questions because most of the accounts of his search for awakening and of the awakening itself are told from the Buddha's own point of view. In the case of his mission in teaching, we have had to collect various passages scattered throughout the Canon that give an idea of his pedagogy: i.e., his ideas about what counts as a responsible and effective way to teach, the extent to which the success of a teaching depends on

the teacher, and the extent to which it depends on the students, both among his contemporaries and in succeeding generations.

You will find the answers to these questions as you read through the book, but we would like to highlight a few of the points we found most striking as we assembled the material and to explain some of our editorial choices.

The first point is the amount of adversity the Buddha had to face in bringing about all three of his major accomplishments. Traditional and modern portrayals of the Buddha tend to emphasize the inevitability of his success, but the accounts in the Canon show that it was rarely effortless. In the Buddha's own words, his awakening required that he be "heedful, ardent, and resolute" in developing all the personal character traits that would enable him to awaken. And the accounts of his teaching career show that he had to deal with opposition not only from contemporary teachers, but also from within his own following. The story of Devadatta is only the most famous instance of rebellion in the ranks. As you will see, the monks and nuns of the monastic Saṅghas weren't always docile in accepting the rules the Buddha laid down for the long life of the True Dhamma.

As the Buddha himself said, a great deal can be learned about a person through observing how he or she deals with adversity, so we felt it important to include stories of the Buddha facing difficulties, both as evidence of his character and as inspiration for those who are following his path. It's because the Buddha had to strategize and do repeated battle throughout his life—first against his own defilements, then against the defilements of others—that we have named this biography, *Noble Warrior*. Not only was he born into the noble-warrior class, he also fought, and often won, the most noble of battles.

Another striking point about the canonical accounts is that the Buddha repeatedly described his quest for awakening, on the one hand, as a search "for the deathless," i.e., something totally unconditioned, and on the other as a search "for what is skillful," i.e., a course of action that would effectively and harmlessly lead to the deathless. To search for the deathless was in itself an audacious aim; to hope for a path of action, which would have to be conditioned, to lead to something unconditioned flew in the face of every known understanding of causality

in his time. This is why, when he had attained awakening, he often expressed the lessons of awakening in terms of a novel principle of causality that had a direct bearing on human action. This emphasis on actions and the great things they could accomplish formed the underlying theme for all of his teachings.

As for the awakening, we were struck by the wide variety of angles from which the Buddha described this event. It was obviously a multifaceted experience—in terms of the efforts that led there and the lessons learned in the course of the awakening itself—and because it was *the* central event in the Buddha's life, we have tried to gather as many of these facets from the Canon as we can. This has had the effect of delaying the pace of the book's narrative, as a single event is retold many, many times from different angles, but for the sake of added depth we felt it important to risk these delays. Think of the repeated accounts as a collection of eyewitness accounts, allowing for a fully rounded view of a momentous event.

For all the many facets of the awakening, it's also striking to note what the Buddha did *not* describe as part of his awakening. Despite the claims we hear often at present that awakening means discovering annihilation, non-duality, the Oneness of all being, the ground of being, the existence of the True Self, or the non-existence of the self—however “self” might be defined—none of these ideas played a role in the Buddha's own account of his awakening or of the standards he used to judge his awakening to be complete. In fact, the Canon contains passages explicitly rejecting these positions (see, respectively, [SN 22:85](#), [AN 10:29](#), [SN 12:48](#), [MN 1](#), [MN 22](#), and [MN 2](#)). And although many modern teachers equate awakening with the act of confirming the truth of the perceptions of inconstancy, stress, and not-self, the Canon never explicitly mentions these perceptions in any of the awakening narratives. Now, these perceptions do play an implicit role in the path leading to awakening, as means for realizing the drawbacks of fabricated experience, but the awakening accounts are clear that all five aggregates—including the perceptions used on the path—are abandoned on reaching the essence of awakening: release.

With regard to the Buddha's work in teaching his contemporaries and establishing the True Dhamma, it's noteworthy that—rather than hoping

to save all beings—he focused on teaching only those fit to be taught. As he said to the Brahmā Sahampati, in response to the latter’s request that he teach, in opening the doors to the deathless he expected a response only from those who had ears. This qualification was a direct result of his insight into kamma: Not everyone who listened to his Dhamma would have the proper combination of past and present kamma to be open to understanding what he was saying or to reach the goal in response.

The Canon emphasizes repeatedly that it would be an impossible task to take the full measure of the Buddha or of his accomplishments. As he told his followers, he had revealed to them only a tiny portion of what he had learned in the course of his awakening. And at present, we know only a small fraction of that tiny portion—and next to nothing of what he may have taught to devas and human beings when no one else was around to record what he said.

As for the Buddha as a person, the Canon insists that, following his release from all attachments, he cannot even be regarded as a being: that he is limitless like the ocean ([MN 72](#)), and that the full range of his powers and virtues is inconceivable ([AN 4:77](#)). However, there is plenty of material in the Canon for us to grasp that his awakening was an earth-shaking achievement, and that he was an outstanding teacher—enough to inspire us to want to attain awakening ourselves, and to contribute to the on-going task he set in motion: that of keeping what remains of the True Dhamma alive.

This book has been a long time in the planning and execution. We took our original inspiration from other biographies of the Buddha presented in a similar format—stringing together passages from ancient texts—most notably those compiled by Vens. Ñāṇamoli and Khantipālo. The advantage of this format is that it allows the reader to get as close as possible to the original sources. The disadvantage is that the style of those sources can be off-putting to anyone unfamiliar with oral literature. The fact that these texts were originally composed to be memorized—an intention that apparently began with the Buddha’s own talks—explains why they make such heavy use of repetition and stock phrases. We have elided some of the repetition wherever elision would not distort the meaning or weaken the impact of the message, but we ask the indulgence of the reader not to be annoyed by the repetitions that

remain. When you get used to the style of the Pali Canon, you find that it has its own charm.

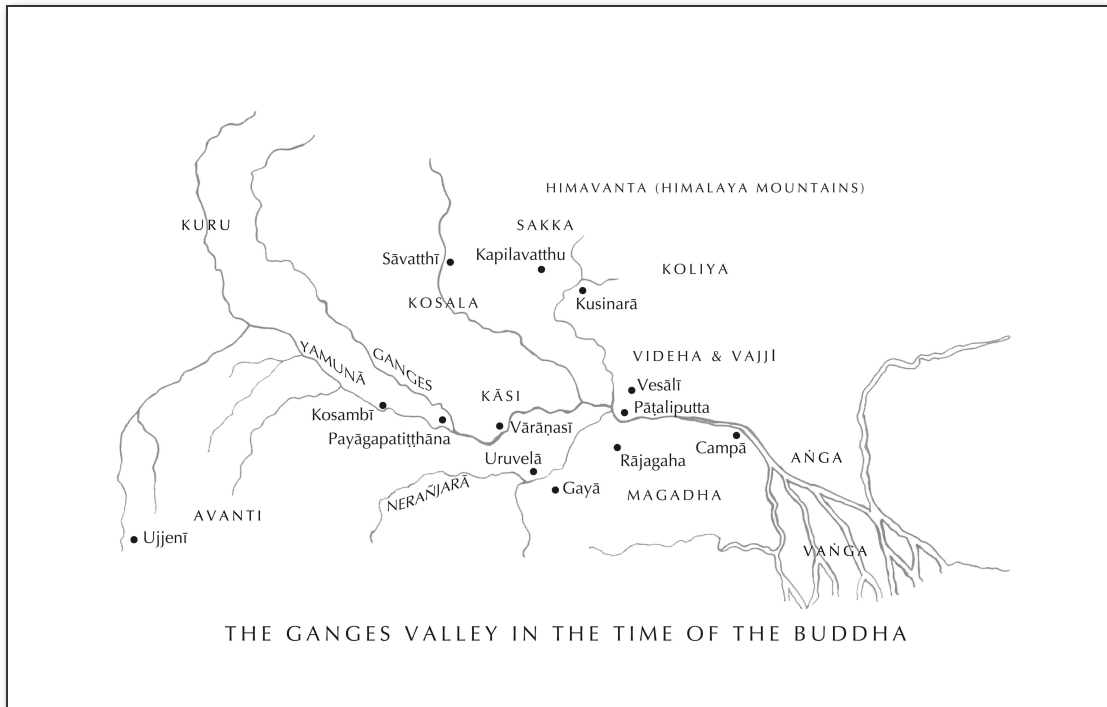
We could not have completed this book without the help of many individuals. In addition to the monks here at the monastery, we would like to thank Andrea Kessler, Addie Onsanit, Nathaniel Osgood, Balaji Ramasubramanian, Dale Schultz, Isabella Trauttmansdorff, and Barbara Wright for their valuable suggestions for improving the text. Hisayo Suzuki proofread the manuscript. Isabella Trauttmansdorff provided the index.

Any mistakes, of course—in either the translations or the explanations—are our own responsibility.

Ṭhānissaro Bhikkhu

Khematto Bhikkhu

OCTOBER 2019



Abbreviations

PĀLI SUTTAS

<i>AN</i>	<i>Aṅguttara Nikāya</i>
<i>Dhp</i>	<i>Dhammapada</i>
<i>DN</i>	<i>Dīgha Nikāya</i>
<i>Iti</i>	<i>Itivuttaka</i>
<i>MN</i>	<i>Majjhima Nikāya</i>
<i>SN</i>	<i>Saṃyutta Nikāya</i>
<i>Sn</i>	<i>Sutta Nipāta</i>
<i>Thag</i>	<i>Theragāthā</i>
<i>Thig</i>	<i>Therīgāthā</i>
<i>Ud</i>	<i>Udāna</i>

PĀLI VINAYA

<i>Cv</i>	<i>Cullavagga</i>
<i>Mv</i>	<i>Mahāvagga</i>
<i>NP</i>	<i>Nissaggiya Pācittiya</i>
<i>Pc</i>	<i>Pācittiya</i>
<i>Pr</i>	<i>Pārājika</i>
<i>Sg</i>	<i>Saṅghādisesa</i>

References to DN, Iti, and MN are to discourse. Those to Dhp are to verse. Those to NP, Pc, Pr, and Sg are to rule number. References to other texts are to section (*saṃyutta*, *nipāta*, or *vagga*) and discourse in the suttas, and section and sub-sections in Cv and Mv. Numbering for AN and SN follows the Thai Edition of the Pāli Canon.

All translations from these texts are by the author, and are based on the Royal Thai Edition of the Pāli Canon (Bangkok: Mahāmakut Rājavidyālaya, 1982).

Birth

The bodhisatta, or Buddha-to-be, was born into the Sakya family of the noble-warrior caste. The Sakyan capital city, Kapilavatthu, was located in the northwest of the Ariyan world—the middle Ganges valley.¹ The following passage states that the bodhisatta’s father was a king (*rājan*), but it has to be borne in mind that this title was used not only by rulers who would count as “king” in the modern sense, but also by the oligarchs in oligarchic republics. Other passages in the Canon indicate that the Sakyan lands were actually organized as such a republic, with one of the oligarchs exercising a limited rulership over the others. This would mean that the bodhisatta’s father was at least a member of the Sakyan ruling class, and may have acted as its chief.

“Monks, as for me in the present: My father was named King Suddhodana. My mother, the giver of birth, was named Queen Māyā. Our capital city was named Kapilavatthu.” — *DN 14*

Although the Canon’s descriptions of the bodhisatta’s early life are considerably more restrained than many of the accounts found in later texts, even they include some miraculous and legendary accounts of his birth.

I have heard that on one occasion the Blessed One was dwelling near Sāvattthī in Jeta’s Forest, Anāthapiṇḍika’s monastery. Now at that time, a large number of monks, after the meal, on returning from their almsround, had gathered at the meeting hall, when this conversation arose among them: “It’s amazing, friends. It’s astounding, the great might, the great power of the Tathāgata, in that the Tathāgata knows of the Awakened Ones of the past—those totally unbound, who have cut through objectification [*papañca*], cut through the rut, put an end to the round, and transcended all suffering & stress: ‘Such was the birth of those Blessed Ones, such was their name, such their clan, such their virtue, such their Dhamma, such their discernment, such their (mental) dwelling, such their release.’”

When this was said, Ven. Ānanda said to those monks, “Friends, Tathāgatas are both amazing & endowed with amazing qualities, both astounding & endowed with astounding qualities.” But the conversation among them was interrupted as the Blessed One, emerging from his seclusion in the late afternoon, went to the meeting hall and, on arrival, sat down on a seat laid out. Seated, he addressed the monks: “For what topic of conversation, monks, 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 almsround, we gathered at the meeting hall, when this conversation arose among us: ‘It’s amazing, friends. It’s astounding, the great might, the great power of the Tathāgata, in that the Tathāgata knows of the Awakened Ones of the past—those totally unbound, who have cut through objectification, cut through the rut, put an end to the round, and transcended all suffering & stress: “Such was the birth of those Blessed Ones, such was their name, such their clan, such their virtue, such their Dhamma, such their discernment, such their (mental) dwelling, such their release.”’

“When this was said, Ven. Ānanda said to us, ‘Friends, Tathāgatas are both amazing & endowed with amazing qualities, both astounding & endowed with astounding qualities.’ But the conversation among us was interrupted when the Blessed One approached.”

Then the Blessed One said to Ven. Ānanda, “That being the case, Ānanda, elaborate to a greater extent on the Tathāgata’s amazing & astounding qualities.”

“In the Blessed One’s presence, lord, I have heard this, in the Blessed One’s presence I have learned this: ‘Mindful & alert, the bodhisatta appeared among [the devas of] the Tusita host.’ And the fact that, mindful & alert, the bodhisatta, appeared among the Tusita host: I hold this to be an amazing & astounding quality of the Blessed One.

“In the Blessed One’s presence, lord, I have heard this, in the Blessed One’s presence I have learned this: ‘Mindful & alert, the bodhisatta stayed for a full lifespan in the Tusita host.’...

“... ‘Mindful & alert, the bodhisatta, descending from the Tusita host, alighted in his mother’s womb.’...

“... ‘When the bodhisatta, mindful & alert, descended from the Tusita host and alighted in his mother’s womb, a great, measureless radiance surpassing the effulgence of the devas appeared in the cosmos with its devas, Māras, &

Brahmās, in this generation with its contemplatives & brahmans, its royalty & common people. Even in the intercosmic [intergalactic?] void of the unrestrained darkness, pitch-black darkness, where even the light of the sun & moon—so mighty, so powerful—doesn’t reach, even there the great, measureless radiance surpassing the effulgence of the devas appeared. And the beings reborn there perceived one another by that radiance: “So other beings have been reborn here, too!” And so this ten-thousandfold cosmos shivered & quivered & quaked, while the great, measureless radiance appeared in the cosmos, surpassing the effulgence of the devas’...

“...‘When the bodhisatta, mindful & alert, had alighted in his mother’s womb, four male devas came to guard him from four directions, (thinking,) “May no human or non-human beings or anyone at all harm the bodhisatta or his mother.”’...

“...‘When the bodhisatta had alighted in his mother’s womb, the bodhisatta’s mother was naturally virtuous, abstaining from taking life, abstaining from taking what is not given, abstaining from sexual misconduct, abstaining from telling lies, abstaining from distilled & fermented drinks that cause heedlessness’...

“...‘When the bodhisatta had alighted in his mother’s womb, there appeared in the bodhisatta’s mother no intention imbued with sensuality toward men, and the bodhisatta’s mother was inaccessible to any man with an impassioned mind’...

“...‘When the bodhisatta had alighted in his mother’s womb, the bodhisatta’s mother was one who received the five strings of sensuality. She lived endowed and provided with the five strings of sensuality’...

“...‘When the bodhisatta had alighted in his mother’s womb, there appeared in the bodhisatta’s mother no illness. She was happy and unafflicted in body. And she saw the bodhisatta within her womb with all his limbs and no inferior faculties. Suppose that there were a beryl gem, beautiful, radiant, eight-faceted, well cut & polished, and through it were strung a blue, yellow, red, white, or beige thread. And then a man of good eyesight, taking it in his hand, would contemplate it: “This is a beryl gem, beautiful, radiant, eight-faceted, well cut & polished, and through it is strung a blue, yellow, red, white, or beige thread.” In the same way, when the bodhisatta had alighted in his mother’s womb, the bodhisatta’s mother experienced no illness. She was happy and unafflicted in

body. And she saw the bodhisatta within her womb with all his limbs and no inferior faculties.’...

“...‘When the bodhisatta had been born seven days, the bodhisatta’s mother passed away and reappeared in the Tusita host.’...

“...‘Whereas other women give birth after nurturing the fetus in the womb between nine and ten lunar months, that’s not how the bodhisatta’s mother gave birth to the bodhisatta. After nurturing the bodhisatta in her womb exactly ten lunar months, the bodhisatta’s mother gave birth.’...

“...‘Whereas other women give birth while sitting or lying down, that’s not how the bodhisatta’s mother gave birth to the bodhisatta. The bodhisatta’s mother gave birth to the bodhisatta while standing.’...

“...‘When the bodhisatta left his mother’s womb, devas received him first, and then human beings.’...

“...‘When the bodhisatta left his mother’s womb but before he reached the ground, four male devas received him and set him in front of his mother, (saying,) “Be gratified, O queen. A son of great influence has been born to you.” ...

“...‘When the bodhisatta left his mother’s womb, he left it immaculate, unsullied by fluid, unsullied by mucus, unsullied by blood, unsullied by lymph: pure, very pure. Just as when a gemstone is placed on Kāsi cloth, neither would the gemstone sully the cloth, nor the cloth the gemstone. Why is that? Because of the purity of both. In the same way, when the bodhisatta left his mother’s womb, he left it immaculate, unsullied by fluid, unsullied by mucus, unsullied by blood, unsullied by lymph: pure, very pure.’...

“...‘When the bodhisatta left his mother’s womb, two streams of water appeared from the sky—one cool, the other warm—to wash the bodhisatta and his mother.’...

“...‘As soon as the bodhisatta was born, he stood steadily with his feet on the ground and, facing north, took seven steps while a white parasol was held over him. Surveying all the directions, he made a bellowing statement: “I am the foremost of the world. I am chief of the world. I am the best of the world.” ...

“In the Blessed One’s presence, lord, I have heard this, in the Blessed One’s presence I have learned this: ‘When the bodhisatta left his mother’s womb, a great, measureless radiance surpassing the effulgence of the devas appeared in the cosmos with its devas, Māras, & Brahmās, in this generation with its

contemplatives & brahmans, its royalty & common people. Even in the intercosmic void of the unrestrained darkness, pitch-black darkness, where even the light of the sun & moon—so mighty, so powerful—doesn’t reach, even there the great, measureless radiance surpassing the effulgence of the devas appeared. And the beings reborn there perceived one another by that radiance: “So other beings have been reborn here, too!” And so this ten-thousandfold cosmos shivered & quivered & quaked, while the great, measureless radiance appeared in the cosmos, surpassing the effulgence of the devas.’ And the fact that when the bodhisatta left his mother’s womb... this ten-thousandfold cosmos shivered & quivered & quaked, while the great, measureless radiance appeared in the cosmos, surpassing the effulgence of the devas: I hold this, too, to be an amazing & astounding quality of the Blessed One.”

“That being the case, Ānanda, you can hold this, too, to be an amazing & astounding quality of the Tathāgata: There is the case where feelings are known to the Tathāgata when they arise, known when they remain, known when they subside. Perceptions are known to the Tathāgata when they arise, known when they remain, known when they subside. Thoughts are known to the Tathāgata when they arise, known when they remain, known when they subside. You can hold this, too, Ānanda, to be an amazing & astounding quality of the Tathāgata.”

“The fact, lord, that feelings are known to the Blessed One when they arise, known when they remain, known when they subside; perceptions are known to the Blessed One when they arise, known when they remain, known when they subside; thoughts are known to the Blessed One when they arise, known when they remain, known when they subside: I hold this, too, lord, to be an amazing & astounding quality of the Blessed One.”

That is what Ven. Ānanda said. The Teacher was in approval. Gratified, the monks delighted in Ven. Ānanda’s words. — [*MN 123*](#)

Asita the seer, in his mid-day meditation,
saw the Group of Thirty—
Sakka the king,
and devas dressed in pure white
exultant, ecstatic—
holding up banners, cheering wildly,
& on seeing the devas so joyful & happy,
having paid his respects, he said:

“Why is the deva community
so wildly elated?
Why are they holding up banners
& waving them around?
Even after the war with the Asuras
—when victory was the devas’,
the Asuras defeated—
even then there was nothing hair-raising like this.
Seeing what marvel
are the devas so joyful?
They whistle,
they sing,
play music,
clap their hands,
dance.
So I ask you, who live on Mount Meru’s summit.
Please dispel my doubt quickly, dear sirs.”

“The bodhisatta, the foremost jewel,
unequaled,
has been born for welfare & happiness
in the human world
in a town in the Sakyan countryside,
Lumbini.
That’s why we’re contented, so wildly elated.
He—the highest of all beings, the ultimate person,
a bull among men, highest of all people—
will set turning the Wheel (of Dhamma)
in the forest named after the seers,
like a strong, roaring lion,
the conqueror of beasts.”

Hearing these words,
Asita quickly descended (from heaven)
and went to Siddhodana’s dwelling.
There, taking a seat, he said to the Sakyans:
“Where is the prince?
I, too, want to see him.”

The Sakyans then showed
to the seer named Asita
 their son, the prince,
 like gold aglow,
 burnished by a most skillful smith
 in the mouth of the furnace,
 blazing with glory, flawless in color.
On seeing the prince blazing like flame,
pure like the bull of the stars
going across the sky
 —the burning sun,
 released from the clouds of autumn—
he was exultant, filled with abundant rapture.
The devas held in the sky
a many-spoked sunshade
of a thousand circles.
Gold-handled whisks
waved up & down,
but those holding the whisks & the sunshade
 couldn't be seen.

The dreadlocked seer
named Dark Splendor,
seeing the boy—like an ornament of gold
on a red woolen blanket,
a white sunshade held over his head—
received him, joyful in mind & pleased.
And on receiving the bull of the Sakyans,
longingly, the master of mantras & signs
exclaimed with a confident mind:

 “This one is unsurpassed,
 the highest of the biped race.”

Then, foreseeing his own imminent departure,
he, dejected, shed tears.
On seeing him weeping,
the Sakyans asked:
 “But surely there will be

no danger for the prince?”
On seeing the Sakyans’ concern
he replied, “I foresee for the prince
no harm,
nor will there be any danger for him.
This one’s not insignificant: Be assured.
This prince will touch
the ultimate self-awakening.
He, seeing the utmost purity,
will set rolling the Wheel of Dhamma
through sympathy for the welfare of many.
His holy life will spread far & wide.

But as for me,
my life here has no long remainder.
My death will take place before then.
I won’t get to hear
the Dhamma of this one with the peerless role.
That’s why I’m stricken,
afflicted, & pained.”

He, having brought the Sakyans
abundant rapture,
the follower of the holy life
left the inner chamber and,
out of sympathy for his nephew,
urged him on toward the Dhamma
of the one with the peerless role:
“When you hear from another the word,
‘Awakened One,’
or ‘Attaining self-awakening,
he lays open the path of the Dhamma,’
go there and, asking him yourself,
follow the holy life
under that Blessed One.”

Instructed by the one
whose mind was set on his benefit,
Such,

seeing in the future the utmost purity,
Nālaka, who had laid up a store of merit,
awaited the Victor expectantly,
guarding his senses. — [*Sn 3:11*](#)

The Noble Search

The famous account of the bodhisatta’s original impulse in this lifetime to search for awakening—in which he had never seen an old person, a sick person, a dead person, or a wilderness mendicant until after becoming an adult—isn’t found in the Pāli Canon. Instead, the Canon’s accounts are simpler and psychologically much more realistic. It was not the case that he hadn’t seen these things when he was a child. It was just that their implications didn’t yet fully hit home. When they did, he decided that a life spent in pursuit of happiness in things that age, grow ill, and die was a life thrown to waste. Not only that, the need to compete for happiness in these things meant that he would have to engage in conflict and do harm—all for things that would eventually have to slip through his fingers. These were the realizations that inspired him to look for a noble happiness: one that would last and also be peaceful, in that it would require no harm or conflict in finding and maintaining it. In his words, this was a search for “what might be skillful.” He was searching not for his true self or even for truth in the abstract, but rather for a path of action that would yield a happiness meeting his high standards.

“Monks, I lived in refinement, utmost refinement, total refinement. My father even had lotus ponds made in our palace: one where red-lotuses bloomed, one where white lotuses bloomed, one where blue lotuses bloomed, all for my sake. I used no sandalwood that was not from Vārāṇasī. My turban was from Vārāṇasī, as were my tunic, my lower garments, & my outer cloak. A white sunshade was held over me day & night to protect me from cold, heat, dust, dirt, & dew.

“I had three palaces: one for the cold season, one for the hot season, one for the rainy season. During the four months of the rainy season, I was entertained in the rainy-season palace by minstrels without a single man among them, and I did not once come down from the palace. Whereas the servants, workers, & retainers in other people’s homes are fed meals of lentil soup & broken rice, in my father’s home the servants, workers, & retainers were fed wheat, rice, and meat.

“Even though I was endowed with such fortune, such total refinement, the thought occurred to me: ‘When an untaught, run-of-the-mill person, himself subject to aging, not beyond aging, sees another who is aged, he is horrified, humiliated, & disgusted, oblivious to himself that he too is subject to aging, not beyond aging. If I—who am subject to aging, not beyond aging—were to be horrified, humiliated, & disgusted on seeing another person who is aged, that would not be fitting for me.’ As I noticed this, the (typical) young person’s intoxication with youth entirely dropped away.

“Even though I was endowed with such fortune, such total refinement, the thought occurred to me: ‘When an untaught, run-of-the-mill person, himself subject to illness, not beyond illness, sees another who is ill, he is horrified, humiliated, & disgusted, oblivious to himself that he too is subject to illness, not beyond illness. And if I—who am subject to illness, not beyond illness—were to be horrified, humiliated, & disgusted on seeing another person who is ill, that would not be fitting for me.’ As I noticed this, the healthy person’s intoxication with health entirely dropped away.

“Even though I was endowed with such fortune, such total refinement, the thought occurred to me: ‘When an untaught, run-of-the-mill person, himself subject to death, not beyond death, sees another who is dead, he is horrified, humiliated, & disgusted, oblivious to himself that he too is subject to death, not beyond death. And if I—who am subject to death, not beyond death—were to be horrified, humiliated, & disgusted on seeing another person who is dead, that would not be fitting for me.’ As I noticed this, the living person’s intoxication with life entirely dropped away.” — [AN 3:39](#)

When embraced,
the rod of violence
 breeds danger & fear:
Look at people quarreling.
 I will tell of how
 I experienced
 terror:
Seeing people floundering
like fish in small puddles,
competing with one another—
 as I saw this,
 fear came into me.

The world was entirely
without substance.
All the directions
were knocked out of line.
Wanting a haven for myself,
I saw nothing that wasn't laid claim to.
Seeing nothing in the end
but competition,
I felt discontent.

And then I saw
an arrow here,
so very hard to see,
embedded in the heart.
Overcome by this arrow
you run in all directions.
But simply on pulling it out
you don't run,
you don't sink. — [Sn 4:15](#)

“I, too, monks, before my self-awakening, when I was still just an unawakened bodhisatta, being subject myself to birth, sought [happiness in] what was likewise subject to birth. Being subject myself to aging... illness... death... sorrow... defilement, I sought what was likewise subject to aging... illness... death... sorrow... defilement. The thought occurred to me, ‘Why do I, being subject myself to birth, seek what is likewise subject to birth? Being subject myself to aging... illness... death... sorrow... defilement, why do I seek what is likewise subject to aging... illness... death... sorrow... defilement? What if I, being subject myself to birth, seeing the drawbacks of birth, were to seek the unborn, unexcelled rest from the yoke: unbinding? What if I, being subject myself to aging... illness... death... sorrow... defilement, seeing the drawbacks of aging... illness... death... sorrow... defilement, were to seek the aging-less, illness-less, deathless, sorrow-less, unexcelled rest from the yoke: unbinding?’” — [MN 26](#)

One of the longest accounts of the bodhisatta's quest for awakening is contained in [MN 36](#). This passage—interspersed with passages from other parts of the Canon—provides the main framework for the following

presentation. It's an example of how the Buddha's autobiographical narratives were sometimes sparked by a particular event—in this case, Saccaka Aggivessana's insinuation that perhaps the bodhisatta's ability to keep his mind from being invaded by pleasure and pain was due to the fact that he never experienced pleasures or pains that were especially intense. This remark provided the occasion for the Buddha to enumerate the extreme pleasures and pains he experienced in the course of his search for awakening but that, despite their intensity, did not invade his mind. Thus the frequent refrain through the following pages: "But the painful/pleasant feeling that arose in this way did not invade my mind or remain."

The Blessed One said, "And how is one undeveloped in body and undeveloped in mind? There is the case where a pleasant feeling arises in an uneducated run-of-the-mill person. On being touched by the pleasant feeling, he becomes impassioned with pleasure and is reduced to being impassioned with pleasure. His pleasant feeling ceases. With the cessation of the pleasant feeling there arises a painful feeling. On being touched with the painful feeling, he sorrows, grieves, & laments, beats his breast, becomes distraught. When that pleasant feeling had arisen in him, it invaded his mind and remained because of his lack of development of the body. When that painful feeling had arisen in him, it invaded his mind and remained because of his lack of development of the mind. This is how one is undeveloped in body and undeveloped in mind.

"And how is one developed in body and developed in mind? There is the case where a pleasant feeling arises in a well educated disciple of the noble ones. On being touched by the pleasant feeling, he doesn't become impassioned with pleasure and is not reduced to being impassioned with pleasure. His pleasant feeling ceases. With the cessation of the pleasant feeling there arises a painful feeling. On being touched with the painful feeling, he doesn't sorrow, grieve, or lament, beat his breast or become distraught. When that pleasant feeling had arisen in him, it didn't invade his mind and remain because of his development of the body. When that painful feeling had arisen in him, it didn't invade his mind and remain because of his development of the mind. This is how one is developed in body and developed in mind."

[Saccaka Aggivessana:] "I have confidence in Master Gotama that Master Gotama is developed in body and developed in mind."

“Well, Aggivessana, you are certainly being rude and presumptuously speaking your words, but nevertheless I will respond to you. Ever since I shaved my hair & beard, put on the ochre robe, and went forth from home into homelessness, it has not been possible for a pleasant feeling that has arisen to invade my mind and remain or for a painful feeling that has arisen to invade my mind and remain.”

“But perhaps there has never arisen in Master Gotama the sort of pleasant feeling that, having arisen, would invade the mind and remain. Perhaps there has never arisen in Master Gotama the sort of painful feeling that, having arisen, would invade the mind and remain.”

“Why wouldn’t it have, Aggivessana? Before my self-awakening, when I was still just an unawakened bodhisatta, the thought occurred to me: ‘Home life is confining, a dusty path. Life gone forth is the open air. It isn’t easy, living in a home, to live the holy life totally perfect, totally pure, a polished shell. What if I, having shaved off my hair & beard and putting on the ochre robe, were to go forth from home into homelessness?’

“So, at a later time, while still young, a black-haired young man endowed with the blessings of youth in the first stage of life—and while my parents, unwilling, were crying with tears streaming down their faces—I shaved off my hair & beard, put on the ochre robe, and went forth from home into homelessness.” — [MN 36](#)

As we will see in [Chapter 6](#), when the bodhisatta left home, he left not only his parents but also a wife and young son. For some reason, they are not mentioned in the Canon’s accounts of events prior to his awakening. Later versions of the story, however, gave them a major role in showing how heart-rending a choice it was for the bodhisatta to go forth.

After leaving his home in Kapilavatthu, in the northwest, he made his way to the far south of the lands of the Ariyans: Rājagaha, the capital city of the kingdom of Magadha. He probably would have taken the road along the Gandak River, passing through Kusinārā, then the territories of the Mallans, Vajjis, and Licchavis, to the River Ganges, the northern frontier of Magadhan territory. It was on this same road, going in the opposite direction, that his final journey was to take place many years later.

I will celebrate the Going-forth,

how he, the One with Eyes, went forth,
how he reasoned and chose the Going-forth.

“Household life is confining,
a realm of dust,
while going forth
is the open air.”

Seeing this, he went forth.

On going forth,
he avoided evil deeds in body.
Abandoning verbal misconduct,
he purified his livelihood.

Then he, the Buddha, went to Rājagaha,
the mountain fortress of the Magadhans,
and wandered for alms,
teeming with the foremost marks.

King Bimbisāra, standing in his palace, saw him
and, on seeing him, consummate in marks,
said this:

“Look at this one, sirs.
How handsome, stately, pure!
How consummate his demeanor!
Mindful, his eyes downcast,
looking only a plow-length before him,
he’s not from a lowly lineage, this.
Have the royal messengers hurry
to see where this monk will go.”

They—the messengers dispatched—
followed behind him.

“Where will this monk go?
Where will his dwelling place be?”

As he went from house to house—
well restrained, his sense-doors guarded,
mindful, alert—
his bowl filled quickly.
Then he, the sage, completing his almsround,
left the city, headed for Mount Paṇḍava.

“That’s where his dwelling will be.”
Seeing him go to his dwelling place,
three messengers sat down,
while one returned to tell the king.
“That monk, your majesty,
on the flank of Paṇḍava,
sits like a tiger, a bull,
a lion in a mountain cleft.”

Hearing the messenger’s words,
the noble-warrior king
straightaway set out by royal coach,
for Mount Paṇḍava.

Going as far as the coach would go,
the noble-warrior king
got down from the coach,
went up on foot
and on arrival sat down.

Sitting there,
he exchanged courteous greetings,
and after giving friendly greetings,
said this:

“Young you are, and youthful,
in the first stage of youth,
consummate in stature & coloring
like a noble-warrior by birth.
You would look glorious
in the vanguard of an army,
arrayed with an elephant squadron.
I offer you wealth : Enjoy it.
I ask your birth : Inform me.”

“Straight ahead, your majesty,
by the foothills of the Himalayas,
is a country consummate
in energy & wealth,
inhabited by Kosalans:
Solar by clan,

Sakyans by birth.
From that lineage I have gone forth,
but not in hope of sensuality.
Seeing the danger in sensuality
—and renunciation as rest—
I go to strive.

That's where my heart delights.” — [*Sn 3:1*](#)

A recurrent theme in the Buddha's accounts of his search for awakening was his experimental approach. He would try a course of action and then evaluate the results. If they didn't meet up with his standards, he would look for the cause in his own actions and ask himself what he might do differently. Coming up with a possible solution, he would then experiment with that. It was through this process of trial and error, carefully observed, that he eventually arrived at trial and success. He began his experiments under the direction of two teachers, but then —dissatisfied with the results—started to experiment on his own.

“Having thus gone forth in search of what might be skillful, seeking the unexcelled state of sublime peace, I went to Ālāra Kālāma and, on arrival, said to him: ‘Friend Kālāma, I want to practice in this Dhamma & discipline.’

“When this was said, Aggivessana, he replied to me, ‘You may stay here, my friend. This Dhamma is such that a wise person can soon enter and remain in his own teacher's knowledge, having realized it for himself through direct knowledge.’

“It wasn't long before I quickly learned the doctrine. As far as mere lip-reciting & repetition, I could speak the words of knowledge, the words of the elders, and I could affirm that I knew and saw—I, along with others.

“I thought: ‘It isn't through mere conviction alone that Ālāra Kālāma declares, “I have entered and remain in this Dhamma, having realized it for myself through direct knowledge.” Certainly he dwells knowing and seeing this Dhamma.’ So I went to him and said, ‘To what extent do you declare that you have entered and remain in this Dhamma?’ When this was said, he declared the dimension of nothingness.

“I thought: ‘Not only does Ālāra Kālāma have conviction, persistence, mindfulness, concentration, & discernment. I, too, have conviction,

persistence, mindfulness, concentration, & discernment. What if I were to endeavor to realize for myself the Dhamma that Ālāra Kālāma declares he has entered and remains in, having realized it for himself through direct knowledge.’ So it wasn’t long before I quickly entered and remained in that Dhamma, having realized it for myself through direct knowledge. I went to him and said, ‘Friend Kālāma, is this the extent to which you have entered and remain in this Dhamma, having realized it for yourself through direct knowledge?’

“‘Yes, my friend...’

“‘This, friend, is the extent to which I, too, have entered and remain in this Dhamma, having realized it for myself through direct knowledge.’

“‘It’s a gain for us, my friend, a great gain for us, that we have such a companion in the holy life. So the Dhamma I declare I have entered and remain in, having realized it for myself through direct knowledge, is the Dhamma you declare you have entered and remain in, having realized it for yourself through direct knowledge. And the Dhamma you declare you have entered and remain in, having realized it for yourself through direct knowledge, is the Dhamma I declare I have entered and remain in, having realized it for myself through direct knowledge. The Dhamma I know is the Dhamma you know; the Dhamma you know is the Dhamma I know. As I am, so are you; as you are, so am I. Come friend, let us now lead this community together.’

“In this way did Ālāra Kālāma, my teacher, place me, his pupil, on the same level with himself and pay me great honor. But the thought occurred to me, ‘This Dhamma leads not to disenchantment, to dispassion, to cessation, to stilling, to direct knowledge, to awakening, nor to unbinding, but only to reappearance in the dimension of nothingness.’ So, dissatisfied with that Dhamma, I left.

“In search of what might be skillful, seeking the unexcelled state of sublime peace, I went to Uddaka Rāmaputta [*literally*, son of Rāma] and, on arrival, said to him: ‘Friend Uddaka, I want to practice in this Dhamma & discipline.’

“When this was said, he replied to me, ‘You may stay here, my friend. This Dhamma is such that a wise person can soon enter and remain in his own teacher’s knowledge, having realized it for himself through direct knowledge.’

“It wasn’t long before I quickly learned the doctrine. As far as mere lip-reciting & repetition, I could speak the words of knowledge, the words of the

elders, and I could affirm that I knew & saw—I, along with others.

“I thought: ‘It wasn’t through mere conviction alone that Rāma declared, “I have entered and remain in this Dhamma, having realized it for myself through direct knowledge.” Certainly he dwelled knowing and seeing this Dhamma.’ So I went to Uddaka and said, ‘To what extent did Rāma declare that he had entered and remained in this Dhamma?’ When this was said, Uddaka declared the dimension of neither perception nor non-perception.

“I thought: ‘Not only did Rāma have conviction, persistence, mindfulness, concentration, & discernment. I, too, have conviction, persistence, mindfulness, concentration, & discernment. What if I were to endeavor to realize for myself the Dhamma that Rāma declared he entered and remained in, having realized it for himself through direct knowledge.’ So it wasn’t long before I quickly entered and remained in that Dhamma, having realized it for myself through direct knowledge. I went to Uddaka and said, ‘Friend Uddaka, is this the extent to which Rāma entered and remained in this Dhamma, having realized it for himself through direct knowledge?’

“‘Yes, my friend...’

“‘This, friend, is the extent to which I, too, have entered and remain in this Dhamma, having realized it for myself through direct knowledge.’

“‘It’s a gain for us, my friend, a great gain for us, that we have such a companion in the holy life. So the Dhamma Rāma declared he entered and remained in, having realized it for himself through direct knowledge, is the Dhamma you declare you have entered and remained in, having realized it for yourself through direct knowledge. And the Dhamma you declare you have entered and remain in, having realized it for yourself through direct knowledge, is the Dhamma Rāma declared he entered and remained in, having realized it for himself through direct knowledge. The Dhamma he knew is the Dhamma you know; the Dhamma you know is the Dhamma he knew. As he was, so are you; as you are, so was he. Come friend, lead this community.’

“In this way did Uddaka Rāmaputta, my companion in the holy life, place me in the position of teacher and pay me great honor. But the thought occurred to me, ‘This Dhamma leads not to disenchantment, to dispassion, to cessation, to stilling, to direct knowledge, to awakening, nor to unbinding, but only to reappearance in the dimension of neither perception nor non-perception.’ So, dissatisfied with that Dhamma, I left.” — [*MN 36*](#)

“Monks, Uddaka Rāmaputta himself made this statement: ‘This one [myself] is surely an attainer of wisdom. This one is surely a conqueror of all. This one surely has uprooted the un-uprooted boil-root.’²

“But Uddaka Rāmaputta, not being an attainer of wisdom, said, ‘I am an attainer of wisdom,’ not being a conqueror of all, said, ‘I am a conqueror of all,’ not having uprooted the boil-root, said, ‘My boil-root is uprooted.’

“Here, a monk, speaking rightly would say, ‘This one [myself] is surely an attainer of wisdom. This one is surely a conqueror of all. This one surely has uprooted the unuprooted boil-root.’

“And how is one an attainer of wisdom? When a monk discerns, as they have come to be, the origination, passing away, allure, drawback, & escape from the six spheres of contact: In that way a monk is an attainer of wisdom.

“And how is a monk a conqueror of all? When a monk, having known, as they have come to be, the origination, passing away, allure, drawback, & escape from the six spheres of contact, is released through non-clinging: In that way a monk is a conqueror of all.

“And how is a monk’s unuprooted boil-root uprooted? ‘Boil,’ is a designation for this body, composed of the four primary elements, born from mother & father, nourished with rice & porridge, subject to inconstancy, rubbing, pressing, dissolution, & dispersion. ‘Boil-root,’ is a designation for craving. When a monk’s craving has been abandoned, its root destroyed, made like a palmyra stump—deprived of the conditions of development, not destined for future arising: In that way a monk’s unuprooted boil-root is uprooted.” —
SN 35:86

Here it’s worth pausing to pose the question of how Āḷāra Kālāma and Uddaka Rāmaputta taught the bodhisatta to reach the dimensions of nothingness and neither perception nor non-perception. In the Canon’s standard descriptions of how these dimensions are attained, they follow on the four *jhānas*. But if these two teachers taught the four *jhānas* as preliminary steps to those dimensions, it raises the question: Why, when the bodhisatta was later looking for a new way to approach the deathless, did he have to cast all the way back to his childhood for a memory of the first *jhāna*? Couldn’t he have simply referred to his experience under them? And why couldn’t he simply have used the states he learned under his teachers as a basis for liberating insight? After all, several suttas, such

as [AN 9:36](#) and [MN 52](#), list the dimensions of nothingness and neither perception nor non-perception as possible bases for liberating insight.

One possible answer is that Ālāra and Uddaka taught alternative routes to those dimensions, rather than through the four jhānas. And the Canon itself lists a few such alternatives, which the bodhisatta may have learned from his two teachers. [MN 106](#) is especially instructive on this question, listing three possible methods for attaining the dimension of nothingness, and a method for attaining the dimension of neither perception nor non-perception.’

Among the three ways to attain the dimension of nothingness, the first describes the standard route, detailing the lessons that can be learned by approaching that dimension through the practice of the four jhānas and two imperturbable states: the dimension of the infinitude of space and the dimension of the infinitude of consciousness. These lessons—about sensuality, form, and perception—are precisely the lessons that are useful in developing insight into how the mind shapes its experience through the processes of the three types of fabrication (intentional action): bodily, verbal, and mental.³ That is why a person who has followed this path to the dimension of nothingness would be primed to use a contemplation of that attainment to gain liberating insight. The remaining two methods, however—and this is true also of the method given here for attaining the dimension of neither perception nor non-perception—do not provide these lessons, which is why a person who reaches these attainments through these alternative methods would not be primed in that way.

“Then again, the disciple of the noble ones considers this: ‘Sensuality here & now; sensuality in lives to come; sensual perceptions here & now; sensual perceptions in lives to come; forms here & now; forms in lives to come; form-perceptions here & now; form-perceptions in lives to come; perceptions of the imperturbable: All are perceptions. Where they cease without remainder: That is peaceful, that is exquisite, i.e., the dimension of nothingness.’ Practicing and frequently abiding in this way, his mind acquires confidence in that dimension. There being full confidence, he either attains the dimension of nothingness now or else is committed to discernment. With the breakup of the body, after death, it’s possible that this leading-on consciousness of his will go to the

dimension of nothingness. This is declared to be the first practice conducive to the dimension of nothingness.

“Then again, the disciple of the noble ones, 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.’ Practicing and frequently abiding in this way, his mind acquires confidence in that dimension. There being full confidence, he either attains the dimension of nothingness now or else is committed to discernment. With the breakup of the body, after death, it’s possible that this leading-on consciousness of his will go to the dimension of nothingness. This is declared to be the second practice conducive to the dimension of nothingness.

“Then again, the disciple of the noble ones considers this: ‘I am not anyone’s anything anywhere; nor is anything of mine in anyone anywhere.’ Practicing and frequently abiding in this way, his mind acquires confidence in that dimension. There being full confidence, he either attains the dimension of nothingness now or else is committed to discernment. With the breakup of the body, after death, it’s possible that this leading-on consciousness of his will go to the dimension of nothingness. This is declared to be the third practice conducive to the dimension of nothingness....

“There is the case, Ānanda, where a monk, having practiced in this way—(thinking) ‘It should not be, it should not occur to me; it will not be, it will not occur to me. What is, what has come to be, that I abandon’—obtains equanimity. He relishes that equanimity, welcomes it, remains fastened to it. As he relishes that equanimity, welcomes it, remains fastened to it, his consciousness is dependent on it, is sustained by it [clings to it]. With clinging/sustenance, Ānanda, a monk is not totally unbound.”

“Being sustained, lord, where is that monk sustained?”

“The dimension of neither perception nor non-perception.” — [*MN 106*](#)

To resume the story of the bodhisatta’s search:

“So, Aggivessana, in search of what might be skillful, seeking the unexcelled state of sublime peace, I wandered by stages in the Magadhan country and came to the military town of Uruvelā. There I saw some delightful countryside, with an inspiring forest grove, a clear-flowing river with fine, delightful banks, & villages for alms-going on all sides. The thought occurred to me: ‘How

delightful is this countryside, with its inspiring forest grove, clear-flowing river with fine, delightful banks, & villages for alms-going on all sides. This is just right for the exertion of a clansman intent on exertion.’ So I sat down right there, thinking, “This is just right for exertion.” — [MN 36](#)

“Monks, I have known two qualities through experience: discontent with regard to skillful qualities⁴ & 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 human firmness, human persistence, human 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.” — [AN 2:5](#)

“Yes, brahman... before my self-awakening, when I was still just an unawakened bodhisatta, the thought occurred to me as well: ‘It’s not easy to maintain seclusion, not easy to enjoy being alone. The forests plunder, as it were, the mind of a monk who has not attained concentration.’

“The thought occurred to me: ‘When contemplatives or brahmans who are unpurified in their bodily activities resort to isolated forest or wilderness dwellings, it’s the fault of their unpurified bodily activities that they give rise to unskillful fear & terror. But it’s not the case that I am unpurified in my bodily activities when I resort to isolated forest or wilderness dwellings. I am purified in my bodily activities. I am one of those noble ones who are purified in their bodily activities when they resort to isolated forest or wilderness dwellings.’ Seeing in myself this purity of bodily activities, I felt even more undaunted about staying in the wilderness.

“The thought occurred to me: ‘When contemplatives or brahmans who are unpurified in their verbal activities... unpurified in their mental activities... unpurified in their livelihood resort to isolated forest or wilderness dwellings, it’s the fault of their unpurified livelihood that they give rise to unskillful fear & terror. But it’s not the case that I am unpurified in my livelihood when I resort to isolated forest or wilderness dwellings. I am purified in my livelihood. I am one of those noble ones who are purified in their livelihood when they resort to isolated forest or wilderness dwellings.’ Seeing in myself this purity of livelihood, I felt even more undaunted about staying in the wilderness.

“The thought occurred to me: ‘When contemplatives or brahmans who are covetous & fiercely passionate for sensual pleasures... I am not covetous...’

“...‘When contemplatives or brahmans who have minds of ill will, with destructive attitudes... I have a mind of goodwill...’...

“...‘When contemplatives or brahmans who are overcome by sloth & drowsiness... I am devoid of sloth & drowsiness...’...

“...‘When contemplatives or brahmans who are restless & with an unstill mind... I have a still mind...’...

“...‘When contemplatives or brahmans who are uncertain & doubting... I have gone beyond uncertainty...’...

“...‘When contemplatives or brahmans who are given to praising themselves & disparaging others... I do not praise myself or disparage others...’...

“...‘When contemplatives or brahmans who tend toward panic & dread... I have gone beyond horripilation...’...

“...‘When contemplatives or brahmans who are desirous of gains, offerings, & fame... I have few wants...’...

“...‘When contemplatives or brahmans who are lazy & lacking in persistence... My persistence is aroused...’...

“...‘When contemplatives or brahmans who are muddled in their mindfulness & unalert... I have mindfulness established...’...

“...‘When contemplatives or brahmans who are unconcentrated, with straying minds... I am consummate in concentration...’...

“The thought occurred to me: ‘When contemplatives or brahmans who are drooling idiots, resort to isolated forest or wilderness dwellings, it’s the fault of their drooling idiocy that they give rise to unskillful fear & terror. But it’s not the case that I am a drooling idiot, when I resort to isolated forest or wilderness dwellings. I am consummate in discernment. I am one of those noble ones who are consummate in discernment when they resort to isolated forest or wilderness dwellings.’ Seeing in myself this consummate discernment, I felt even more undaunted about staying in the wilderness.

“The thought occurred to me: ‘What if—on recognized, designated nights such as the eighth, fourteenth, & fifteenth of the lunar fortnight—I were to stay in the sort of places that are awe-inspiring and make your hair stand on end, such as park-shrines, forest-shrines, & tree-shrines? Perhaps I would get to see that fear & terror.’ So at a later time—on recognized, designated nights such as

the eighth, fourteenth, & fifteenth of the lunar fortnight—I stayed in the sort of places that are awe-inspiring and make your hair stand on end, such as park-shrines, forest-shrines, & tree-shrines. And while I was staying there, a wild animal would come, or a bird would make a twig fall, or wind would rustle the fallen leaves. The thought would occur to me: ‘Is this that fear & terror coming?’

“Then the thought occurred to me: ‘Why do I just keep waiting for fear? What if I were to subdue fear & terror in whatever state they come?’ So when fear & terror came while I was walking back & forth, I would not stand or sit or lie down. I would keep walking back & forth until I had subdued that fear & terror. When fear & terror came while I was standing, I would not walk or sit or lie down. I would keep standing until I had subdued that fear & terror. When fear & terror came while I was sitting, I would not lie down or stand up or walk. I would keep sitting until I had subdued that fear & terror. When fear & terror came while I was lying down, I would not sit up or stand or walk. I would keep lying down until I had subdued that fear & terror.” — [MN 4](#)

“Then, Aggivessana, these three similes—spontaneous, never before heard—appeared to me. Suppose there were a wet, sappy piece of timber lying in the water, and a man were to come along with an upper fire-stick, thinking, ‘I’ll light a fire. I’ll produce heat.’ Now what do you think? Would he be able to light a fire and produce heat by rubbing the upper fire-stick in the wet, sappy timber lying in the water?”

“No, Master Gotama. Why is that? Because the timber is wet & sappy, and besides it is lying in the water. Eventually the man would reap only his share of weariness & disappointment.”

“So it is with any contemplative or brahman who does not live secluded from sensuality in body & mind, and whose desire, infatuation, urge, thirst, & fever for sensuality is not relinquished and stilled within him: Whether or not he feels painful, racking, piercing feelings (due to his striving for awakening), he is incapable of knowledge, vision, & unexcelled self-awakening. This was the first simile—spontaneous, never before heard—that appeared to me.

“Then a second simile—spontaneous, never before heard—appeared to me. Suppose there were a wet, sappy piece of timber lying on land far from water, and a man were to come along with an upper fire-stick, thinking, ‘I’ll light a fire. I’ll produce heat.’ Now what do you think? Would he be able to light a fire

and produce heat by rubbing the upper fire-stick in the wet, sappy timber lying on land far from water?”

“No, Master Gotama. Why is that? Because the timber is wet & sappy, even though it is lying on land far from water. Eventually the man would reap only his share of weariness & disappointment.”

“So it is with any contemplative or brahman who lives secluded from sensuality in body only, but whose desire, infatuation, urge, thirst, & fever for sensuality is not relinquished and stilled within him: Whether or not he feels painful, racking, piercing feelings (due to his striving), he is incapable of knowledge, vision, & unexcelled self-awakening. This was the second simile—spontaneous, never before heard—that appeared to me.

“Then a third simile—spontaneous, never before heard—appeared to me. Suppose there were a dry, sapless piece of timber lying on land far from water, and a man were to come along with an upper fire-stick, thinking, ‘I’ll light a fire. I’ll produce heat.’ Now what do you think? Would he be able to light a fire and produce heat by rubbing the upper fire-stick in the dry, sapless timber lying on land?”

“Yes, Master Gotama. Why is that? Because the timber is dry & sapless, and besides it is lying on land far from water.”

“So it is with any contemplative or brahman who lives secluded from sensuality in body & mind, and whose desire, infatuation, urge, thirst, & fever for sensuality is relinquished and stilled within him: Whether or not he feels painful, racking, piercing feelings due to his striving, he is capable of knowledge, vision, & unexcelled self-awakening. This was the third simile—spontaneous, never before heard—that appeared to me.

“I thought: ‘What if I, clenching my teeth and pressing my tongue against the roof of my mouth, were to beat down, constrain, & crush my mind with my awareness?’ So, clenching my teeth and pressing my tongue against the roof of my mouth, I beat down, constrained, & crushed my mind with my awareness. 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, I beat down, constrained, & crushed my mind with my awareness. As I did so, sweat poured from my armpits. And although tireless persistence was aroused in me, and unmuddled mindfulness established, my body was aroused & uncalm because of the painful exertion, being harassed by the exertion. But the painful feeling that arose in this way did not invade my mind or remain.

“I thought: ‘What if I were to become absorbed in the jhāna of non-breathing?’ So I stopped the in-breaths & out-breaths in my nose & mouth. As I did so, there was a loud roaring of winds coming out my earholes, just like the loud roar of winds coming out of a smith’s bellows.... So I stopped the in-breaths & out-breaths in my nose & mouth & ears. As I did so, extreme forces sliced through my head, just as if a strong man were slicing my head open with a sharp sword.... Extreme pains arose in my head, just as if a strong man were tightening a turban made of tough leather straps around my head.... Extreme forces carved up my stomach cavity, just as if a butcher or his apprentice were to carve up the stomach cavity of an ox.... There was an extreme burning in my body, just as if two strong men, grabbing a weaker man by the arms, were to roast & broil him over a pit of hot embers. And although tireless persistence was aroused in me, and unmuddled mindfulness established, my body was aroused & uncalm because of the painful exertion, being harassed by the exertion. But the painful feeling that arose in this way did not invade my mind or remain.

“Devas, on seeing me, said, ‘Gotama the contemplative is dead.’ Other devas said, ‘He isn’t dead, he’s dying.’ Others said, ‘He’s neither dead nor dying, he’s an *arahant*, for this is the way arahants live.’

“I thought: ‘What if I were to practice going altogether without food?’ Then devas came to me and said, ‘Please, dear sir, don’t practice going altogether without food. If you go altogether without food, we’ll infuse divine nourishment in through your pores, and you will survive on that.’ I thought, ‘If I were to claim to be completely fasting while these devas are infusing divine nourishment in through my pores, I would be lying.’ So I dismissed them, saying, ‘Enough.’

“I thought: ‘What if I were to take only a little food at a time, only a handful at a time of bean soup, lentil soup, vetch soup, or pea soup?’ So I took only a little food at a time, only a handful at a time of bean soup, lentil soup, vetch soup, or pea soup. My body became extremely emaciated. Simply from my eating so little, my limbs became like the jointed segments of vine stems or bamboo stems.... My backside became like a camel’s hoof.... My spine stood out like a string of beads.... My ribs jutted out like the jutting rafters of an old, run-down barn.... The gleam of my eyes appeared to be sunk deep in my eye sockets, like the gleam of water deep in a well.... My scalp shriveled & withered like a green bitter gourd, shriveled & withered in the heat & the wind.... The

skin of my belly became so stuck to my spine that when I thought of touching my belly, I grabbed hold of my spine as well; and when I thought of touching my spine, I grabbed hold of the skin of my belly as well... If I urinated or defecated, I fell over on my face right there.... Simply from my eating so little, if I tried to ease my body by rubbing my limbs with my hands, the hair—rotted at its roots—fell from my body as I rubbed, simply from eating so little.

“People on seeing me would say, ‘Gotama the contemplative is black.’ Other people would say, ‘Gotama the contemplative isn’t black, he’s brown.’ Others would say, ‘Gotama the contemplative is neither black nor brown, he’s golden-skinned.’ So much had the clear, bright color of my skin deteriorated, simply from eating so little.

“I thought: ‘Whatever contemplatives or brahmans in the past have felt painful, racking, piercing feelings (due to their striving), this is the utmost. None have been greater than this. Whatever contemplatives or brahmans in the future will feel painful, racking, piercing feelings due to their striving, this is the utmost. None will be greater than this. Whatever contemplatives or brahmans in the present are feeling painful, racking, piercing feelings due to their striving, this is the utmost. None is greater than this. But with this racking practice of austerities I haven’t attained any superior human state, any distinction in knowledge or vision worthy of the noble ones. Could there be another path to awakening?’

“I thought: ‘I recall once, when my father the Sakyan was working, and I was sitting in the cool shade of a rose-apple tree, then—quite secluded from sensuality, secluded from unskillful qualities—I entered and remained in the first jhāna: rapture & pleasure born of seclusion, accompanied by directed thought & evaluation. Could that be the path to awakening?’ Then there was the consciousness following on that memory: ‘That is the path to awakening.’ I thought: ‘So why am I afraid of that pleasure that has nothing to do with sensuality, nothing to do with unskillful qualities?’ I thought: ‘I am no longer afraid of that pleasure that has nothing to do with sensuality, nothing to do with unskillful qualities, but that pleasure is not easy to achieve with a body so extremely emaciated. What if I were to take some solid food: some rice & porridge?’ So I took some solid food: some rice & porridge.

“Now five monks had been attending to me, thinking, ‘If Gotama, our contemplative, achieves some higher state, he will tell us.’ But when they saw me taking some solid food—some rice & porridge—they were disgusted and

left me, thinking, ‘Gotama the contemplative is living luxuriously. He has abandoned his exertion and is backsliding into abundance.’” — [*MN 36*](#)

“When the Tathāgata—worthy & rightly self-awakened—was still just an unawakened bodhisatta, five great dreams appeared to him. Which five?

“When the Tathāgata—worthy & rightly self-awakened—was still just an unawakened bodhisatta, this great earth was his great bed. The Himalayas, king of mountains, was his pillow. His left hand rested in the eastern sea, his right hand in the western sea, and both feet in the southern sea. When the Tathāgata—worthy & rightly self-awakened—was still just an unawakened bodhisatta, this was the first great dream that appeared to him.

“Furthermore, when the Tathāgata—worthy & rightly self-awakened—was still just an unawakened bodhisatta, a woody vine growing out of his navel stood reaching to the sky. When the Tathāgata—worthy & rightly self-awakened—was still just an unawakened bodhisatta, this was the second great dream that appeared to him.

“Furthermore, when the Tathāgata—worthy & rightly self-awakened—was still just an unawakened bodhisatta, white worms with black heads crawling up from his feet covered him as far as his knees. When the Tathāgata—worthy & rightly self-awakened—was still just an unawakened bodhisatta, this was the third great dream that appeared to him.

“Furthermore, when the Tathāgata—worthy & rightly self-awakened—was still just an unawakened bodhisatta, four birds of different color coming from the four directions fell at his feet and turned entirely white. When the Tathāgata—worthy & rightly self-awakened—was still just an unawakened bodhisatta, this was the fourth great dream that appeared to him.

“Furthermore, when the Tathāgata—worthy & rightly self-awakened—was still just an unawakened bodhisatta, he walked back & forth on top of a giant mountain of excrement but was not soiled by the excrement. When the Tathāgata—worthy & rightly self-awakened—was still just an unawakened bodhisatta, this was the fifth great dream that appeared to him.

“Now, when the Tathāgata—worthy & rightly self-awakened—was still just an unawakened bodhisatta, and this great earth was his great bed, the Himalayas, king of mountains, was his pillow, his left hand rested in the eastern sea, his right hand in the western sea, and both feet in the southern sea: This

first great dream appeared to let him know that he would awaken to the unexcelled right self-awakening.

“When the Tathāgata—worthy & rightly self-awakened—was still just an unawakened bodhisatta, and a woody vine growing out of his navel stood reaching to the sky: This second great dream appeared to let him know that when he had awakened to the noble eightfold path, he would proclaim it well as far as there are devas & human beings.

“When the Tathāgata—worthy & rightly self-awakened—was still just an unawakened bodhisatta, and white worms with black heads crawling up from his feet covered him as far as his knees: This third great dream appeared to let him know that many white-clothed householders would go for lifelong refuge to the Tathāgata.

“When the Tathāgata—worthy & rightly self-awakened—was still just an unawakened bodhisatta, and four different-colored birds coming from the four directions fell at his feet and turned entirely white: This fourth great dream appeared to let him know that people from the four castes—brahmans, noble warriors, merchants, and laborers—having gone forth from home into homelessness in the Dhamma & Vinaya taught by the Tathāgata, would realize unexcelled release.

“When the Tathāgata—worthy & rightly self-awakened—was still just an unawakened bodhisatta, and he walked back & forth on top of a giant mountain of excrement but was not soiled by the excrement: This fifth great dream appeared to let him know that the Tathāgata would receive gifts of robes, almsfood, lodgings, & medicinal requisites to cure the sick, but he would use them unattached to them, uninfatuated, guiltless, seeing the drawbacks [of attachment to them], and discerning the escape from them.

“When the Tathāgata—worthy & rightly self-awakened—was still just an unawakened bodhisatta, these five great dreams appeared to him.” — [AN 5:196](#)

To me—

resolute in exertion
near the river Nerañjarā,
making a great effort,
doing jhāna
to attain rest from the yoke—
Namuci⁵ came,

speaking words of compassion:
“You are ashen, thin.

Death is in
your presence.

Death
has one thousand 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,
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,⁶
 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 & Drowsiness.
 Sixth is called Cowardice.
 Your seventh is Uncertainty.
 Hypocrisy & Stubbornness, your eighth.
 Gains, Offerings, Fame, & Status
 wrongly gained,
 and whoever would praise self
 & disparage others:
 That, Namuci, 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?⁷
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." — [*Sn 3:2*](#)

The Buddha related the events just prior to his awakening several times in the discourses, choosing to include different details in the different accounts, apparently in response to the audience and the situation. In the following account, he emphasizes the role of right resolve in leading to concentration. In other passages, he emphasizes his mastery of concentration, and in still others, the questioning that led to discernment.

The Blessed One said, "Monks, before my self-awakening, when I was still just an unawakened bodhisatta, the thought occurred to me: 'Why don't I keep dividing my thinking into two sorts?' So I made thinking imbued with sensuality, thinking imbued with ill will, & thinking imbued with harmfulness one sort, and thinking imbued with renunciation, thinking imbued with non-ill will, & thinking imbued with harmlessness another sort.

"And as I remained thus heedful, ardent, & resolute, thinking imbued with sensuality arose in me. I discerned that 'Thinking imbued with sensuality has arisen in me; and that leads to my own affliction or to the affliction of others or to the affliction of both. It obstructs discernment, promotes vexation, & does not lead to unbinding.'

"As I noticed that it leads to my own affliction, it subsided. As I noticed that it leads to the affliction of others... to the affliction of both... it obstructs discernment, promotes vexation, & does not lead to unbinding, it subsided. Whenever thinking imbued with sensuality had arisen, I simply abandoned it, destroyed it, dispelled it, wiped it out of existence.

"And as I remained thus heedful, ardent, & resolute, thinking imbued with ill will... thinking imbued with harmfulness arose in me. I discerned that 'Thinking imbued with harmfulness has arisen in me; and that leads to my own affliction or to the affliction of others or to the affliction of both. It obstructs discernment, promotes vexation, & does not lead to unbinding.'

"As I noticed that it leads to my own affliction, it subsided. As I noticed that it leads to the affliction of others... to the affliction of both... it obstructs discernment, promotes vexation, & does not lead to unbinding, it subsided. Whenever thinking imbued with harmfulness had arisen, I simply abandoned it, destroyed it, dispelled it, wiped it out of existence.

“Whatever a monk keeps pursuing with his thinking & pondering, that becomes the inclination of his awareness. If a monk keeps pursuing thinking imbued with sensuality, abandoning thinking imbued with renunciation, his mind is bent by that thinking imbued with sensuality. If a monk keeps pursuing thinking imbued with ill will, abandoning thinking imbued with non-ill will, his mind is bent by that thinking imbued with ill will. If a monk keeps pursuing thinking imbued with harmfulness, abandoning thinking imbued with harmlessness, his mind is bent by that thinking imbued with harmfulness.

“Just as in the last month of the Rains, in the autumn season when the crops are ripening, a cowherd would look after his cows: He would tap & poke & check & curb them with a stick on this side & that. Why is that? Because he foresees flogging or imprisonment or a fine or public censure arising from that [if he let his cows wander into the crops]. In the same way, I foresaw in unskillful qualities drawbacks, degradation, & defilement, and I foresaw in skillful qualities rewards related to renunciation & promoting cleansing.

“And as I remained thus heedful, ardent, & resolute, thinking imbued with renunciation arose in me. I discerned that ‘Thinking imbued with renunciation has arisen in me; and that leads neither to my own affliction, nor to the affliction of others, nor to the affliction of both. It fosters discernment, promotes lack of vexation, & leads to unbinding. If I were to think & ponder in line with that even for a night... even for a day... even for a day & night, I do not envision any danger that would come from it, except that thinking & pondering a long time would tire the body. When the body is tired, the mind is disturbed, and a disturbed mind is far from concentration.’ So I steadied my mind right within, settled, unified, & concentrated it. Why is that? So that my mind would not be disturbed.

“And as I remained thus heedful, ardent, & resolute, thinking imbued with non-ill will... thinking imbued with harmlessness arose in me. I discerned that ‘Thinking imbued with harmlessness has arisen in me; and that leads neither to my own affliction, nor to the affliction of others, nor to the affliction of both. It fosters discernment, promotes lack of vexation, & leads to unbinding. If I were to think & ponder in line with that even for a night... even for a day... even for a day & night, I do not envision any danger that would come from it, except that thinking & pondering a long time would tire the body. When the body is tired, the mind is disturbed, and a disturbed mind is far from concentration.’

So I steadied my mind right within, settled, unified, & concentrated it. Why is that? So that my mind would not be disturbed.

“Whatever a monk keeps pursuing with his thinking & pondering, that becomes the inclination of his awareness. If a monk keeps pursuing thinking imbued with renunciation, abandoning thinking imbued with sensuality, his mind is bent by that thinking imbued with renunciation. If a monk keeps pursuing thinking imbued with non-ill will, abandoning thinking imbued with ill will, his mind is bent by that thinking imbued with non-ill will. If a monk keeps pursuing thinking imbued with harmlessness, abandoning thinking imbued with harmfulness, his mind is bent by that thinking imbued with harmlessness.

“Just as in the last month of the hot season, when all the crops have been gathered into the village, a cowherd would look after his cows: While resting under the shade of a tree or out in the open, he simply keeps himself mindful of ‘those cows.’ In the same way, I simply kept myself mindful of ‘those mental qualities.’

“Unflagging persistence was aroused in me, and unmuddled mindfulness established. My body was calm & unaroused, my mind concentrated & gathered into one. Quite secluded from sensuality, secluded from unskillful qualities, I entered and remained in the first jhāna: rapture & pleasure born of seclusion, accompanied by directed thought & evaluation. With the stilling of directed thoughts & evaluations, I entered and remained in the second jhāna: rapture & pleasure born of concentration, unification of awareness free from directed thought & evaluation—internal assurance. With the fading of rapture I remained in equanimity, mindful & alert, and sensed pleasure with the body. I entered and remained 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—I entered and remained in the fourth jhāna: purity of equanimity & mindfulness, neither pleasure nor pain.” — [*MN 19*](#)

What was the theme the bodhisatta focused on to bring the mind into the jhānas? The following passage indicates that he was focused on the breath.

“Monks, concentration through mindfulness of in-&-out breathing, when developed & pursued, is of great fruit, great benefit. And how is concentration

through mindfulness of in-&-out breathing developed & pursued so as to be of great fruit, great benefit?

“There is the case where a monk, having gone to the wilderness, to the shade of a tree, or to an empty building, sits down folding his legs crosswise, holding his body erect, and establishing mindfulness to the fore.⁸ Always mindful, he breathes in; mindful, he breathes out.

“[1] Breathing in long, he discerns, ‘I am breathing in long’; or breathing out long, he discerns, ‘I am breathing out long.’ [2] Or breathing in short, he discerns, ‘I am breathing in short’; or breathing out short, he discerns, ‘I am breathing out short.’ [3] He trains himself, ‘I will breathe in sensitive to the entire body.’⁹ He trains himself, ‘I will breathe out sensitive to the entire body.’ [4] He trains himself, ‘I will breathe in calming bodily fabrication.’¹⁰ He trains himself, ‘I will breathe out calming bodily fabrication.’

“[5] He trains himself, ‘I will breathe in sensitive to rapture.’ He trains himself, ‘I will breathe out sensitive to rapture.’ [6] He trains himself, ‘I will breathe in sensitive to pleasure.’ He trains himself, ‘I will breathe out sensitive to pleasure.’ [7] He trains himself, ‘I will breathe in sensitive to mental fabrication.’¹¹ He trains himself, ‘I will breathe out sensitive to mental fabrication.’ [8] He trains himself, ‘I will breathe in calming mental fabrication.’ He trains himself, ‘I will breathe out calming mental fabrication.’

“[9] He trains himself, ‘I will breathe in sensitive to the mind.’ He trains himself, ‘I will breathe out sensitive to the mind.’ [10] He trains himself, ‘I will breathe in gladdening the mind.’ He trains himself, ‘I will breathe out gladdening the mind.’ [11] He trains himself, ‘I will breathe in steadying the mind.’ He trains himself, ‘I will breathe out steadying the mind.’ [12] He trains himself, ‘I will breathe in releasing the mind.’ He trains himself, ‘I will breathe out releasing the mind.’¹²

“[13] He trains himself, ‘I will breathe in focusing on inconstancy.’ He trains himself, ‘I will breathe out focusing on inconstancy.’ [14] He trains himself, ‘I will breathe in focusing on dispassion [lit: fading].’ He trains himself, ‘I will breathe out focusing on dispassion.’ [15] He trains himself, ‘I will breathe in focusing on cessation.’ He trains himself, ‘I will breathe out focusing on cessation.’ [16] He trains himself, ‘I will breathe in focusing on relinquishment.’ He trains himself, ‘I will breathe out focusing on relinquishment.’

“This is how concentration through mindfulness of in-&-out breathing is developed & pursued so as to be of great fruit, great benefit.

“I myself, monks, before my awakening, when I was still an unawakened bodhisatta, often dwelt in this (meditative) dwelling. While I was dwelling in this (meditative) dwelling, neither my body nor my eyes were fatigued, and the mind—through lack of clinging/sustenance—was released from effluents [*āśava*].

“Thus, monks, if a monk should wish, ‘May neither my body nor my eyes be fatigued, and may my mind—through lack of clinging/sustenance—be released from effluents,’ then he should attend closely to this very same concentration through mindfulness of in-&-out breathing.” — [*SN 54:8*](#)

The jhāna attained through focusing on the breath provided the bodhisatta not only with a way to rest the mind from its harmless thoughts, but also with an alternative pleasure to sensuality that helped make him resistant to temptation by sensual thoughts.

“I myself, before my self-awakening, when I was still just an unawakened bodhisatta, saw as it had come to be with right discernment that sensuality is of much stress, much despair, & greater drawbacks, but as long as I had not attained a rapture & pleasure apart from sensuality, apart from unskillful qualities, or something more peaceful than that, I did not claim that I could not be tempted by sensuality. But when I saw as it had come to be with right discernment that sensuality is of much stress, much despair, & greater drawbacks, and I had attained a rapture & pleasure apart from sensuality, apart from unskillful qualities, or something more peaceful than that, that was when I claimed that I could not be tempted by sensuality.” — [*MN 14*](#)

“So when I had taken solid food and regained strength, then—quite secluded from sensuality, secluded from unskillful qualities, I entered and remained in the first jhāna: rapture & pleasure born of seclusion, accompanied by directed thought & evaluation. But the pleasant feeling that arose in this way did not invade my mind or remain. With the stilling of directed thoughts & evaluations, I entered and remained in the second jhāna.... I entered and remained in the third jhāna.... With the abandoning of pleasure & pain—as with the earlier disappearance of elation & distress—I entered and remained in the fourth jhāna: purity of equanimity & mindfulness, neither pleasure nor

pain. But the pleasant feeling that arose in this way did not invade my mind or remain.

“When the mind was thus concentrated, purified, bright, unblemished, rid of defilement, pliant, malleable, steady, & attained to imperturbability, I directed it to the knowledge of recollecting my past lives. I recollected my manifold past lives, i.e., one birth, two... five, ten... fifty, a hundred, a thousand, a hundred thousand, many eons of cosmic contraction, many eons of cosmic expansion, many eons of cosmic contraction & expansion: ‘There I had such a name, belonged to such a clan, had such an appearance. Such was my food, such my experience of pleasure & pain, such the end of my life. Passing away from that state, I re-arose there. There, too, I had such a name, belonged to such a clan, had such an appearance. Such was my food, such my experience of pleasure & pain, such the end of my life. Passing away from that state, I re-arose here.’ Thus I recollected my manifold past lives in their modes & details.

“This was the first knowledge I attained in the first watch of the night. Ignorance was destroyed; knowledge arose; darkness was destroyed; light arose—as happens in one who is heedful, ardent, & resolute. But the pleasant feeling that arose in this way did not invade my mind or remain.

“When the mind was thus concentrated, purified, bright, unblemished, rid of defilement, pliant, malleable, steady, & attained to imperturbability, I directed it to the knowledge of the passing away & reappearance of beings. I saw—by means of the divine eye, purified & surpassing the human—beings passing away & re-appearing, and I discerned how they are inferior & superior, beautiful & ugly, fortunate & unfortunate in accordance with their kamma: ‘These beings—who were endowed with bad conduct of body, speech, & mind, who reviled the noble ones, held wrong views and undertook actions under the influence of wrong views—with the breakup of the body, after death, have re-appeared in a plane of deprivation, a bad destination, a lower realm, hell. But these beings—who were endowed with good conduct of body, speech & mind, who did not revile the noble ones, who held right views and undertook actions under the influence of right views—with the breakup of the body, after death, have re-appeared in a good destination, a heavenly world.’ Thus—by means of the divine eye, purified & surpassing the human—I saw beings passing away & re-appearing, and I discerned how they are inferior & superior, beautiful & ugly, fortunate & unfortunate in accordance with their kamma.

“This was the second knowledge I attained in the second watch of the night. Ignorance was destroyed; knowledge arose; darkness was destroyed; light arose—as happens in one who is heedful, ardent, & resolute. But the pleasant feeling that arose in this way did not invade my mind or remain.

“When the mind was thus concentrated, purified, bright, unblemished, rid of defilement, pliant, malleable, steady, & attained to imperturbability, I directed it to the knowledge of the ending of effluents. I directly knew, as it had come to be, 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.’* My heart, thus knowing, thus seeing, was released from the effluent of sensuality, released from the effluent of becoming, released from the effluent of ignorance. With release, there was the knowledge, ‘Released.’ I directly knew that ‘Birth is ended, the holy life fulfilled, the task done. There is nothing further for this world.’

“This was the third knowledge I attained in the third watch of the night. Ignorance was destroyed; knowledge arose; darkness was destroyed; light arose—as happens in one who is heedful, ardent, & resolute. But the pleasant feeling that arose in this way did not invade my mind or remain.” — [MN 36](#)

The first four truths to which the Buddha awakened in this third knowledge—the truths of stress, its origination, its cessation, and the way leading to its cessation—became the central teaching in the Dhamma he taught. He called these truths “noble,” although he never explained why. Perhaps it was because they gave guidance to the noble search. What he did say was that they were the distinctive teaching of all Buddhas. As Ven. Sāriputta, one of his chief disciples later stated ([MN 28](#)), all skillful qualities are contained within these four noble truths, just as all the footprints of animals with feet can be contained in the footprint of an elephant.

As [MN 36](#) shows, the Buddha’s awakening required that he develop both concentration and discernment. The following two passages go into more detail on his mastery of concentration.

“Even I myself, Anuruddha, before my self-awakening, when I was still just an unawakened bodhisatta, perceived both light and a vision of forms. But not

long afterward, the light and the vision of forms disappeared. The thought occurred to me: ‘What is the cause, what is the reason, why the light and the vision of forms have disappeared?’ Then the thought occurred to me: ‘Doubt has arisen in me, and on account of the doubt my concentration fell away. With the falling away of concentration, the light and the vision of forms have disappeared. I will act in a way such that doubt doesn’t arise in me again.’

“So—staying heedful, ardent, & resolute—I perceived light and a vision of forms. But not long afterward, the light and the vision of forms disappeared.... Then the thought occurred to me: ‘Inattention has arisen in me....’ ‘Sloth-&-drowsiness has arisen in me....’ ‘Panic has arisen in me, and on account of the panic my concentration fell away. With the falling away of concentration, the light and the vision of forms have disappeared.’ Suppose, Anuruddha, that a man was traveling along a road, and murderers appeared on both sides. He would, for that reason, feel panic. In the same way, panic arose in me, and on account of the panic my concentration fell away. With the falling away of concentration, the light and the vision of forms disappeared. (I thought:) ‘I will act in a way such that doubt, inattention, sloth-&-drowsiness, and panic don’t arise in me again.’

“So—staying heedful, ardent, & resolute—I perceived light and a vision of forms. But not long afterward, the light and the vision of forms disappeared.... Then the thought occurred to me: ‘Exhilaration has arisen in me, and on account of the exhilaration my concentration fell away. With the falling away of concentration, the light and the vision of forms have disappeared.’ Suppose, Anuruddha, that a man searching for portals to hidden treasure suddenly came across five portals to hidden treasure. He would, for that reason, feel exhilaration. In the same way, exhilaration arose in me.... (I thought:) ‘I will act in a way such that doubt, inattention, sloth-&-drowsiness, panic, and exhilaration don’t arise in me again.’

“So—staying heedful, ardent, & resolute—I perceived light and a vision of forms. But not long afterward, the light and the vision of forms disappeared. The thought occurred to me: ‘What is the cause, what is the reason, why the light and the vision of forms have disappeared?’ Then the thought occurred to me: ‘Malaise has arisen in me....’ ‘Excess persistence has arisen in me, and on account of the excess persistence my concentration fell away. With the falling away of concentration, the light and the vision of forms have disappeared.’ Suppose, Anuruddha, that a man was grasping a baby quail tightly with both

hands. It would die right there. In the same way, excess persistence arose in me.... (I thought:) ‘I will act in a way such that doubt, inattention, sloth-&-drowsiness, panic, exhilaration, malaise, and excess persistence don’t arise in me again.’

“So—staying heedful, ardent, & resolute—I perceived light and a vision of forms. But not long afterward, the light and the vision of forms disappeared. The thought occurred to me: ‘What is the cause, what is the reason, why the light and the vision of forms have disappeared?’ Then the thought occurred to me: ‘Slack persistence has arisen in me, and on account of the slack persistence my concentration fell away. With the falling away of concentration, the light and vision of forms have disappeared.’ Suppose, Anuruddha, that a man was holding a baby quail loosely. It would fly out of his hand. In the same way, slack persistence arose in me, and on account of the slack persistence my concentration fell away. With the falling away of concentration, the light and the vision of forms disappeared. (I thought:) ‘I will act in a way such that doubt, inattention, sloth-&-drowsiness, panic, exhilaration, malaise, excess persistence, and slack persistence do not arise in me again.’

“So—staying heedful, ardent, & resolute—I perceived light and a vision of forms. But not long afterward, the light and the vision of forms disappeared. The thought occurred to me: ‘What is the cause, what is the reason, why the light and the vision of forms have disappeared?’ Then the thought occurred to me: ‘A perception of multiplicity has arisen in me....’ ‘Excess absorption in forms has arisen in me, and on account of the excess absorption in forms my concentration fell away. With the falling away of concentration, the light and the vision of forms have disappeared. I will act in a way such that doubt, inattention, sloth-&-drowsiness, panic, exhilaration, malaise, excess persistence, slack persistence, a perception of diversity, and excessive absorption in forms don’t arise in me again.’

“So, understanding that ‘doubt is a defilement of the mind,’ I abandoned the doubt defilement of the mind. Understanding that ‘inattention is a defilement of the mind,’... ‘sloth-&-drowsiness is a defilement of the mind,’... ‘panic is a defilement of the mind,’... ‘exhilaration is a defilement of the mind,’... ‘malaise is a defilement of the mind,’... ‘excess persistence is a defilement of the mind,’... ‘slack persistence is a defilement of the mind,’... ‘a perception of diversity is a defilement of the mind,’... ‘excessive absorption in forms is a defilement of the mind,’ I abandoned the excessive-absorption-in-forms defilement of the mind.

“So—staying heedful, ardent, & resolute—I perceived light but I did not see forms, or I saw forms but did not perceive light for an entire night, for an entire day, and for an entire day and night. The thought occurred to me: ‘What is the cause, what is the reason, why I perceive light but I do not see forms, or I see forms but do not perceive light for an entire night, for an entire day, and for an entire day and night?’ The thought occurred to me, ‘At the time when, not attending to the theme of forms, I attend to the theme of light, that is the time when I perceive light but do not see forms. But at the time when, not attending to the theme of light, I attend to the theme of forms, that is the time when I see forms but do not perceive light for an entire night, for an entire day, and for an entire day and night.’

“So—staying heedful, ardent, & resolute—I perceived limited light and limited forms, and immeasurable light and immeasurable forms for an entire night, for an entire day, and for an entire day and night. The thought occurred to me: ‘What is the cause, what is the reason, why I perceive limited light and limited forms, and immeasurable light and immeasurable forms for an entire night, for an entire day, and for an entire day and night?’ The thought occurred to me, ‘At the time when my concentration is limited, my (inner) eye is limited. With a limited eye, I perceive limited light and see limited forms. But at the time when my concentration is immeasurable, my (inner) eye is immeasurable. With an immeasurable eye, I perceive immeasurable light and see immeasurable forms for an entire night, for an entire day, and for an entire day and night.’

“When, having understood that ‘doubt is a defilement of the mind’ and having abandoned doubt, having understood that ‘inattention... sloth-&-drowsiness... panic... exhilaration... malaise... excess persistence... slack persistence... a perception of diversity... excessive absorption in forms is a defilement of the mind,’ and having abandoned excessive absorption in forms, the thought occurred to me, ‘Those defilements of the mind are abandoned in me. What if I were to develop concentration in three ways?’

“So, Anuruddha, I developed concentration with directed thought & evaluation. I developed concentration without directed thought but with a modicum of evaluation. I developed concentration without directed thought or evaluation. I developed concentration with rapture. I developed concentration without rapture. I developed concentration with enjoyment. I developed concentration with equanimity.¹³ When, in me, concentration with directed

thought & evaluation was developed, concentration without directed thought but with a modicum of evaluation was developed, concentration without directed thought or evaluation was developed, concentration with rapture was developed, concentration without rapture was developed, concentration with enjoyment was developed, and concentration with equanimity was developed, knowledge & vision arose in me: ‘Unprovoked is my release. This is the last birth. There is now no further-becoming.’” — [MN 128](#)

As the following account shows, the Buddha attained more than three knowledges based on concentration in the course of his awakening. We don’t know why he reported only the three in his more famous accounts. Perhaps he omitted the other knowledges because they didn’t provide him with any insights helpful for the purpose of developing right view.

“Monks, before my self-awakening, when I was still just an unawakened bodhisatta, I developed & cultivated five things. Which five? I developed the base of power endowed with concentration founded on desire & the fabrications of exertion. I developed the base of power endowed with concentration founded on persistence & the fabrications of exertion. I developed the base of power endowed with concentration founded on intent & the fabrications of exertion. I developed the base of power endowed with concentration founded on discrimination & the fabrications of exertion. And great energy was the fifth. Having developed & cultivated these things with great energy as the fifth, then whichever of the higher knowledges I turned my mind to know and realize, I could witness them for myself whenever there was an opening.

“If I wished, I wielded manifold supranormal powers. Having been one I became many; having been many I became one. I appeared. I vanished. I went unimpeded through walls, ramparts, & mountains as if through space. I dove in and out of the earth as if it were water. I walked on water without sinking as if it were dry land. Sitting cross-legged I flew through the air like a winged bird. With my hand I touched and stroked even the sun & moon, so mighty & powerful. I exercised influence with my body even as far as the Brahmā worlds. I could witness this for myself whenever there was an opening.

“If I wished, I heard—by means of the divine ear-element, purified and surpassing the human—both kinds of sounds: divine & human, whether near or far. I could witness this for myself whenever there was an opening.

“If I wished, I knew the awareness of other beings, other individuals, having encompassed it with my own awareness. I discerned a mind with passion as ‘a mind with passion’ and a mind without passion as ‘a mind without passion.’ I discerned a mind with aversion as ‘a mind with aversion’ and a mind without aversion as ‘a mind without aversion.’ I discerned a mind with delusion as ‘a mind with delusion’ and a mind without delusion as ‘a mind without delusion.’ I discerned a restricted mind as ‘a restricted mind’ and a scattered mind as ‘a scattered mind.’ I discerned an enlarged mind¹⁴ as ‘an enlarged mind’ and an unenlarged mind as ‘an unenlarged mind.’ I discerned a surpassed mind [one that is not at the most excellent level] as ‘a surpassed mind’ and an unsurpassed mind as ‘an unsurpassed mind.’ I discerned a concentrated mind as ‘a concentrated mind’ and an unconcentrated mind as ‘an unconcentrated mind.’ I discerned a released mind as ‘a released mind’ and an unreleased mind as ‘an unreleased mind.’ I could witness this for myself whenever there was an opening.

“If I wished, I recollected my manifold past lives....

“If I wished, I saw—by means of the divine eye, purified and surpassing the human—beings passing away and re-appearing....

“If I wished, then through the ending of effluents, I entered and remained in the effluent-free awareness-release & discernment-release, having directly known & realized them for myself right in the here-&-now. I could witness this for myself whenever there was an opening.” — AN 5:68

The following passage focuses less on concentration and more on the discernment required for awakening. It’s one of the few passages showing how the contemplation of dependent co-arising—which was later to become one of the Buddha’s most distinctive, if complex, teachings—played a role in leading to his awakening. It can be read as an expanded discussion of the third and most decisive knowledge that led to his release.

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

“Then the thought occurred to me, ‘Aging & death exist when what exists? From what as a requisite condition is there aging & death?’ From my appropriate attention there came the breakthrough of discernment: ‘Aging & death exist when birth exists. From birth as a requisite condition comes aging & death.’ Then the thought occurred to me, ‘Birth exists when what exists? From what as a requisite condition comes birth?’ From my appropriate attention there came the breakthrough of discernment: ‘Birth exists when becoming¹⁵ exists. From becoming as a requisite condition comes birth...’... ‘Becoming exists when clinging/sustenance¹⁶ exists....’... ‘Clinging/sustenance exists when craving exists....’... ‘Craving exists when feeling exists....’... ‘Feeling exists when contact exists....’... ‘Contact exists when the six sense media exist....’... ‘The six sense media exist when name-&form¹⁷ exists....’... ‘Name-&-form exists when consciousness exists. From consciousness as a requisite condition comes name-&-form.’ Then the thought occurred to me, ‘Consciousness exists when what exists? From what as a requisite condition comes consciousness?’ From my appropriate attention there came the breakthrough of discernment: ‘Consciousness exists when name-&-form exists. From name-&-form as a requisite condition comes consciousness.’

“Then the thought occurred to me, ‘This consciousness turns back at name-&-form, and goes no farther. It is to this extent that there is birth, aging, death, falling away, & re-arising, i.e., from name-&-form as a requisite condition comes consciousness, from consciousness as a requisite condition comes name-&-form. From name-&-form as a requisite condition come the six sense media... Thus is the origination of this entire mass of stress. Origination, origination.’ Vision arose, clear knowing arose, discernment arose, knowledge arose, illumination arose within me with regard to things never heard before.

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

“Then the thought occurred to me, ‘Birth... Becoming... Clinging/sustenance... Craving... Feeling... Contact... The six sense media... Name-&-form doesn’t exist when what doesn’t exist? From the cessation of what comes the cessation of name-&-form?’ From my appropriate attention

there came the breakthrough of discernment: 'Name-&-form doesn't exist when consciousness doesn't exist. From the cessation of consciousness comes the cessation of name-&-form.' Then the thought occurred to me, 'Consciousness doesn't exist when what doesn't exist? From the cessation of what comes the cessation of consciousness?' From my appropriate attention there came the breakthrough of discernment: 'Consciousness doesn't exist when name-&-form doesn't exist. From the cessation of name-&-form comes the cessation of consciousness.'

"The thought occurred to me, 'I have attained this path to awakening, i.e., from the cessation of name-&-form comes the cessation of consciousness, from the cessation of consciousness comes the cessation of name-&-form. From the cessation of name-&-form comes the cessation of the six sense media. From the cessation of the six sense media comes the cessation of contact. From the cessation of contact comes the cessation of feeling. From the cessation of feeling comes the cessation of craving. From the cessation of craving comes the cessation of clinging/sustenance. From the cessation of clinging/sustenance comes the cessation of becoming. From the cessation of becoming comes the cessation of birth. From the cessation of birth, then aging & death, sorrow, lamentation, pain, distress, & despair all cease. Thus is the cessation of this entire mass of stress. Cessation, cessation.' Vision arose, clear knowing arose, discernment arose, knowledge arose, illumination arose within me with regard to things never heard before.

"It's just as if a man, traveling along a wilderness track, were to see an ancient path, an ancient road, traveled by people of former times. He would follow it. Following it, he would see an ancient city, an ancient capital inhabited by people of former times, complete with parks, groves, & ponds, walled, delightful. He would go to address the king or the king's minister, saying, 'Sire, you should know that while traveling along a wilderness track I saw an ancient path... I followed it... I saw an ancient city, an ancient capital... complete with parks, groves, & ponds, walled, delightful. Sire, rebuild that city!' The king or king's minister would rebuild the city, so that at a later date the city would become powerful, rich, & well populated, fully grown & prosperous.

"In the same way, I saw an ancient path, an ancient road, traveled by the Rightly Self-awakened ones of former times. And what is that ancient path, that ancient road, traveled by the Rightly Self-awakened ones of former times? Just this noble eightfold path: right view, right resolve, right speech, right

action, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness, right concentration. That is the ancient path, the ancient road, traveled by the Rightly Self-awakened ones of former times. I followed that path. Following it, I came to direct knowledge of aging & death, direct knowledge of the origination of aging & death, direct knowledge of the cessation of aging & death, direct knowledge of the path leading to the cessation of aging & death. I followed that path. Following it, I came to direct knowledge of birth... becoming... clinging/sustenance... craving... feeling... contact... the six sense media... name-&-form... consciousness, direct knowledge of the origination of consciousness, direct knowledge of the cessation of consciousness, direct knowledge of the path leading to the cessation of consciousness. I followed that path.

“Following it, I came to direct knowledge of fabrications, direct knowledge of the origination of fabrications, direct knowledge of the cessation of fabrications, direct knowledge of the path leading to the cessation of fabrications. Knowing that directly, I have revealed it to monks, nuns, male lay followers, & female lay followers, so that this holy life has become powerful, rich, detailed, well populated, wide-spread, proclaimed among devas & human beings.” — [*SN 12:65*](#)

Having attained knowledge and vision, the bodhisatta was now the Buddha, “Awakened”—or, to be more precise, the *Sammā Sambuddha*: the Rightly Self-Awakened One. However, before claiming this status to others, he evaluated his attainment, judging it from many angles against a wide variety of standards to make sure that it was genuine and that there was no further work for him to do. As he engaged in this evaluation, he continued to apply the high standards he had applied to every step in his quest for awakening, a sign of how sincere he was in his quest for the deathless. At the same time, he may have anticipated charges from others that his awakening was incomplete. This, as we will see, was a charge that *Māra*, for one, continued to make. Only when the Buddha was sure that his attainment had passed the test in every case did he claim that he truly had reached his goal.

It’s possible that he applied these tests reflectively during the weeks following his awakening, so it might be argued that they should be discussed in [Chapter 3](#), which covers the events of those weeks. But because the Buddha’s descriptions of how the awakening experience

passed those tests helps to fill in many of the details of what he actually learned during the awakening, there is good reason for discussing them here.

There is no telling the actual order in which he applied these tests, but there is a certain logical order among them. The first order of test was to check that he had truly overcome sensuality—in line with his threefold vision that had warned him that sensuality was antithetical to the awakened state. This test, in turn, required that he assure himself that he had mastered the levels of concentration needed to free the mind from sensual fetters.

“Even I myself, before my self-awakening, when I was still just an unawakened bodhisatta, thought: ‘Renunciation is good. Seclusion is good.’ But my heart didn’t leap up at renunciation, didn’t grow confident, steadfast, or firm, seeing it as peace. The thought occurred to me: ‘What is the cause, what is the reason, why my heart doesn’t leap up at renunciation, doesn’t grow confident, steadfast, or firm, seeing it as peace?’ Then the thought occurred to me: ‘I haven’t seen the drawback of sensual pleasures; I haven’t pursued (that theme). I haven’t understood the reward of renunciation; I haven’t familiarized myself with it. That’s why my heart doesn’t leap up at renunciation, doesn’t grow confident, steadfast, or firm, seeing it as peace.’

[1] “Then the thought occurred to me: ‘If, having seen the drawback of sensual pleasures, I were to pursue that theme; and if, having understood the reward of renunciation, I were to familiarize myself with it, there’s the possibility that my heart would leap up at renunciation, grow confident, steadfast, & firm, seeing it as peace.’

“So at a later time, having seen the drawback of sensual pleasures, I pursued that theme; having understood the reward of renunciation, I familiarized myself with it. My heart leaped up at renunciation, grew confident, steadfast, & firm, seeing it as peace. Then, quite secluded from sensuality, secluded from unskillful qualities, I entered and remained in the first jhāna: rapture & pleasure born of seclusion, accompanied by directed thought & evaluation.

“As I remained there, I was beset with attention to perceptions dealing with sensuality. That was an affliction for me. Just as pain arises as an affliction for a healthy person, even so the attention to perceptions dealing with sensuality that beset me was an affliction for me.

[2] “The thought occurred to me: ‘What if, with the stilling of directed thoughts & evaluations, I were to enter and remain in the second jhāna: rapture & pleasure born of concentration, unification of awareness free from directed thought & evaluation—internal assurance.’ But my heart didn’t leap up at being without directed thought, didn’t grow confident, steadfast, or firm, seeing it as peace. The thought occurred to me: ‘What is the cause, what is the reason, why my heart doesn’t leap up at being without directed thought, doesn’t grow confident, steadfast, or firm, seeing it as peace?’ Then the thought occurred to me: ‘I haven’t seen the drawback of directed thought; I haven’t pursued that theme. I haven’t understood the reward of being without directed thought; I haven’t familiarized myself with it. That’s why my heart doesn’t leap up at being without directed thought, doesn’t grow confident, steadfast, or firm, seeing it as peace.’

“Then the thought occurred to me: ‘If, having seen the drawback of directed thought, I were to pursue that theme; and if, having understood the reward of being without directed thought, I were to familiarize myself with it, there’s the possibility that my heart would leap up at being without directed thought, grow confident, steadfast, & firm, seeing it as peace.’

“So at a later time, having seen the drawback of directed thought, I pursued that theme; having understood the reward of being without directed thought, I familiarized myself with it. My heart leaped up at being without directed thought, grew confident, steadfast, & firm, seeing it as peace. With the stilling of directed thoughts & evaluations, I entered and remained in the second jhāna: rapture & pleasure born of concentration, unification of awareness free from directed thought & evaluation—internal assurance.

“As I remained there, I was beset with attention to perceptions dealing with directed thought. That was an affliction for me. Just as pain arises as an affliction for a healthy person, even so the attention to perceptions dealing with directed thought that beset me was an affliction for me.

[3] “The thought occurred to me: ‘What if, with the fading of rapture, I were to remain equanimous, mindful, & alert, to sense pleasure with the body, and to enter and remain in the third jhāna, of which the noble ones declare, “Equanimous & mindful, he has a pleasant abiding”?’ But my heart didn’t leap up at being without rapture, didn’t grow confident, steadfast, or firm, seeing it as peace.... So at a later time, having seen the drawback of rapture, I pursued that theme; having understood the reward of being without rapture, I

familiarized myself with it. My heart leaped up at being without rapture, grew confident, steadfast, & firm, seeing it as peace. With the fading of rapture, I remained equanimous, mindful, & alert, sensed pleasure with the body, and entered and remained in the third jhāna, of which the noble ones declare, ‘Equanimous & mindful, he has a pleasant abiding.’

“As I remained there, I was beset with attention to perceptions dealing with rapture. That was an affliction for me. Just as pain arises as an affliction for a healthy person, even so the attention to perceptions dealing with rapture that beset me was an affliction for me.

[4] “The thought occurred to me: ‘What if, with the abandoning of pleasure & pain—as with the earlier disappearance of elation & distress—I were to enter and remain in the fourth jhāna: purity of equanimity & mindfulness, neither pleasure nor pain?’ But my heart didn’t leap up at neither-pleasure-nor-pain, didn’t grow confident, steadfast, or firm, seeing it as peace.... So at a later time, having seen the drawback of the pleasure of equanimity, I pursued that theme; having understood the reward of neither-pleasure-nor-pain, I familiarized myself with it. My heart leaped up at neither-pleasure-nor-pain, grew confident, steadfast, & firm, seeing it as peace. With the abandoning of pleasure & pain—as with the earlier disappearance of elation & distress—I entered and remained in the fourth jhāna: purity of equanimity & mindfulness, neither pleasure nor pain.”

[Similarly with the remaining concentration attainments—the dimension of the infinitude of space, the dimension of the infinitude of consciousness, the dimension of nothingness, up through the dimension of neither perception nor non-perception, concluding with these two paragraphs:]

“So at a later time, having seen the drawback of the dimension of neither perception nor non-perception, I pursued that theme; having understood the reward of the cessation of perception & feeling, I familiarized myself with it. My heart leaped up at the cessation of perception & feeling, grew confident, steadfast, & firm, seeing it as peace. With the complete transcending of the dimension of neither perception nor non-perception, I entered and remained in the cessation of perception & feeling. And as I saw (that) with discernment, effluents were completely ended.

“Ānanda, as long as I had not attained & emerged from these nine step-by-step dwelling-attainments in forward & backward order in this way, I did not claim to have directly awakened to the right self-awakening unexcelled in the

cosmos with its devas, Māras, & Brahmās, with its contemplatives & brahmans, its royalty & common people. But as soon as I had attained & emerged from these nine step-by-step dwelling-attainments in forward & backward order in this way, then I did claim to have directly awakened to the right self-awakening unexcelled in the cosmos with its devas, Māras, & Brahmās, in this generation with its contemplatives & brahmans, its royalty & common people. Knowledge & vision arose in me: ‘Unprovoked is my release. This is the last birth. There is now no further-becoming.’ — [AN 9:41](#)

“There is the case, brahman, where a certain contemplative or brahman, while claiming to be one who rightly follows the holy life, doesn’t actually engage in copulating with a woman but he does consent to being anointed, rubbed down, bathed, or massaged by a woman. He enjoys that, wants more of that, and luxuriates in that. This is a gap, a break, a spot, a blemish of the holy life. He is called one who lives the holy life in an impure way, one who is fettered by the fetter of sexuality. He is not freed from birth, aging, & death, from sorrows, lamentations, pains, griefs, and despairs. He is not freed, I tell you, from suffering & stress.

“Or... he jokes, plays, and amuses himself with a woman. He enjoys that, wants more of that, and luxuriates in that... “Or... he stares into a woman’s eyes. He enjoys that, wants more of that, and luxuriates in that...

“Or... he listens to the voices of women outside a wall as they laugh, speak, sing, or cry. He enjoys that, wants more of that, and luxuriates in that...

“Or... he recollects how he used to laugh, converse, and play with a woman. He enjoys that, wants more of that, and luxuriates in that...

“Or... he sees a householder or householder’s son enjoying himself endowed with the five strings of sensuality. He enjoys that, wants more of that, and luxuriates in that...

“Or... he practices the holy life intent on being born in one or another of the deva hosts, (thinking,) ‘By this virtue or practice or abstinence or holy life I will be a deva of one sort or another.’ He enjoys that, wants more of that, and luxuriates in that. This is a gap, a break, a spot, a blemish of the holy life. He is called one who lives the holy life in an impure way, one who is fettered by the fetter of sexuality. He is not freed from birth, aging, & death, from sorrows, lamentations, pains, griefs, and despairs. He is not freed, I tell you, from suffering & stress.

“And, brahman, as long as I saw that one or another of these seven fetters of sexuality was not abandoned in myself, I did not claim to have directly awakened to the right self-awakening unexcelled in the cosmos with its devas, Māras, & Brahmās, in this generation with its contemplatives & brahmans, its royalty & common people. But when I did not see any one of these seven fetters of sexuality unabandoned in myself, then I did claim to have directly awakened to the right self-awakening unexcelled in the cosmos with its devas, Māras, & Brahmās, in this generation with its contemplatives & brahmans, its royalty & common people. Knowledge & vision arose in me: ‘Unprovoked is my release. This is the last birth. There is now no further-becoming.’” —

[AN 7:47](#)

Because the bodhisatta had sought a happiness that was beyond birth, now that he was Buddha he also had to assure himself that his awakening surpassed all possible births, and that his knowledge surpassed that of beings born into the highest of all births. This was why the first and second knowledges, which helped to provide this assurance, were an integral part of his awakening. But as the following passage shows, his knowledge of the range of birth came not only from those two knowledges, but also from a mastery of the divine ear so that he could engage the highest level of devas in conversation to ascertain that, yes, his knowledge was unsurpassed by theirs.

“Monks, before my self-awakening, when I was still just an unawakened bodhisatta, I perceived light but didn’t see forms. The thought occurred to me, ‘If I perceived light and saw forms, this knowledge-&-vision of mine would be purer.’

“So, at a later time—staying heedful, ardent, & resolute—I perceived light and saw forms, but I didn’t associate with those devas, didn’t converse with them or engage them in discussion. The thought occurred to me, ‘If I perceived light and saw forms and associated with those devas, conversed with them, and engaged them in discussion, this knowledge-&-vision of mine would be purer.’

“So, at a later time—staying heedful, ardent, & resolute—I perceived light and saw forms; and I also associated with those devas, conversed with them, and engaged them in discussion...

“... I perceived light and saw forms; and associated with those devas, conversed with them, and engaged them in discussion; and I also knew of

those devas that ‘These devas are from this or that deva host’...

“... I also knew of those devas that ‘As a result of this kamma, these devas fell away from here and reappeared there’...

“... I also knew of those devas that ‘As a result of this kamma, these devas are nourished on such food and experience such pleasure & pain’...

“... I also knew of those devas that ‘As a result of this kamma, these devas have such a lifespan and are of such long standing’...

“... I also knew of those devas whether I had previously lived together with them or not.

“And, monks, as long as this—my eight-round heightened deva-knowledge-&-vision—was not pure, I did not claim to have directly awakened to the right self-awakening unexcelled in the cosmos with its devas, Māras, & Brahmās, in this generation with its contemplatives & brahmans, its royalty & common people. But as soon as this—my eight-round heightened deva-knowledge-&-vision—was truly pure, then I did claim to have directly awakened to the right self-awakening unexcelled in the cosmos with its devas, Māras, & Brahmās, in this generation with its contemplatives & brahmans, its royalty & common people. Knowledge & vision arose in me: ‘Unprovoked is my release. This is the last birth. There is now no further-becoming.’” — [AN 8:71](#)

To guarantee the results of his third knowledge, the Buddha had to ensure that he had truly escaped from suffering/stress, the first noble truth, and from its origination, the second. This required that he not only have thorough, direct knowledge of these two truths, but also of the third noble truth, the cessation of suffering, and of the fourth, the path to that cessation.

“Now, as long as I didn’t have direct knowledge of the fourfold round with regard to these five clinging-aggregates as they have come to be, I did not claim to have directly awakened to the unexcelled right self-awakening in this cosmos with its devas, Māras, & Brahmās, in this generation with its contemplatives & brahmans, its royalty & common people. But when I did have direct knowledge of the fourfold round with regard to these five clinging-aggregates as they have come to be, then I did claim to have directly awakened to the unexcelled right self-awakening in this cosmos with its devas, Māras, &

Brahmās, in this generation with its contemplatives & brahmans, its royalty & common people.

“The fourfold round in what way? I had direct knowledge of form... of the origination of form... of the cessation of form... of the path of practice leading to the cessation of form.

“I had direct knowledge of feeling....

“I had direct knowledge of perception....

“I had direct knowledge of fabrications....

“I had direct knowledge of consciousness... of the origination of consciousness... of the cessation of consciousness... of the path of practice leading to the cessation of consciousness.” — [SN 22:56](#)

However, the Buddha didn’t stop simply with knowledge of the four truths. He also had to ascertain that he had discerned and completed the duties appropriate to each.

“Vision arose, insight arose, discernment arose, knowledge arose, illumination arose within me with regard to things never heard before: ‘This is the noble truth of stress’ ... ‘This noble truth of stress is to be comprehended’ ... ‘This noble truth of stress has been comprehended.’

‘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.’

“Vision arose, insight arose, discernment arose, knowledge arose, illumination arose within me with regard to things never heard before: ‘This is the noble truth of the way of practice leading to the cessation of stress’ ... ‘This noble truth of the way of practice leading to the cessation of stress is to be developed’ ... ‘This noble truth of the way of practice leading to the cessation of stress has been developed.’

“And, monks, as long as this—my three-round, twelve-permutation knowledge & vision concerning these four noble truths^{[18](#)} as they have come to be—was not pure, I did not claim to have directly awakened to the right self-

awakening unexcelled in the cosmos with its devas, Māras, & Brahmās, in this generation with its contemplatives & brahmins, its royalty & common people. But as soon as this—my three-round, twelve-permutation knowledge & vision concerning these four noble truths as they have come to be—was truly pure, then I did claim to have directly awakened to the right self-awakening unexcelled in the cosmos with its devas, Māras, & Brahmās, in this generation with its contemplatives & brahmins, its royalty & common people. Knowledge & vision arose in me: ‘Unprovoked is my release. This is the last birth. There is now no further-becoming.’ — [*SN 56:11*](#)

To guarantee that he had fully escaped from the first and second noble truths, the Buddha had to ascertain that he had seen through the allure of everything that could count as suffering/stress and its origination, and that he had gained his escape from those phenomena by seeing that their drawbacks far outweighed their allure.

“Monks, before my self-awakening, when I was still just an unawakened bodhisatta, the thought occurred to me: ‘What is the allure of form? What is its drawback? What is its escape?’

“‘What is the allure of feeling? What is its drawback? What is its escape?’

“‘What is the allure of perception? What is its drawback? What is its escape?’

“‘What is the allure of fabrications? What is their drawback? What is their escape?’

“‘What is the allure of consciousness? What is its drawback? What is its escape?’

“Then the thought occurred to me, ‘Whatever pleasure & joy arises dependent on form: That is the allure of form. The fact that form is inconstant, stressful, subject to change: That is the drawback of form. The subduing of desire & passion, the abandoning of desire & passion for form: That is the escape from form.

[Similarly with feeling, perception, fabrications, & consciousness.]

“Monks, as long as I did not have direct knowledge, as it had come to be, of the allure as allure, of the drawback as drawback, and of the escape as escape, with regard to these five clinging-aggregates, I did not claim to have directly awakened to the right self-awakening unexcelled in the cosmos with its devas,

Māras, & Brahmās, in this generation with its contemplatives & brahmans, its royalty & common people.

“But when I did have direct knowledge, as it had come to be, of the allure as allure, the drawback as drawback, and the escape as escape, with regard to these five clinging-aggregates, then I did claim to have directly awakened to the right self-awakening unexcelled in the cosmos with its devas, Māras, & Brahmās, in this generation with its contemplatives & brahmans, its royalty & common people.

“Knowledge & vision arose in me: ‘Unprovoked is my release. This is the last birth. There is now no further-becoming.’” — *SN 22:26*

“Now, as long as I did not have direct knowledge, as it has come to be, of the allure as the allure, of the drawback as the drawback, and of the escape as the escape with regard to these four properties [earth, water, wind, & fire]... these six internal sense-media... these six external sense media... the cosmos, I did not claim to have directly awakened to the unexcelled right self-awakening in this cosmos with its devas, Māras, & Brahmās, in this generation with its contemplatives & brahmans, its royalty & common people. But when I did have direct knowledge (of these things) as they have come to be, then I did claim to have directly awakened to the unexcelled right self-awakening in this cosmos with its devas, Māras, & Brahmās, in this generation with its contemplatives & brahmans, its royalty & common people.” — *SN 14:31, SN 35:13–14; [AN 3:104](#)*

The fact that the Buddha’s standards for awakening included the ability to find the escape from the first and second noble truths might be expected. But if his awakening had truly taken him to an unfabricated dimension, it had to be separate from the path of action that had led him there. This meant that he also had to have had acquired direct knowledge of the allure and drawbacks of—and escape from—the five faculties, which are equivalent to the fourth noble truth: the path of practice leading to the cessation of suffering/stress.

“Monks, there are these five faculties. Which five? The faculty of conviction, the faculty of persistence, the faculty of mindfulness, the faculty of concentration, the faculty of discernment.

“Now, as long as I did not have direct knowledge, as it has come to be, of the origination, the passing away, the allure, the drawbacks of—and the escape from—these five faculties, I did not claim to have directly awakened to the unexcelled right self-awakening in this cosmos with its devas, Māras, & Brahmās, in this generation with its contemplatives & brahmans, its royalty & common people. But when I did have direct knowledge, as it has come to be, of the origination, the passing away, the allure, the drawbacks of—and the escape from—these five faculties, then I did claim to have directly awakened to the unexcelled right self-awakening in this cosmos with its devas, Māras, & Brahmās, in this generation with its contemplatives & brahmans, its royalty & common people.

“Knowledge & vision arose in me: ‘Unprovoked is my release. This is the last birth. There is now no further-becoming.’” — [SN 48:21](#)

In other words, all cases of awakening, to be genuine, have to escape even from the path of practice that leads there. This is why the Buddha later compared the path to a raft that is used to cross over a river but has to be abandoned on reaching the far shore.

Having guaranteed the completeness of his awakening, the Buddha could be assured that he had fulfilled the original desire that led to his quest: He had found total freedom—an unborn, undying dimension beyond the reach of aging, illness, death, and repeated birth.

“Then, monks, being subject myself to birth, seeing the drawbacks of birth, seeking the unborn, unexcelled rest from the yoke—unbinding—I reached the unborn, unexcelled rest from the yoke: unbinding. Being subject myself to aging... illness... death... sorrow... defilement, seeing the drawbacks of aging... illness... death... sorrow... defilement, seeking the aging-less, illness-less, deathless, sorrow-less, unexcelled rest from the yoke—unbinding—I reached the aging-less, illness-less, deathless, sorrow-less, unexcelled rest from the yoke: unbinding. Knowledge & vision arose in me: ‘Unprovoked is my release. This is the last birth. There is now no further-becoming.’” — [MN 26](#)

“When the Tathāgata awakens to the unexcelled right self-awakening, the earth shakes & shivers, quivers & quakes.” — [DN 16](#)

Through the round of many births I roamed
without reward,

without rest,
seeking the house-builder.
Painful is birth again
& again.

House-builder, you're seen!
You will not build a house again.
All your rafters broken,
the ridge pole dismantled,
immersed in dismantling, the mind
has attained to the end of craving. — [*Dhp 153–154*](#)

I have heard that on one occasion the Blessed One was traveling along the road between Ukkaṭṭha and Setabya, and Doṇa the brahman was also traveling along the road between Ukkaṭṭha and Setabya. Doṇa the brahman saw, in the Blessed One's footprints, wheels with one thousand spokes, together with rims and hubs, complete in all their features. On seeing them, the thought occurred to him, "How amazing! How astounding! These are not the footprints of a human being!"

Then the Blessed One, leaving the road, went to sit at the root of a certain tree—his legs crossed, his body erect, with mindfulness established to the fore. Then Doṇa, following the Blessed One's footprints, saw him sitting at the root of the tree: confident, inspiring confidence, his senses calmed, his mind calmed, having attained the utmost control & tranquility, tamed, guarded, his senses restrained, a *nāga*. On seeing him, he went to him and said, "Master, are you a deva?"

"No, brahman, I am not a deva."

"Are you a *gandhabba*?"

"No..."

"... a *yakkha*?"

"No..."

"... a human being?"

"No, brahman, I am not a human being."

"... Then what sort of being are you?"

"Brahman, the effluents by which—if they were not abandoned—I would be a deva: Those are abandoned by me, their root destroyed, made like a palmyra

stump—deprived of the conditions of development, not destined for future arising. The effluents by which—if they were not abandoned—I would be a gandhabba... a yakkha... a human being: Those are abandoned by me, their root destroyed, made like a palmyra stump—deprived of the conditions of development, not destined for future arising.

“Just like a red, blue, or white lotus—born in the water, grown in the water, rising up above the water—stands unsmear by the water, in the same way, I—born in the world, grown in the world, having overcome the world—live unsmear by the world. Remember me, brahman, as ‘awakened.’

“The effluents by which I would go
to a deva-state,
or become a gandhabba in the sky,
or go to a yakkha-state & human-state:
Those have been destroyed by me,
ruined, their stems removed.
Like a blue lotus, rising up,
unsmear by water,
unsmear am I by the world,
and so, brahman,
I’m awakened.” — [AN 4:36](#)

The Awakening

Even though the Buddha's awakening was the most important accomplishment in his life, we know very little about it. As he told his monks, he revealed to others only a tiny portion of what he had come to know.

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

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

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

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

“Therefore your duty is the contemplation, *‘This is stress’ ... ‘This is the origination of stress’ ... ‘This is the cessation of stress.’* Your duty is the contemplation, *‘This is the path of practice leading to the cessation of stress.’*” — [SN 56:31](#)

One of the Buddha's shortest but most comprehensive statements of what he found worthy of communicating about his awakening is this:

“First there is the knowledge of the regularity of the Dhamma, after which there is the knowledge of unbinding.” — [*SN 12:70*](#)

This passage will provide the framework for this chapter, in which we try to illuminate at least some of what the Buddha learned in the course of his awakening. The first part of the statement, the “regularity of the Dhamma,” covers all three knowledges that occurred on the night of the awakening.

To gain some sense of the many dimensions included in the three knowledges, it’s useful to look at passages in the earlier parts of the Canon that treat the theme of each knowledge: past lives in the first knowledge, kamma and rebirth in the second, and the four noble truths in the third. This will also serve as a good introduction to the Dhamma the Buddha taught, given that all three knowledges came to constitute right view: the first two, right view on the mundane level; the third, right view on the transcendent level.

In this way, this chapter not only helps to flesh out the Buddha’s accounts of his awakening. It also shows how the later accomplishments of his life—teaching the Dhamma to others and establishing the Dhamma & Vinaya so that the True Dhamma would last a long time—were directly related to the first.

PAST LIVES

The suttas list “*jātakas*,” or stories of previous births, as one of the genres that the Buddha used in teaching. The Vinaya and the four nikāyas contain only a handful of such stories. The fifth nikāya, however, contains a collection of many hundreds of jātika verses, to which the Commentary has appended stories connecting the verses to specific events that it claims occurred in the previous lives of the Buddha or his major disciples. One of the prominent features of the Commentary’s stories is that they often cite actions in previous lives as causal explanations for events in the Buddha’s time, reflecting a rather simplistic view of kamma. And one of the major differences between these stories and the jātika stories in the suttas and Vinaya is that the latter give Dhamma lessons of a more general sort and never try to explain events in the present as definitely

resulting from particular actions in previous lifetimes. It's from this latter source that the following stories are drawn.

“Once, monks, a certain brahman in Takkasilā had an ox named Nandivīsāla. Then Nandivīsāla said to the brahman, ‘Go, brahman, and make a bet for a thousand (gold pieces) with the moneylender: “My ox will draw one hundred carts tied to one another.”’

“So the brahman made a bet for a thousand with the moneylender: ‘My ox will draw one hundred carts tied to one another.’ Then, having tied one hundred carts to one another, having yoked Nandivīsāla the ox, the brahman said, ‘Pull, you beast! Drag them, you beast!’ So Nandivīsāla just stood right there.

“Then the brahman, having lost a thousand, was brooding. So Nandivīsāla said to him, ‘Why, brahman, are you brooding?’

“‘Because, good sir, I lost a thousand because of you.’

“‘But why, brahman, did you disgrace me, who am not a beast, by calling me a beast? Go, brahman, and make a bet for two thousand with the moneylender: “My ox will drag one hundred carts tied to one another,” and don’t disgrace me, who am not a beast, by calling me a beast.’

“So the brahman made a bet for two thousand with the moneylender: ‘My ox will drag one hundred carts tied to one another.’ Then, having tied one hundred carts to one another, having yoked Nandivīsāla the ox, the brahman said, ‘Pull, civilized one! Drag them, civilized one!’ And Nandivīsāla drew the one hundred carts tied to one another.

Speak what’s appealing,
not what’s unappealing, ever.
For the one who spoke what was appealing,
he dragged the heavy load
and brought him wealth,
having abandoned his mood because of that.

“Even then, monks, abuse & insult were unappealing to me. So how much less would they be appealing now—abuse & insult?” — [Pc 2](#)

The Blessed One said: “Once, monks, there was a king named Pacetana. One day King Pacetana said to his chariot maker, ‘My good chariot maker, in

six months time from now a battle will take place. Can you make me a new pair of chariot wheels?’

“‘Yes, your majesty, I can,’ the chariot maker replied to the king.

“Then in six months minus six days the chariot maker finished one wheel. King Pacetana said to him, ‘In six days time from now the battle will take place. Will the pair of chariot wheels be finished?’

“‘Your majesty, in these six months minus six days, I have finished one wheel.’

“‘But can you finish the second wheel in these six days?’

“‘Yes, your majesty, I can,’ the chariot maker replied to the king.

Then, after finishing the second wheel in six days, the chariot maker took the pair of wheels to the king and, on arrival, said to him, ‘Here is your new pair of chariot wheels all finished, your majesty.’

“‘And what is the difference between your wheel that took six months minus six days to finish, and your wheel that took six days to finish? I don’t see any difference between them at all.’

“‘There is a difference between them, your majesty. Look at the difference.’ Then the chariot maker took the chariot wheel that took six days to finish and set it rolling. Going as far as its momentum carried it, it twirled around & around and fell to the ground. But then he took the chariot wheel that took six months minus six days to finish and set it rolling. Going as far as its momentum carried it, it stood still as if fixed on an axle.

“‘Now what is the reason, my good chariot maker, what is the cause, why the chariot wheel that took six days to finish, when set rolling, goes as far as its momentum carries it and then, twirling around & around, falls to the ground? And what is the reason, what is the cause, why the chariot wheel that took six months minus six days to finish, when set rolling, goes as far as its momentum carries it and then stands still as if fixed on an axle?’

“‘Your majesty, as for the wheel that took six days to finish, its rim is crooked, with faults & flaws. Its spokes are crooked, with faults & flaws. Its hub is crooked, with faults & flaws. Because its rim... spokes... (&) hub are crooked, with faults & flaws, when set rolling it goes as far as its momentum carries it and then, twirling around & around, falls to the ground. But as for the wheel that took six months minus six days to finish, its rim is not crooked, with no faults or flaws. Its spokes are not crooked, with no faults or flaws. Its hub is

not crooked, with no faults or flaws. Because its rim... spokes... (&) hub are not crooked, with no faults or flaws, when set rolling it goes as far as its momentum carries it and then stands still as if fixed on an axle.’

“Now, should it occur to you, monks, that ‘Perhaps it was someone else who was the chariot maker at that time,’ it shouldn’t be seen in that way. I was the chariot maker at that time. I was skilled in dealing with the crookedness, faults, & flaws of wood. Now I am a worthy one, rightly self-awakened, skilled in dealing with the crookedness, faults, & flaws of bodily action; skilled in dealing with the crookedness, faults, & flaws of verbal action; skilled in dealing with the crookedness, faults, & flaws of mental action.” — [AN 3:15](#)

On one occasion the Blessed One was dwelling near Sāvattthī in Jeta’s Forest, Anāthapiṇḍika’s monastery. Then Anāthapiṇḍika the householder went to the Blessed One and, on arrival, bowed down to him and sat to one side. As he was sitting there, the Blessed One said to him, “Householder, are gifts still given in your family?”

“Gifts are still given in my family, lord, but they are coarse: broken rice cooked with bran, accompanied by pickle brine.”¹⁹

“Householder, regardless of whether a gift is coarse or refined, if it is given inattentively, disrespectfully, not with one’s own hand, as if throwing it away, with the view that nothing will come of it: Wherever the result of that gift comes to fruition, one’s mind will not incline to the enjoyment of splendid food, will not incline to the enjoyment of splendid clothing, will not incline to the enjoyment of splendid vehicles, will not incline to the enjoyment of the splendid five strings of sensuality. And one’s sons & daughters, slaves, servants, & workers will not listen to one, will not lend ear, will not make their minds attend for the sake of knowledge. Why is that? Because that is the result of inattentive actions.

“Householder, regardless of whether a gift is coarse or refined, if it is given attentively, respectfully, with one’s own hand, not as if throwing it away, with the view that something will come of it: Wherever the result of that gift comes to fruition, one’s mind will incline to the enjoyment of splendid food, will incline to the enjoyment of splendid clothing, will incline to the enjoyment of splendid vehicles, will incline to the enjoyment of the splendid five strings of sensuality. And one’s sons & daughters, slaves, servants, & workers will listen to

one, will lend ear, will make their minds attend for the sake of knowledge. Why is that? Because that is the result of attentive actions.

“Once, householder, there was a brahman named Velāma. And this was the nature of the gift, the great gift, he gave: He gave 84,000 gold trays filled with silver, 84,000 silver trays filled with gold, 84,000 copper trays filled with gems. He gave 84,000 elephants with gold ornaments, gold banners, covered with nets of gold thread. He gave 84,000 chariots spread with lion skins, tiger skins, leopard skins, saffron-colored blankets, with gold ornaments, gold banners, covered with nets of gold thread. He gave 84,000 milk cows with tethers of fine jute and copper milk pails. He gave 84,000 maidens adorned with jeweled earrings. He gave 84,000 couches spread with long-fleeced coverlets, white wool coverlets, embroidered coverlets, rugs of kadali-deer hide, each with a canopy above & red cushions on either side. He gave 84,000 lengths of cloth—of finest linen, of finest cotton, of finest silk—to say nothing of the food & drink, staple & non-staple food, lotions & beddings: They flowed, as it were, like rivers.

“Now, householder, should it occur to you that ‘Perhaps it was someone else who at that time was Velāma the brahman, who gave that gift, that great gift,’ it shouldn’t be seen that way. I was Velāma the brahman at that time. I gave that gift, that great gift. But in that gift there was no one worthy of offerings; no one purified that gift.

“If one were to feed one person consummate in view [i.e., a stream-winner²⁰], that would be more fruitful than the gift, the great gift, that Velāma the brahman gave.

“If one were to feed one once-returner, that would be more fruitful than the gift, the great gift, that Velāma the brahman gave, and if one were to feed one person consummate in view, and if one were to feed one hundred people consummate in view.

“If one were to feed one non-returner, that would be more fruitful than... if one were to feed one hundred once-returners.

“If one were to feed one arahant, that would be more fruitful than... if one were to feed one hundred non-returners.

“If one were to feed one Private Buddha, that would be more fruitful than... if one were to feed one hundred arahants.

“If one were to feed one Tathāgata—a worthy one, rightly self-awakened—that would be more fruitful than... if one were to feed one hundred Private Buddhas.

“If one were to feed a Saṅgha of monks headed by the Buddha, that would be more fruitful than... if one were to feed a Tathāgata—a worthy one, rightly self-awakened.

“If one were to have a dwelling built and dedicated to the Saṅgha of the four directions, that would be more fruitful than... if one were to feed a Saṅgha of monks headed by the Buddha.

“If one with a confident mind were to go to the Buddha, Dhamma, & Saṅgha for refuge, that would be more fruitful than... if one were to have a dwelling built and dedicated to the Saṅgha of the four directions.

“If one with a confident mind were to undertake the training rules—refraining from taking life, refraining from taking what is not given, refraining from illicit sex, refraining from lying, refraining from distilled & fermented drinks that cause heedlessness—that would be more fruitful than... if one with a confident mind were to go to the Buddha, Dhamma, & Saṅgha for refuge.

“If one were to develop even just one whiff of a heart of goodwill, that would be more fruitful than... if one with a confident mind were to undertake the training rules....

“If one were to develop even for just a finger-snap the perception of inconstancy, that would be more fruitful than the gift, the great gift, that Velāma the brahman gave, and if one were to feed one person... one hundred people consummate in view, and if one were to feed one once-returner... one hundred once-returners, and if one were to feed one non-returner... one hundred non-returners, and if one were to feed one arahant... one hundred arahants, and if one were to feed one Private Buddha... one hundred Private Buddhas, and if one were to feed a Tathāgata—a worthy one, rightly self-awakened—and if one were to feed a Saṅgha of monks headed by the Buddha, and if one were to have a dwelling built and dedicated to the Saṅgha of the four directions, and if one with a confident mind were to go to the Buddha, Dhamma, & Saṅgha for refuge, and if one with a confident mind were to undertake the training rules—refraining from taking life, refraining from taking what is not given, refraining from illicit sex, refraining from lying, refraining from distilled & fermented drinks that cause heedlessness—and if one were to develop even just one whiff of a heart of goodwill.” — [AN 9:20](#)

Among the Buddha’s previous lifetimes reported in the suttas, there is one he remembered in which he was a student of a previous Buddha. However, nothing is known of how—or even whether—memories of this sort played a role in his awakening in his final lifetime.

I have heard that on one occasion the Blessed One was on a walking tour among the Kosalans, along with a large Saṅgha of monks. At a certain place the Blessed One, having come down from the road, smiled.

The thought occurred to Ven. Ānanda, “What is the cause, what is the condition for the Blessed One’s smile? Tathāgatas don’t smile without a reason.”

Then Ven. Ānanda, arranging his upper robe over one shoulder and saluting the Blessed One with his hands palm-to-palm in front of his heart, said, “What is the cause, lord, what is the condition for the Blessed One’s smile? Tathāgatas don’t smile without a reason.”

“In the past, Ānanda, in this place there was a town called Vebhaḷiga—powerful, prosperous, & populous—crowded with people. The Blessed Kassapa, worthy & rightly self-awakened, lived in dependence on Vebhaḷiga. Right here was the monastery of the Blessed Kassapa, worthy & rightly self-awakened. Sitting right here, the Blessed Kassapa, worthy & rightly self-awakened, exhorted the Saṅgha of monks.”

Then Ven. Ānanda, having set out his outer robe folded in four, said to the Blessed One, “In that case, lord, may the Blessed One sit down, so that this spot of ground will have been used by two arahants, worthy & rightly self-awakened.”

The Blessed One sat down on the seat laid out. Seated, he addressed Ven. Ānanda, “In the past, Ānanda, in this place there was a town called Vebhaḷiga—powerful, prosperous, and populous—crowded with people. The Blessed Kassapa, worthy & rightly self-awakened lived in dependence on Vebhaḷiga. Right here was the monastery of the Blessed Kassapa, worthy & rightly self-awakened. Sitting right here, the Blessed Kassapa, worthy & rightly self-awakened, exhorted the Saṅgha of monks.

“In the town of Vebhaḷiga there was a potter named Ghaṭikāra. He was the Blessed Kassapa’s supporter—his foremost supporter.

“Ghaṭikāra the potter had a friend, a dear friend, named Jotipāla, a young brahman. Then Ghaṭikāra the potter said to Jotipāla the young brahman, ‘Come, my good friend Jotipāla, let’s go see the Blessed Kassapa, worthy &

rightly self-awakened. I think it's good to see a Blessed One, worthy & rightly self-awakened.'

"When that was said, Jotipāla the young brahman said to Ghaṭikāra the potter, 'Enough, my good friend. What's the use of seeing that shaven monkling?'

"A second time... A third time, Ghaṭikāra the potter said to Jotipāla the young brahman, 'Come, my good friend Jotipāla, let's go see the Blessed Kassapa, worthy & rightly self-awakened. I think it's good to see a Blessed One, worthy & rightly self-awakened.'

"A third time, Jotipāla the young brahman said to Ghaṭikāra the potter, 'Enough, my good friend. What's the use of seeing that shaven monkling?'

"In that case, my good friend, let's take back-scrapers & bath powder and go to the river to bathe.'

"As you say, my good friend,' Jotipāla the young brahman responded to Ghaṭikāra the potter.

"Then, Ānanda, Ghaṭikāra the potter and Jotipāla the young brahman, taking back-scrapers & bath powder, went to the river to bathe. Ghaṭikāra the potter addressed Jotipāla the young brahman, 'Jotipāla, the monastery of the Blessed Kassapa, worthy & rightly self-awakened, is not far away. Come, let's go see the Blessed Kassapa, worthy & rightly self-awakened. I think it's good to see a Blessed One, worthy & rightly self-awakened.'

"When that was said, Jotipāla the young brahman said to Ghaṭikāra the potter, 'Enough, my good friend. What's the use of seeing that shaven monkling?'

"A second time... A third time, Ghaṭikāra the potter said to Jotipāla the young brahman, 'Jotipāla, the monastery of the Blessed Kassapa, worthy & rightly self-awakened, is not far away. Come, let's go see the Blessed Kassapa, worthy & rightly self-awakened. I think it's good to see a Blessed One, worthy & rightly self-awakened.'

"A third time, Jotipāla the young brahman said to Ghaṭikāra the potter, 'Enough, my good friend. What's the use of seeing that shaven monkling?'

"Then Ghaṭikāra the potter, seizing Jotipāla the young brahman by the waist-cloth, said, 'My good friend Jotipāla, the monastery of the Blessed Kassapa, worthy & rightly self-awakened, is not far away. Come, let's go see the

Blessed Kassapa, worthy & rightly self-awakened. I think it's good to see a Blessed One, worthy & rightly self-awakened.'

"Then Jotipāla the young brahman, pulling free his waist-cloth, said to Ghaṭikāra the potter, 'Enough, my good friend. What's the use of seeing that shaven monkling?'

"Then, as Jotipāla the young brahman was bathing his head, Ghaṭikāra the potter seized him by the hair and said, 'My good friend Jotipāla, the monastery of the Blessed Kassapa, worthy & rightly self-awakened, is not far away. Come, let's go see the Blessed Kassapa, worthy & rightly self-awakened. I think it's good to see a Blessed One, worthy & rightly self-awakened.'

"Jotipāla the young brahman thought, 'How amazing! How, astounding!—that this potter Ghaṭikāra, being of low birth, supposes that he can seize me by the hair while I'm washing my head! How unpetty a matter this must be, I'd suppose.'

"He said to Ghaṭikāra the potter, '(You're) even (going) that far?'

"'(I'm) even (going) that far, my good friend Jotipāla, because I think it's good to see a Blessed One, worthy & rightly self-awakened.'

"'In that case, Ghaṭikāra, my good friend, let go. We'll go.'

"Then Ghaṭikāra the potter & Jotipāla the young brahman went to the Blessed Kassapa, worthy & rightly self-awakened. On arrival, Ghaṭikāra the potter bowed down to the Blessed Kassapa, worthy & rightly self-awakened, and sat to one side. Jotipāla the young brahman exchanged courteous greetings with the Blessed Kassapa, worthy & rightly self-awakened. After an exchange of friendly greetings & courtesies, he sat to one side. As he was sitting there, Ghaṭikāra the potter said to the Blessed Kassapa, worthy & rightly self-awakened, 'Lord, this is my good friend Jotipāla the young brahman. May the Blessed One teach him the Dhamma.'

"Then the Blessed Kassapa, worthy & rightly self-awakened, instructed, urged, roused, & encouraged Ghaṭikāra the potter & Jotipāla the young brahman with a Dhamma talk. Ghaṭikāra the potter & Jotipāla the young brahman, having been instructed, urged, roused, & encouraged with a Dhamma talk by the Blessed Kassapa, delighting in and approving of the Blessed Kassapa's words, got up from their seats, bowed down to him, circumambulated him, keeping him to their right, and left.

“Then, Ānanda, Jotipāla the young brahman said to Ghaṭikāra the potter, ‘My good friend Ghaṭikāra, (after) hearing this Dhamma, aren’t you going to go forth from home into homelessness?’

“My good friend Jotipāla, don’t you know I’m taking care of my blind & elderly parents?’

“In that case, my good friend Ghaṭikāra, I’ll go forth from home into homelessness.’

“Then Ghaṭikāra the potter & Jotipāla the young brahman went to the Blessed Kassapa, worthy & rightly self-awakened, bowed down to him, and sat to one side. As they were sitting there, Ghaṭikāra the potter said to the Blessed Kassapa, worthy & rightly self-awakened, ‘Lord, this is my good friend Jotipāla the young brahman. May the Blessed One give him the Going-forth.’

“So, Ānanda, Jotipāla the young brahman obtained the Going-forth in the presence of the Blessed Kassapa, worthy & rightly self-awakened, and he obtained Acceptance. Then, not long after Jotipāla the young brahman’s Acceptance—when he had been ordained half a month—the Blessed Kassapa, worthy & rightly self-awakened, having stayed at Vebhaḷiga as long as he liked, set out on a wandering tour toward Vārāṇasī, and, wandering by stages, arrived at Vārāṇasī. There the Blessed Kassapa, worthy & rightly self-awakened, stayed near Vārāṇasī in the Isipatana game reserve.

“King Kiki of Kāsi heard, ‘They say that the Blessed Kassapa, worthy & rightly self-awakened, has arrived at Vārāṇasī, and is dwelling near Vārāṇasī in the Isipatana game reserve.’

“Then King Kiki of Kāsi had auspicious vehicles harnessed. Mounting an auspicious vehicle, he set out from Vārāṇasī accompanied by other auspicious vehicles in full royal pomp to see the Blessed Kassapa, worthy & rightly self-awakened. Going as far by vehicle as the ground permitted, he got down from his vehicle and proceeded on foot to the Blessed Kassapa, worthy & rightly self-awakened. On arrival, he bowed down to him and sat to one side. As he was sitting there, the Blessed Kassapa instructed, urged, roused, & encouraged King Kiki of Kāsi with a Dhamma talk. Having been urged, roused, & encouraged by the Blessed Kassapa with a Dhamma talk, King Kiki of Kāsi said to the Blessed Kassapa, ‘Lord, may the Blessed One acquiesce to my meal tomorrow, together with the Saṅgha of monks.’

“The Blessed Kassapa acquiesced with silence. King Kiki of Kāsi, understanding the Blessed Kassapa’s acquiescence, got up from his seat, bowed

down to him, circumambulated him, keeping him to his right, and left.

“Then, Ānanda, after the night had ended, King Kiki of Kāsi, having had exquisite staple & non-staple food prepared in his own residence—aged, fragrant rice²¹ free of black grains, with many kinds of curries & sauces—had the time announced to the Blessed Kassapa: ‘It’s time, lord. The meal is ready.’

“Then, early in the morning, the Blessed Kassapa—having adjusted his under robe and carrying his bowl & outer robe—went together with the Saṅgha of monks to King Kiki of Kāsi’s residence and, on arrival, sat down on a seat laid out.

“Then King Kiki of Kāsi, with his own hands, served & satisfied the Saṅgha of monks headed by the Blessed Kassapa with exquisite staple & non-staple food. When the Blessed Kassapa had finished his meal and had rinsed his bowl & hands, King Kiki of Kāsi, taking a low seat, sat to one side. As he was sitting there he said to the Blessed Kassapa, worthy & rightly self-awakened, ‘Lord, may the Blessed One acquiesce to my (invitation) to spend the Rains in Vārāṇasī. There will be this kind of support for the Saṅgha.’

“‘Enough, great king. I have already acquiesced to (an invitation to) spend the Rains.’

“A second time... A third time, King Kiki of Kāsi said to the Blessed Kassapa, worthy & rightly self-awakened, ‘Lord, may the Blessed One acquiesce to my (invitation to) spend the Rains in Vārāṇasī. There will be this kind of support for the Saṅgha.’

“‘Enough, great king. I have already acquiesced to (an invitation to) spend the Rains.’

“Then King Kiki of Kāsi, (thinking,) ‘The Blessed Kassapa, worthy & rightly self-awakened didn’t acquiesce to my (invitation to) spend the Rains in Vārāṇasī,’ was sad & upset. He said to the Blessed Kassapa, ‘Lord, is there anybody else who surpasses me as a supporter?’

“‘Great king, there is a town named Vebhaḷiga, and there is a potter there named Ghaṭikāra. He is my supporter—my supporter attendant. Great king, (thinking,) “The Blessed Kassapa, worthy & rightly self-awakened didn’t acquiesce to my (invitation to) spend the Rains in Vārāṇasī,” you are sad & upset. But there is none of that in Ghaṭikāra the potter, nor will there be.

“‘Ghaṭikāra the potter has gone to the Buddha for refuge. He has gone to the Dhamma for refuge. He has gone to the Saṅgha for refuge.

“Ghaṭikāra the potter refrains from killing, refrains from taking what is not given, refrains from sexual misconduct, refrains from telling lies, and refrains from intoxicating liquors & drugs that lead to heedlessness.

“Ghaṭikāra the potter is endowed with verified confidence in the Buddha, verified confidence in the Dhamma, and verified confidence in the Saṅgha. He is endowed with virtues pleasing to the noble ones.

“Ghaṭikāra the potter has no doubts about stress, no doubts about the origination of stress, no doubts about the cessation of stress, no doubts about the path of practice leading to the cessation of stress.

“Ghaṭikāra the potter eats one meal a day and is celibate—a person of virtue, with fine qualities.

“Ghaṭikāra the potter has renounced gold & jewels, and does without silver or money.

“Ghaṭikāra the potter doesn’t dig the soil with a trowel or his hands, but using a carrying-pole takes clay from a collapsing river-bank or from (what was dug up by) a dog or a rodent and making clay vessels, he says, ‘Whoever wants this: Leaving payments of rice, of green beans, or of chick-peas, take whatever you want.’

“Ghaṭikāra the potter is taking care of his blind & elderly parents.

“Great king, Ghaṭikāra the potter, from the total ending of the five lower fetters [self-identity views, uncertainty, grasping at habits & practices, sensual passion, and irritation], will (after passing away) spontaneously arise (in the Pure Abodes,) there to be totally unbound, never again to return from that world.

“Once I was dwelling near the town of Vebhaḷiga. Then, early in the morning—having adjusted my under robe and carrying my bowl & outer robe—I went to Ghaṭikāra the potter’s father & mother, and, on arrival, said to them, “Now then, where has the potter gone?”

““Lord, your supporter has gone out, so take some rice from the rice-pot and some sauce from the sauce-pot and eat.”

“Then, great king, I took some rice from the rice-pot and some sauce from the sauce-pot, ate, got up from my seat, and left. Ghaṭikāra the potter came to his father & mother, and said to them, “Who took some rice from the rice-pot and some sauce from the sauce-pot, ate, and then left?”

““My son, the Blessed Kassapa, worthy & rightly self-awakened, took some rice from the rice-pot and some sauce from the sauce-pot, ate, and then left.”

“Then it occurred to Ghaṭikāra the potter, “What a gain for me, what a great gain, that the Blessed Kassapa, worthy & rightly self-awakened is so trusting in me!”

“Then, great king, Ghaṭikāra the potter was not without rapture & happiness for half a month, and his father & mother for a week....

“Once I was dwelling near that very same town of Vebhaliga. At that time my hut was being rained on (leaking). Then I said to the monks, “Go, monks, to Ghaṭikāra the potter’s house and inquire about thatch.”

“When that was said, the monks said to me, “There’s no thatch at Ghaṭikāra the potter’s house, but his workshop is roofed with thatch.”

““Go, monks, remove the thatch from Ghaṭikāra the potter’s workshop.”

“Then the monks removed the thatch from Ghaṭikāra the potter’s workshop. His father & mother said to the monks, “Who’s removing the thatch from the workshop?”

““The monks, sister. The Blessed Kassapa’s hut is being rained on (leaking).”

““Take it, venerable sirs! Take it, fortunate ones!”

“Then Ghaṭikāra the potter went to his father & mother and said to them. “Who removed the thatch from the workshop?”

““The monks, son. The Blessed Kassapa’s hut is being rained on (leaking).”

“Then it occurred to Ghaṭikāra the potter, “What a gain for me, what a great gain, that the Blessed Kassapa, worthy & rightly self-awakened is so trusting in me!”

“Then, great king, Ghaṭikāra the potter was not without rapture & happiness for half a month, and his father & mother for a week. Then the workshop remained with the sky for a roof for the whole three months but didn’t get rained on. Ghaṭikāra the potter is like that.’

“It’s a gain for Ghaṭikāra the potter, lord, a great gain, that the Blessed Kassapa, worthy & rightly self-awakened is so trusting in him.’

“Then, Ānanda, King Kiki of Kāsi sent Ghaṭikāra the potter five hundred cartloads of plain rice, aged fragrant rice, & ingredients for sauces. The king’s men went to Ghaṭikāra the potter and said, ‘Sir, these five hundred cartloads of

plain rice, aged fragrant rice, & ingredients for sauces have been sent to you by King Kiki of Kāsi. May you accept them, sir?

“The king has many duties, many responsibilities. I have enough. May they be the king’s.’

“Now, should it occur to you, Ānanda, that ‘Perhaps it was someone else who was the young brahman Jotipāla at that time,’ it shouldn’t be seen that way. I was the young brahman Jotipāla at that time.”

That is what the Blessed One said. Gratified, Ven. Ānanda delighted in the Blessed One’s words. — *MN 81*

But even though the bodhisatta learned the Dhamma under previous Buddhas, his own many-lifetime quest for awakening was, for the most part, like the quest in his final lifetime: a series of experiments. He tried many practices, some that he later incorporated into his Dhamma and others that proved fruitless or actually led to lower realms.

“I remember, Sāriputta, being one who lived a holy life endowed with four factors: I was an ascetic, the most extreme ascetic. I was rough, the most extreme in roughness. I was scrupulous, the most extreme in scrupulousness. I was secluded, the most extreme in seclusion.

“This is how it was for me, in terms of asceticism: I was cloth-less, rejecting conventions, licking my hands, not coming when called, not staying when asked. I didn’t consent to food brought to me, to food dedicated to me, or to an invitation to a meal. I accepted nothing from the mouth of a pot or from the mouth of a bowl. I accepted nothing from across a threshold, across a stick, across a pestle, from two eating together, from a pregnant woman, from a nursing woman, from a woman living with a man, from where it was announced that food was to be distributed, from where a dog was waiting or flies were buzzing. I took no fish or meat. I drank no liquor, wine, or fermented drink.

“I limited myself to one house & one morsel a day, or two houses & two morsels... seven houses & seven morsels. I lived on one saucerful a day, two... seven saucerfuls a day. I took food once a day, once every two days... once every seven days, and so on up to a fortnight, devoted to regulating my intake of food.

“I was an eater of greens, millet, wild rice, hide-parings, moss, rice bran, rice-scum, sesame flour, grass, or cow dung. I lived on forest roots & berries. I fed on fallen fruits.

“I wore hemp, canvas, shrouds, refuse rags, tree bark, antelope hide, strips of antelope hide, kusa-grass garments, bark garments, wood-shaving garments, head-hair garments, animal wool, owl’s wings. I was a hair-&-beard puller, one devoted to the practice of pulling out my hair & beard. I was a stander, one who rejected seats. I was a kneeler, one devoted to the exertion of kneeling. I was a spike-mattresser, one who made my bed on a bed of spikes. I was a third-time-in-the-evening bather, one who stayed devoted to the practice of bathing in water.

“Thus in a variety of ways I stayed devoted to the practice of tormenting & afflicting the body. That’s how it was for me, in terms of asceticism.

“This is how it was for me, in terms of roughness: Many years worth of dirt had collected on my body, so that it became a crust. Just like a *tiṇḍuka* stump, having collected (dirt) for many years so that it has become a crust—in the same way, many years’ worth of dirt had collected on my body, so that it became a crust.

“The thought didn’t occur to me, ‘Oh! I would like to rub off this dirt with my hand! Or may others rub off this dirt with their hands!’ That didn’t occur to me.

“That’s how it was for me, in terms of roughness.

“This is how it was for me, in terms of scrupulousness: I was mindful stepping forward; I was mindful stepping back. Even for a drop of water, concern was established within me, (thinking,) ‘I won’t engage in killing these small, unfortunate creatures.’

“That’s how it was for me, in terms of scrupulousness.

“This is how it was for me, in terms of seclusion: “Plunging into a certain wilderness area, I stayed there. When I saw a cowherd, an ox-herd, a grass-carrier, a wood-carrier, or a woodsman, I fled from grove to grove, from thicket to thicket, from hill to hill, from meadow to meadow. Why was that? (I thought,) ‘May they not see me, and may I not see them.’

“Just like a wild deer, on seeing human beings, flees from grove to grove, from thicket to thicket, from hill to hill, from meadow to meadow—in the same way, when I saw a cowherd, an ox-herd, a grass-carrier, a wood-carrier, or

a woodsman, I fled from grove to grove, from thicket to thicket, from hill to hill, from meadow to meadow. Why was that? (I thought,) ‘May they not see me, and may I not see them.’

“That’s how it was for me, in terms of seclusion.

“I would crawl on all fours to the cow-sheds when the cows had gone out and the cowherds had gone off. Whatever manure there was from young nursing calves: I took just that for food. As long as my own urine and excrement hadn’t run out, I took just my own urine and excrement for food. That’s how it was for me, in terms of subsisting on the great foul things as food.

“Plunging into a certain awe-inspiring forest grove, I stayed there. There, Sāriputta, that awe-inspiring grove had this quality in terms of making one awe-inspired: When one who had not gone beyond passion entered, his hair would usually stand on end.

“Those cold winter middle-eight nights [the four nights on either side of the full moon in February, the coldest time of the year in northern India], the time of snowfall: On nights like that I would stay in the open by night and in the grove by day. In the last month of the hot season, I would stay in the open by day and in the grove by night. And then this verse of amazement—never heard before—occurred to me:

“He is scorched, he is drenched, alone—
alone in the awe-inspiring forest,
naked, not sitting near a fire,
exerting himself in the search : the sage.’

“I arranged a sleeping place in a charnel ground, piling up bones from the corpses.

“And then cowherd boys, coming up to me, would spit on me, or urinate on me, or throw dirt on me, or stick twigs into my ears. But I do not remember giving rise to any evil thoughts toward them.

“That’s how it was for me, in terms of dwelling in equanimity.

“Sāriputta, there are some contemplatives & brahmans with this doctrine, this view: ‘Purity is by means of food.’

“‘We live on jujube fruits,’ they say. They eat jujubes, they eat jujube powder, they drink jujube juice, and make use of diverse products of the jujube.

“But I remember being one who ate just one jujube (per day). If the thought should occur to you, ‘Maybe jujubes were large at that time,’ it shouldn’t be seen that way. Jujubes were just the same size then as they are now.

“For me, eating just one jujube (per day), my body became extremely emaciated. Simply from my eating so little, my limbs became like the jointed segments of vine stems or bamboo stems.... My backside became like a camel’s hoof.... My spine stood out like a string of beads.... My ribs jutted out like the jutting rafters of an old, run-down barn.... The gleam of my eyes appeared to be sunk deep in my eye sockets like the gleam of water deep in a well.... My scalp shriveled & withered like a green bitter melon, shriveled & withered in the heat & the wind.... The skin of my belly became so stuck to my spine that when I thought of touching my belly, I grabbed hold of my spine as well, and when I thought of touching my spine, I grabbed hold of the skin of my belly as well.... If I urinated or defecated, I fell over on my face right there.... If I tried to ease my body by rubbing my limbs with my hands, the hair—rotted at its roots—fell from my body as I rubbed, simply from eating so little.

“Sāriputta, there are some contemplatives & brahmins with this doctrine, this view: ‘Purity is by means of food.’

“‘We live on green gram... sesame seeds... rice...’ they say. They eat rice, they eat rice powder, they drink rice water, and make use of diverse products of rice.

“But I remember being one who ate just one grain of rice (per day). If the thought should occur to you, ‘Maybe rice grains were large at that time,’ it shouldn’t be seen that way. Rice grains were just the same size then as they are now.

“For me, eating just one grain of rice (per day), my body became extremely emaciated. Simply from my eating so little, my limbs became like the jointed segments of vine stems or bamboo stems....

“But with this racking practice of austerities I didn’t attain any superior human state, any distinction in knowledge or vision worthy of the noble ones. Why is that? Because of the non-attainment of this noble discernment—the noble discernment that, when attained, is noble, leading out, leading those who act on it to the right ending of suffering & stress.

“There are some contemplatives & brahmins with this doctrine, this view: ‘Purity is by means of wandering on.’²² But it’s not easy to find a wandering-on

that I haven't wandered to before, in this long, long journey, aside from the Pure-Abode devas. If I had wandered among the Pure-Abode devas, I wouldn't have come back to this world again.

“There are some contemplatives & brahmans with this doctrine, this view: ‘Purity is by means of rebirth.’ But it's not easy to find a rebirth that I haven't been reborn in before, in this long, long journey, aside from the Pure-Abode devas. If I had been reborn among the Pure-Abode devas, I wouldn't have come back to this world again.

“There are some contemplatives & brahmans with this doctrine, this view: ‘Purity is by means of abodes.’ But it's not easy to find an abode that I haven't abided in before, in this long, long journey, aside from the Pure-Abode devas. If I had abided among the Pure-Abode devas, I wouldn't have come back to this world again.

“There are some contemplatives & brahmans with this doctrine, this view: ‘Purity is by means of sacrifice.’ But it's not easy to find a sacrifice that I haven't performed before, in this long, long journey, either as a head-anointed noble-warrior king or as an extremely wealthy brahman.

“There are some contemplatives & brahmans with this doctrine, this view: ‘Purity is by means of tending the (sacred) fire.’ But it's not easy to find a (sacred) fire that I haven't tended to before, in this long, long journey, either as a head-anointed noble-warrior king or as an extremely wealthy brahman.” —

[MN 12](#)

Even though the accounts of the bodhisatta's previous lives recorded in the four nikāyas and Vinaya are few and far between, his first knowledge on the night of his awakening covered vast eons. It's easy to imagine that the sheer immensity of the time covered in that knowledge strengthened the sense of terror that originally motivated his quest and gave more urgency to his search for a way out. This is reflected in the way he later would cite that vast span of time as a way of inducing these feelings in his audience.

“Monks, if a single person were to wander & transmigrate on for an eon, he/she would leave behind a chain of bones, a pile of bones, a heap of bones, as large as this Mount Vepulla, if there were someone to collect them and the collection were not destroyed.” — [SN 15:10](#)

Then a certain monk went to the Blessed One and, on arrival, having bowed down to him, sat to one side. As he was sitting there, the monk said to the Blessed One, “How long, lord, is an eon?”

“Long, monk, is an eon. It’s not easy to count as ‘so many years’ or ‘so many hundreds of years’ or ‘so many thousands of years’ or ‘so many hundreds of thousands of years.’”

“But is it possible to give an analogy, lord?”

“It is, monk,” said the Blessed One. “Suppose there were a great mountain of rock—a league long, a league wide, a league high, uncracked, uncavities, a single mass—and a man would come along once every hundred years and rub it once with a Kāsi cloth. More quickly than the eon would that great mountain of rock waste away and be consumed by that effort. That’s how long, monk, an eon is. And of eons of such length, not just one eon has been wandered-through, not just one hundred eons have been wandered-through, not just one thousand eons have been wandered-through, not just one hundred-thousand eons have been wandered-through.

“Why is that? From an inconceivable beginning comes the wandering-on. A beginning point is not discernible, though beings hindered by ignorance and fettered by craving are transmigrating & wandering on. Long have you thus experienced stress, experienced pain, experienced loss, swelling the cemeteries—enough to become disenchanted with all fabrications, enough to become dispassionate, enough to be released.” — [SN 15:5](#)

“Just as, from where the River Ganges begins to where it goes to the ocean, the grains of sand in between are not easy to count as ‘so many grains of sand’ or ‘so many hundreds of grains of sand’ or ‘so many thousands of grains of sand’ or ‘so many hundreds of thousands of grains of sand.’ Even more than that are the eons that have passed and gone. They are not easy to count: ‘So many eons have passed and gone by’ or ‘So many hundreds of eons have passed and gone by’ or ‘So many thousands of eons have passed and gone by’ or ‘So many hundreds of thousands of eons have passed and gone by.’” — [SN 15:8](#)

“What do you think, monks? Which is greater, the tears you have shed while transmigrating & wandering this long, long time—crying & weeping from being joined with what is displeasing, being separated from what is pleasing—or the water in the four great oceans?”

“As we understand the Dhamma taught to us by the Blessed One, this is the greater: the tears we have shed while transmigrating & wandering this long, long time—crying & weeping from being joined with what is displeasing, being separated from what is pleasing—not the water in the four great oceans.”

“Excellent, monks. Excellent. It is excellent that you thus understand the Dhamma taught by me.

“This is the greater: the tears you have shed while transmigrating & wandering this long, long time—crying & weeping from being joined with what is displeasing, being separated from what is pleasing—not the water in the four great oceans.

“Long have you (repeatedly) experienced the death of a mother. The tears you have shed over the death of a mother while transmigrating & wandering this long, long time—crying & weeping from being joined with what is displeasing, being separated from what is pleasing—are greater than the water in the four great oceans.

“Long have you (repeatedly) experienced the death of a father... the death of a brother... the death of a sister... the death of a son... the death of a daughter... loss with regard to relatives... loss with regard to wealth... loss with regard to disease. The tears you have shed over loss with regard to disease while transmigrating & wandering this long, long time—crying & weeping from being joined with what is displeasing, being separated from what is pleasing—are greater than the water in the four great oceans.

“Why is that? From an inconceivable beginning comes the wandering-on. A beginning point is not discernible, though beings hindered by ignorance and fettered by craving are transmigrating & wandering on. Long have you thus experienced stress, experienced pain, experienced loss, swelling the cemeteries—enough to become disenchanted with all fabrications, enough to become dispassionate, enough to be released.” — [*SN 15:3*](#)

“Just as a stick thrown up in the air lands sometimes on its base, sometimes on its side, sometimes on its tip; in the same way, beings hindered by ignorance and fettered by craving, transmigrating & wandering on, sometimes go from this world to another world, sometimes come from another world to this.” — [*SN 15:9*](#)

“When you see someone who has fallen on hard times, overwhelmed with hard times, you should conclude: ‘We, too, have experienced just this sort of thing in the course of that long, long time.’... When you see someone who is happy & well provided in life, you should conclude: ‘We, too, have experienced just this sort of thing in the course of that long, long time.’” — [SN 15:11](#), 12

“A being who has not been your mother at one time in the past is not easy to find.... A being who has not been your father... your brother... your sister... your son... your daughter at one time in the past is not easy to find.

“Why is that? From an inconceivable beginning comes transmigration. A beginning point is not evident, though beings hindered by ignorance and fettered by craving are transmigrating & wandering on. Long have you thus experienced stress, experienced pain, experienced loss, swelling the cemeteries—enough to become disenchanted with all fabrications, enough to become dispassionate, enough to be released.” — [SN 15:14–19](#)

KAMMA & REBIRTH

The Buddha acknowledged that he was not the first to attain the jhānas or to use those states of concentration to attain knowledge of previous lives. However, he noted that it is possible to attain a limited knowledge of previous lives (and by limited, he meant even as long as forty eons of cosmic expansion and contraction ([DN 1](#))) and still develop wrong views about the relationship between kamma and the process by which rebirth occurs. One of the reasons for these wrong views is inappropriate attention—asking the wrong questions—and another is the sheer complexity of how kamma works. Only through his more complete knowledge of previous lives, together with his application of appropriate attention, was he able to realize the general principle of how kamma yields results: that skillful acts tend toward happiness and unskillful acts toward pain. However, he also saw that the results of present and past kamma interact in ways so complex that the question of when and where a particular action will yield its results is hard to answer—so hard, that any attempt to do so would lead to madness. And, given the role of present kamma in shaping one’s experience of the results of past kamma, the intensity with which the results of past kamma will be experienced can’t be predicted at all. Still, the general principle

underlying these tendencies is reliable enough to provide guidance in following a path of action that will, eventually, lead to happiness. Not only that, this general principle also proved sufficient to underlie a path leading even further: to the harmless and peaceful happiness of unbinding.

“Intention, I tell you, is kamma. Intending, one does kamma by way of body, speech, & intellect.” — [AN 6:63](#)

This was said by the Blessed One, said by the Arahant, so I have heard: “Monks, don’t be afraid of acts of merit. This is a synonym for what is blissful, desirable, pleasing, endearing, charming—i.e., acts of merit. I directly know that, having long performed meritorious deeds, I long experienced desirable, pleasing, endearing, charming results. Having developed a mind of goodwill for seven years, then for seven eons of contraction & expansion I didn’t return to this world. Whenever the eon was contracting, I entered the (realm of) Radiance. Whenever the eon was expanding, I reappeared in an empty Brahma-abode. There I was Brahmā, the Great Brahmā, the Unconquered Conqueror, Total Seer, Wielder of Power. Then for thirty-six times I was Sakka the deva-king. For many hundreds of times I was a king, a wheel-turning monarch, a righteous king of Dhamma, conqueror of the four corners of the earth, maintaining stable control over the countryside, endowed with the seven treasures²³ —to say nothing of the times I was a local king. The thought occurred to me, ‘Of what action of mine is this the fruit, of what action the result, that I now have such great power & might?’ Then the thought occurred to me, ‘This is the fruit of my three (types of) action, the result of three types of action, that I now have such great power & might: i.e., generosity, self-control, & restraint.’”

Train in acts of merit
that yield the foremost profit of bliss—
develop generosity,
 a life in tune,
 a mind of goodwill.
Developing these
three things
that bring about bliss,

the wise reappear
in a world of bliss
unalloyed. — [*Iti 22*](#)

Then Subha the student, Todeyya's son, went to the Blessed One and, on arrival, exchanged courteous greetings with him. After an exchange of friendly greetings & courtesies, he sat to one side. As he was sitting there, he said to the Blessed One: "Master Gotama, what is the reason, what is the cause, why baseness & excellence are seen among human beings, among the human race? For short-lived & long-lived people are to be seen, sickly & healthy, ugly & beautiful, uninfluential & influential, poor & rich, low-born & high-born, stupid & discerning people are to be seen. So what is the reason, what is the cause, why baseness & excellence are seen among human beings, among the human race?"

"Student, beings are owners of their actions, heirs of their actions, born of their actions, related through their actions, and have their actions as their arbitrator. Action is what differentiates beings in terms of baseness & excellence."

"I don't understand the detailed meaning of Master Gotama's statement spoken in brief without explaining the detailed meaning. It would be good if Master Gotama taught me the Dhamma so that I might understand the detailed meaning of his brief statement."

"In that case, student, listen & pay close attention. I will speak."

"As you say, Master Gotama," Subha the student responded to the Blessed One.

The Blessed One said: "There is the case, student, where a woman or man is a killer of living beings, brutal, bloody-handed, given to killing & slaying, showing no mercy to living beings. Through having adopted & carried out such actions, on the breakup of the body, after death, he/she reappears in a plane of deprivation, a bad destination, a lower realm, hell. If, on the breakup of the body, after death—instead of reappearing in a plane of deprivation, a bad destination, a lower realm, hell—he/she comes to the human state, then he/she is short-lived wherever reborn. This is the way leading to a short life: to be a killer of living beings, brutal, bloody-handed, given to killing & slaying, showing no mercy to living beings.

“But then there is the case where a woman or man, having abandoned the killing of living beings, abstains from killing living beings, and dwells with the rod laid down, the knife laid down, scrupulous, merciful, & sympathetic for the welfare of all living beings. Through having adopted & carried out such actions, on the breakup of the body, after death, he/she reappears in a good destination, a heavenly world. If, on the breakup of the body, after death—instead of reappearing in a good destination, a heavenly world—he/she comes to the human state, then he/she is long-lived wherever reborn. This is the way leading to a long life: to have abandoned the killing of living beings, to abstain from killing living beings, to dwell with one’s rod laid down, one’s knife laid down, scrupulous, merciful, & sympathetic for the welfare of all living beings.

“There is the case where a woman or man is one who harms beings with his/her fists, with clods, with sticks, or with knives. Through having adopted & carried out such actions, on the breakup of the body, after death, he/she reappears in a plane of deprivation.... If instead he/she comes to the human state, then he/she is sickly wherever reborn. This is the way leading to sickness: to be one who harms beings with one’s fists, with clods, with sticks, or with knives.

“But then there is the case where a woman or man is not one who harms beings with his/her fists, with clods, with sticks, or with knives. Through having adopted & carried out such actions, on the breakup of the body, after death, he/she reappears in a good destination.... If instead he/she comes to the human state, then he/she is healthy wherever reborn. This is the way leading to health: not to be one who harms beings with one’s fists, with clods, with sticks, or with knives.

“There is the case, where a woman or man is ill-tempered & easily upset; even when lightly criticized, he/she grows offended, provoked, malicious, & resentful; shows annoyance, aversion, & bitterness. Through having adopted & carried out such actions, on the breakup of the body, after death, he/she reappears in a plane of deprivation.... If instead he/she comes to the human state, then he/she is ugly wherever reborn. This is the way leading to ugliness: to be ill-tempered & easily upset; even when lightly criticized, to grow offended, provoked, malicious, & resentful; to show annoyance, aversion, & bitterness.

“But then there is the case where a woman or man is not ill-tempered or easily upset; even when heavily criticized, he/she doesn’t grow offended,

provoked, malicious, or resentful; doesn't show annoyance, aversion, or bitterness. Through having adopted & carried out such actions, on the breakup of the body, after death, he/she reappears in a good destination.... If instead he/she comes to the human state, then he/she is beautiful wherever reborn. This is the way leading to beauty: not to be ill-tempered or easily upset; even when heavily criticized, not to be offended, provoked, malicious, or resentful; nor to show annoyance, aversion, & bitterness.

“There is the case where a woman or man is envious. He/she envies, begrudges, & broods about others' gains, honor, respect, reverence, salutations, & veneration. Through having adopted & carried out such actions, on the breakup of the body, after death, he/she reappears in a plane of deprivation.... If instead he/she comes to the human state, then he/she is not influential wherever reborn. This is the way leading to being uninfluential: to be envious, to envy, begrudge, & brood about others' gains, honor, respect, reverence, salutations, & veneration.

“But then there is the case where a woman or man is not envious. He/she doesn't envy, begrudge, or brood about others' gains, honor, respect, reverence, salutations, or veneration. Through having adopted & carried out such actions, on the breakup of the body, after death, he/she reappears in a good destination.... If instead he/she comes to the human state, he/she is influential wherever reborn. This is the way leading to being influential: not to be envious; not to envy, begrudge, or brood about others' gains, honor, respect, reverence, salutations, or veneration.

“There is the case where a woman or man is not a giver of food, drink, cloth, sandals, garlands, scents, ointments, beds, dwellings, or lighting to contemplatives or brahmans. Through having adopted & carried out such actions, on the breakup of the body, after death he/she reappears in a plane of deprivation... If instead he/she comes to the human state, he/she is poor wherever reborn. This is the way leading to poverty: not to be a giver of food, drink, cloth, sandals, garlands, scents, ointments, beds, dwellings, or lighting to contemplatives or brahmans.

“But then there is the case where a woman or man is a giver of food, drink, cloth, sandals, scents, ointments, beds, dwellings, & lighting to contemplatives & brahmans. Through having adopted & carried out such actions, on the breakup of the body, after death, he/she reappears in a good destination.... If instead he/she comes to the human state, then he/she is wealthy wherever

reborn. This is the way leading to great wealth: to be a giver of food, drink, cloth, sandals, garlands, scents, ointments, beds, dwellings, & lighting to contemplatives & brahmans.

“There is the case where a woman or man is obstinate & arrogant. He/she doesn’t pay homage to those who deserve homage, rise up for those for whom one should rise up, give a seat to those to whom one should give a seat, make way for those for whom one should make way, worship those who should be worshipped, respect those who should be respected, revere those who should be revered, or honor those who should be honored. Through having adopted & carried out such actions, on the breakup of the body, after death, he/she reappears in a plane of deprivation.... If instead he/she comes to the human state, then he/she is low-born wherever reborn. This is the way leading to a low birth: to be obstinate & arrogant, not to pay homage to those who deserve homage, nor rise up for... nor give a seat to... nor make way for... nor worship... nor respect... nor revere... nor honor those who should be honored.

“But then there is the case where a woman or man is not obstinate or arrogant; he/she pays homage to those who deserve homage, rises up... gives a seat... makes way... worships... respects... reveres... honors those who should be honored. Through having adopted & carried out such actions, on the breakup of the body, after death, he/she reappears in a good destination.... If instead he/she comes to the human state, then he/she is highborn wherever reborn. This is the way leading to a high birth: not to be obstinate or arrogant; to pay homage to those who deserve homage, to rise up... give a seat... make way... worship... respect... revere... honor those who should be honored.

“There is the case where a woman or man when visiting a contemplative or brahman, doesn’t 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?’ Through having adopted & carried out such actions, on the breakup of the body, after death, he/she reappears in a plane of deprivation, a bad destination, a lower realm, hell. If, on the breakup of the body, after death—instead of reappearing in a plane of deprivation, a bad destination, a lower realm, hell—he/she comes to the human state, then he/she will be stupid wherever reborn. This is the way leading to stupidity: when visiting a

contemplative or brahman, not to ask, ‘What is skillful? ... Or what, having been done by me, will be for my long-term welfare & happiness?’

“But then there is the case where a woman or man when visiting a contemplative or brahman, asks, ‘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?’ Through having adopted & carried out such actions, on the breakup of the body, after death, he/she reappears in a good destination, a heavenly world. If, on the breakup of the body, after death—instead of reappearing in a good destination, a heavenly world—he/she comes to the human state, then he/she is discerning wherever reborn. This is the way leading to discernment: when visiting a contemplative or brahman, to ask, ‘What is skillful?... Or what, having been done by me, will be for my long-term welfare & happiness?’

“So, student, the way leading to short life makes people short-lived, the way leading to long life makes people long-lived. The way leading to sickness makes people sickly, the way leading to health makes people healthy. The way leading to ugliness makes people ugly, the way leading to beauty makes people beautiful. The way leading to lack of influence makes people uninfluential, the way leading to influence makes people influential. The way leading to poverty makes people poor, the way leading to wealth makes people wealthy. The way leading to low birth makes people low-born, the way leading to high birth makes people highborn. The way leading to stupidity makes people stupid, the way leading to discernment makes people discerning.

“Beings are owners of their actions, heirs of their actions, born of their actions, related through their actions, and have their actions as their arbitrator. Action is what differentiates beings in terms of baseness & excellence.” —

[MN 135](#)

The Blessed One said, “Ānanda, there are four kinds of people to be found in the world. Which four? There is the case where a certain person is one who takes life, takes what is not given [steals], engages in illicit sex, lies, speaks divisively, speaks abusively, engages in idle chatter; is covetous, malevolent, & holds wrong view. With the breakup of the body, after death, he reappears in a plane of deprivation, a bad destination, a lower realm, hell.

“But there is also the case where a certain person is one who takes life... & holds wrong view, (yet) with the breakup of the body, after death, he reappears in a good destination, a heavenly world.

“And there is the case where a certain person is one who abstains from taking life, abstains from taking what is not given, abstains from illicit sex, abstains from lying, abstains from speaking divisively, abstains from speaking abusively, abstains from idle chatter, is not covetous, not malevolent, & holds right view. With the breakup of the body, after death, he reappears in a good destination, a heavenly world.

“But there is also the case where a certain person is one who abstains from taking life... & holds right view, (yet) with the breakup of the body, after death, he reappears in a plane of deprivation, a bad destination, a lower realm, hell.

“There is the case, Ānanda, where a certain contemplative or brahman—through ardency, exertion, commitment, heedfulness, & right attention—touches the sort of concentration of awareness that, when his mind is thus concentrated, he sees with the divine eye, pure and surpassing the human, that person—the case where one who takes life... & holds wrong view, with the breakup of the body, after death, has reappeared in a plane of deprivation, a bad destination, a lower realm, hell.

“He says, ‘So there really are evil actions, there really is the result of misconduct. For I saw the case where a person who took life... & held wrong view, with the breakup of the body, after death, has reappeared in a plane of deprivation, a bad destination, a lower realm, hell.’ He says, ‘Anyone who takes life... & holds wrong view: They all, on the breakup of the body, after death, reappear in a plane of deprivation, a bad destination, a lower realm, hell. Whoever knows this, knows rightly. Whoever knows otherwise, their knowledge is wrong.’ Insisting through obstinacy & grasping right there on what was seen by himself, known by himself, understood by himself, he states: ‘Only this is true. Everything otherwise is worthless.’

“Then there is the case, Ānanda, where a certain contemplative or brahman... sees with the divine eye, pure and surpassing the human, that person—the case where one who takes life... & holds wrong view, with the breakup of the body, after death, has reappeared in a good destination, a heavenly world.

“He says, ‘So there really are no evil actions, there really is no result of misconduct. For I saw the case where a person who took life... & held wrong

view, with the breakup of the body, after death, has reappeared in a good destination, a heavenly world.’ He says, ‘Anyone who takes life... & holds wrong view: They all, on the breakup of the body, after death, reappear in a good destination, a heavenly world. Whoever knows this, knows rightly...

“Then there is the case, Ānanda, where a certain contemplative or brahman... sees with the divine eye, pure and surpassing the human, that person—the case where one who abstains from taking life... & holds right view, with the breakup of the body, after death, reappears in a good destination, a heavenly world.

“He says, ‘So there really are fine actions, there really is the result of good conduct. For I saw the case where a person who abstained from taking life... & held right view, with the breakup of the body, after death, has reappeared in a good destination, a heavenly world.’ He says, ‘Anyone who abstains from taking life... & holds right view: They all, on the breakup of the body, after death, reappear in a good destination, a heavenly world. Whoever knows this, knows rightly....

“Then there is the case, Ānanda, where a certain contemplative or brahman... sees with the divine eye, pure and surpassing the human, that person—the case where one who abstains from taking life... & holds right view, with the breakup of the body, after death, reappears in a plane of deprivation, a bad destination, a lower realm, hell.

“He says, ‘So there really are no fine actions, there really is no result of good conduct. For I saw the case where a person who abstained from taking life... & held right view, with the breakup of the body, after death, has reappeared in a plane of deprivation, a bad destination, a lower realm, hell.’ He says, ‘Anyone who abstains from taking life... & holds right view: They all, on the breakup of the body, after death, reappear in a plane of deprivation, a bad destination, a lower realm, hell. Whoever knows this, knows rightly....

“Now, Ānanda, in the case where the contemplative or brahman says, ‘So there really are evil actions, there really is the result of misconduct,’ I allow him that. When he says, ‘For I saw the case where a person who took life... & held wrong view, with the breakup of the body, after death, has reappeared in a plane of deprivation, a bad destination, a lower realm, hell,’ I allow him that, too. But when he says, ‘Anyone who takes life... & holds wrong view: They all, on the breakup of the body, after death, reappear in a plane of deprivation, a bad destination, a lower realm, hell,’ I don’t allow him that. And when he says,

‘Whoever knows this, knows rightly; whoever knows otherwise, their knowledge is wrong,’ I don’t allow him that. When, insisting through obstinacy & grasping right there on what was seen by himself, known by himself, understood by himself, he states: ‘Only this is true. Everything otherwise is worthless,’ I don’t allow him that, either. Why is that? Because the Tathāgata’s knowledge with regard to the greater analysis of action is otherwise.

“Now, Ānanda, in the case where the contemplative or brahman says, ‘So there really are no evil actions, there really is no result of misconduct,’ I don’t allow him that. But when he says, ‘For I saw the case where a person who took life... & held wrong view, with the breakup of the body, after death, has reappeared in a good destination, a heavenly world,’ I do allow him that. But when he says, ‘Anyone who takes life... & holds wrong view: They all, on the breakup of the body, after death, reappear in a good destination, a heavenly world,’ I don’t allow him that. And when he says, ‘Whoever knows this, knows rightly. Whoever knows otherwise, their knowledge is wrong,’ I don’t allow him that....

“Now, Ānanda, in the case where the contemplative or brahman says, ‘So there really are fine actions, there really is the result of good conduct,’ I allow him that. And when he says, ‘For I saw the case where a person who abstained from taking life... & held right view, with the breakup of the body, after death, has reappeared in a good destination, a heavenly world,’ I allow him that, too. But when he says, ‘Anyone who abstains from taking life... & holds right view: They all, on the breakup of the body, after death, reappear in a good destination, a heavenly world,’ I don’t allow him that. And when he says, ‘Whoever knows this, knows rightly. Whoever knows otherwise, their knowledge is wrong,’ I don’t allow him that....

“Now, Ānanda, in the case where the contemplative or brahman says, ‘So there really are no fine actions, there really is no result of good conduct,’ I don’t allow him that. But when he says, ‘For I saw the case where a person who abstained from taking life... & held right view, with the breakup of the body, after death, has reappeared in a plane of deprivation, a bad destination, a lower realm, hell,’ I do allow him that. But when he says, ‘Anyone who abstains from taking life... & holds right view: They all, on the breakup of the body, after death, reappear in a plane of deprivation, a bad destination, a lower realm, hell,’ I don’t allow him that. And when he says, ‘Whoever knows this, knows rightly. Whoever knows otherwise, their knowledge is wrong,’ I don’t allow him that....

“Now, Ānanda, in the case of the person who takes life... & holds wrong view and, with the breakup of the body, after death, reappears in a plane of deprivation, a bad destination, a lower realm, hell: Either earlier he performed evil action that is to be felt as painful, or later he performed evil action that is to be felt as painful, or at the time of death he adopted and carried out wrong view. Because of that, with the breakup of the body, after death, he reappears in a plane of deprivation, a bad destination, a lower realm, hell. And as for the results of taking life... holding wrong view, he will feel them either right here & now, or in the next (lifetime), or following that.

“In the case of the person who takes life... & holds wrong view (yet), with the breakup of the body, after death, reappears in a good destination, a heavenly world: Either earlier he performed fine action that is to be felt as pleasant, or later he performed fine action that is to be felt as pleasant, or at the time of death he adopted and carried out right view. Because of that, with the breakup of the body, after death, he reappears in a good destination, a heavenly world. But as for the results of taking life... holding wrong view, he will feel them either right here & now, or in the next (lifetime), or following that.

“In the case of the person who abstains from taking life... & holds right view and, with the breakup of the body, after death, reappears in a good destination, a heavenly world: either earlier he performed fine action that is to be felt as pleasant, or later he performed fine action that is to be felt as pleasant, or at the time of death he adopted and carried out right view. Because of that, with the breakup of the body, after death, he reappears in a good destination, a heavenly world. And as for the results of abstaining from taking life... holding right view, he will feel them either right here & now, or in the next (lifetime), or following that.”

“In the case of the person who abstains from taking life... & holds right view (yet) with the breakup of the body, after death, reappears in a plane of deprivation, a bad destination, a lower realm, hell: Either earlier he performed evil action that is to be felt as painful, or later he performed evil action that is to be felt as painful, or at the time of death he adopted and carried out wrong view. Because of that, with the breakup of the body, after death, he reappears in a plane of deprivation, a bad destination, a lower realm, hell. But as for the results of abstaining from taking life... holding right view, he will feel them either right here & now, or in the next (lifetime), or following that.

“Thus, Ānanda, there is action that is ineffectual and apparently ineffectual. There is action that is ineffectual but apparently effectual. There is action that is both effectual and apparently effectual. There is action that is effectual but apparently ineffectual.”²⁴ — [MN 136](#)

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

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

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

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

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

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

“Now, a trifling evil deed done by what sort of individual takes him to hell? There is the case where a certain individual is undeveloped in body [see [MN 36](#), above], undeveloped in virtue, undeveloped in mind, undeveloped in discernment: restricted, small-hearted, dwelling with suffering. A trifling evil deed done by this sort of individual takes him to hell.

“Now, a trifling evil deed done by what sort of individual is experienced in the here-&-now and for the most part barely appears for a moment? There is the case where a certain individual is developed in body, developed in virtue, developed in mind, developed in discernment: unrestricted, large-hearted, dwelling with the immeasurable.”²⁵ A trifling evil deed done by this sort of

individual is experienced in the here-&-now, and for the most part barely appears for a moment.” — [*AN 3:101*](#)

The Buddha never provided a complete map to the many levels of the cosmos in which he saw beings dying and being reborn under the influence of their kamma. Although a sketchy map can be compiled from scattered references in the Canon, it's important to remember that it's only a sketch. And it's also important to note that, although it does contain some elements of the cosmos as taught by previous Indian teachers, the overall shape and ordering of the cosmos as he taught it was original with him. Beginning with the lowest level, there are the planes of deprivation: hells, the realm of common animals, and the realm of hungry ghosts. The good destinations begin with the human realm and go up through the realms of the devas: terrestrial and celestial devas on the level of sensuality, and the heavens of the *brahmā-devas* on the levels of form and formlessness, corresponding to the levels of jhāna and formless concentration. In addition, there are beings without perception, which do not quite fit into the neat ascending pattern, and also five Pure Abodes: the heavens from which non-returners attain total unbinding.

In only a few cases did the Buddha describe life in these various realms. His descriptions of the heavens tended to be short, as in the following example:

“There ultimately comes a time when, with the passing of a long stretch of time, this world devolves. When the world is devolving, beings for the most part head toward the Radiant (*brahmās*). There they stay: mind-made, feeding on rapture, self-luminous, coursing through the air, established in beauty for a long stretch of time.” — [*DN 1*](#)

However, the Buddha's descriptions of the hells that await a person who has done evil in this lifetime could be quite detailed. Here's just one of the hells:

“Then the hell-wardens throw him into the Great Hell. And as to the Great Hell, monks:

It's four-cornered & has four gates
set in the middle of each side.

It's surrounded by an iron fortress wall
and roofed with iron.
Its floor is made of red-hot iron,
heated, fully blazing.
It stands always, spreading one hundred leagues all around.

“The flame that leaps from the eastern wall of the Great Hell strikes the western wall. The flame that leaps from the western wall strikes the eastern wall. The flame that leaps from the northern wall strikes the southern wall. The flame that leaps from the southern wall strikes the northern wall. The flame that leaps from the bottom strikes the top. The flame that leaps from the top strikes the bottom. There he feels painful, racking, piercing feelings, yet he does not die as long as his evil kamma is not exhausted.

“There comes a time when, ultimately, with the passing of a long stretch of time, the eastern gate of the Great Hell opens. He runs there, rushing quickly. As he runs there, rushing quickly, his outer skin burns, his inner skin burns, his flesh burns, his tendons burn, even his bones turn to smoke. When (his foot) is lifted, he is just the same.²⁶ But when he finally arrives, the door slams shut. There he feels painful, racking, piercing feelings, yet he does not die as long as his evil kamma is not exhausted.

“There comes a time when, ultimately, with the passing of a long stretch of time, the western gate of the Great Hell opens... the northern gate... the southern gate of the Great Hell opens. He runs there, rushing quickly. As he runs there, rushing quickly, his outer skin burns, his inner skin burns, his flesh burns, his tendons burn, even his bones turn to smoke. When (his foot) is lifted, he is just the same. But when he finally arrives, the door slams shut. There he feels painful, racking, piercing feelings, yet he does not die as long as his evil kamma is not exhausted.

“There comes a time when, ultimately, with the passing of a long stretch of time, the eastern gate of the Great Hell opens. He runs there, rushing quickly. As he runs there, rushing quickly, his outer skin burns, his inner skin burns, his flesh burns, his tendons burn, even his bones turn to smoke. When (his foot) is lifted, he is just the same. He gets out through the gate. But right next to the Great Hell is a vast Excrement Hell. He falls into that.” — [*MN 130*](#)

Another way in which the Buddha's description of rebirth differed from that of his contemporaries was that he never answered the question of

what it was that took rebirth. He talked only about how the process happens, because the process is something that can be mastered so as to bring it to an end.

The Buddha called this process “further-becoming,” the act of taking on an identity in a particular world of experience. As he saw in his second knowledge, this external process could be traced to internal processes: acts of intention (action) and attention (the choice of what questions to ask and which views to adopt). These acts, in turn, could be traced back to craving and desire, whether skillful or unskillful.

“Vaccha, just as a fire burns with clinging/sustenance and not without clinging/sustenance, even so I designate the rebirth of one who has clinging/sustenance and not of one without clinging/sustenance.”

“But, Master Gotama, at the moment a flame is being swept on by the wind and goes a far distance, what do you designate as its clinging/sustenance then?”

“Vaccha, when a flame is being swept on by the wind and goes a far distance, I designate it as wind-sustained, for the wind is its clinging/sustenance at that time.”

“And at the moment when a being sets this body aside and is not yet reborn in another body, what do you designate as its clinging/sustenance then?”

“Vaccha, when a being sets this body aside and is not yet reborn in another body, I designate it as craving-sustained, for craving is its clinging/sustenance at that time.” — [*SN 44:9*](#)

Ven. Ānanda said to the Blessed One, “Lord, this word, ‘becoming, becoming’—to what extent is there becoming?”

“Ānanda, if there were no kamma ripening in the sensuality-property, would sensuality-becoming be discerned?”

“No, lord.”

“Thus kamma is the field, consciousness the seed, and craving the moisture. The intention & aspiration of living beings hindered by ignorance & fettered by craving is established in/tuned to a lower property. Thus there is the production of renewed becoming in the future.

“If there were no kamma ripening in the form-property, would form-becoming be discerned?”

“No, lord.”

“Thus kamma is the field, consciousness the seed, and craving the moisture. The intention & aspiration of living beings hindered by ignorance & fettered by craving is established in/tuned to a middling property. Thus there is the production of renewed becoming in the future.

“If there were no kamma ripening in the formless-property, would formless-becoming be discerned?”

“No, lord.”

“Thus kamma is the field, consciousness the seed, and craving the moisture. The intention & aspiration of living beings hindered by ignorance & fettered by craving is established in/tuned to a refined property. Thus there is the production of renewed becoming in the future. This is how there is becoming.”

— [AN 3:78](#)

“All phenomena are rooted in desire.” — [AN 10:58](#)

Given the sense of terror accompanying the Buddha’s first two knowledges, it was only natural that, on seeing the centrality of desire and craving in fueling the process of further-becoming, he would ask himself: “How can desire be brought to an end? Can desire be skillfully used to bring that end about? And, if so, what kind of desire might that be?” These were the questions that led from the second knowledge to the third.

THE FOUR NOBLE TRUTHS

The four noble truths are the truths of *dukkha*—suffering and stress—its origination, its cessation, and the path to its cessation. The framework of these noble truths derives from the fact that there are two kinds of desires, unskillful—the forms of craving leading to suffering—and skillful, the forms of desire that give guidance to the path in the form of right resolve and right effort. Skillful desires find expression in terms of appropriate attention (right view) and intention (the practices of right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness, and right concentration). Of these factors, the Buddha gave prominence to right view. Unlike the first and second knowledges—which were expressed in terms of becoming, i.e., beings and worlds—right view on

the level of the third knowledge dropped those terms, regarding experience in terms of events immediately present to awareness.

“Now this, monks, is the noble truth of stress: Birth is stressful, aging is stressful, death is stressful; sorrow, lamentation, pain, distress, & despair are stressful; association with the unbeloved is stressful, separation from the loved is stressful, not getting what is wanted is stressful. In short, the five clinging-aggregates are stressful.

“And this, monks, is the noble truth of the origination of stress: the craving that makes for further-becoming—accompanied by passion & delight, relishing now here & now there—i.e., craving for sensuality, craving for becoming, craving for non-becoming.

“And this, monks, is the noble truth of the cessation of stress: the remainderless fading & cessation, renunciation, relinquishment, release, & letting go of that very craving.

“And this, monks, is the noble truth of the way of practice leading to the cessation of stress: precisely this noble eightfold path—right view, right resolve, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness, right concentration.” — [*SN 56:11*](#)

“And what are the five clinging-aggregates?

“Any form whatsoever—past, future, or present; internal or external; blatant or subtle; common or sublime; far or near—that is clingable, offers sustenance, and is accompanied with effluents: That is called the form clinging-aggregate.

“Any feeling whatsoever—past, future, or present; internal or external; blatant or subtle; common or sublime; far or near—that is clingable, offers sustenance, and is accompanied with effluents: That is called the feeling clinging-aggregate.

“Any perception whatsoever—past, future, or present; internal or external; blatant or subtle; common or sublime; far or near—that is clingable, offers sustenance, and is accompanied with effluents: That is called the perception clinging-aggregate.

“Any fabrications whatsoever—past, future, or present; internal or external; blatant or subtle; common or sublime; far or near—that are clingable, offer sustenance, and are accompanied with effluents: Those are called the fabrication clinging-aggregate.

“Any consciousness whatsoever—past, future, or present; internal or external; blatant or subtle; common or sublime; far or near—that is clingable, offers sustenance, and is accompanied with effluents: That is called the consciousness clinging-aggregate.” — [SN 22:48](#)

“And what is clinging? These four clingings: sensuality-clinging, view-clinging, habit-&-practice-clinging, and doctrine-of-self-clinging. This is called clinging.” — [SN 12:2](#)

The Blessed One said, “Now what, monks, is the noble eightfold path? Right view, right resolve, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness, right concentration.

“And what, monks, is right view? Knowledge with regard to [or: in terms of] stress, knowledge with regard to the origination of stress, knowledge with regard to the stopping of stress, knowledge with regard to the way of practice leading to the stopping of stress: This, monks, is called right view.”^{[27](#)}

“And what, monks, is right resolve? Resolve for renunciation, resolve for non-ill will, resolve for harmlessness: This, monks, is called right resolve.

“And what, monks, is right speech? Abstaining from lying, abstaining from divisive speech, abstaining from harsh speech, abstaining from idle chatter: This, monks, is called right speech.”^{[28](#)}

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

“And what, monks, is right livelihood? There is the case where a disciple of the noble ones, having abandoned dishonest livelihood, keeps his life going with right livelihood. This, monks, is called right livelihood.

“And what, monks, is right effort? (i) There is the case where a monk generates desire, endeavors, activates persistence, upholds & exerts his intent for the sake of the non-arising of evil, unskillful qualities that have not yet arisen. (ii) He generates desire, endeavors, activates persistence, upholds & exerts his intent for the sake of the abandoning of evil, unskillful qualities that have arisen. (iii) He generates desire, endeavors, activates persistence, upholds & exerts his intent for the sake of the arising of skillful qualities that have not yet arisen. (iv) He generates desire, endeavors, activates persistence, upholds & exerts his intent for the maintenance, non-confusion, increase, plenitude,

development, & culmination of skillful qualities that have arisen. This, monks, is called right effort.²⁹

“And what, monks, is right mindfulness? (i) There is the case where a monk remains focused on the body in & of itself—ardent, alert, & mindful—subduing greed & distress with reference to the world. (ii) He remains focused on feelings in & of themselves—ardent, alert, & mindful—subduing greed & distress with reference to the world. (iii) He remains focused on the mind in & of itself—ardent, alert, & mindful—subduing greed & distress with reference to the world. (iv) He remains focused on mental qualities in & of themselves—ardent, alert, & mindful—subduing greed & distress with reference to the world. This, monks, is called right mindfulness.³⁰

“And what, monks, is right concentration? (i) There is the case where a monk—quite secluded from sensuality,³¹ secluded from unskillful qualities³²—enters and remains in the first jhāna... the second jhāna... the third jhāna... the fourth jhāna: purity of equanimity & mindfulness, neither pleasure nor pain. This, monks, is called right concentration.”³³ — [SN 45:8](#)

Each of the four noble truths, the Buddha discerned, entailed a duty: stress was to be comprehended, its origination abandoned, its cessation realized, and the path to its cessation developed. The first three duties revolved around dispassion: Comprehending stress meant understanding it to the point of dispassion for it, abandoning the origination of stress required dispassion for the three types of craving leading to becoming, and the cessation of stress came with that act of dispassion. Developing the fourth noble truth, however, required passion of a relatively skillful type. However, when the path was fully developed, it, too, had to be abandoned with the attainment of release. This meant that the bodhisatta had to follow the path strategically, developing, in some cases, qualities of mind that eventually he left behind. This experience was what probably inspired his image comparing the path to a raft: To cross over the river he had to hold onto it, but once he had reached the far shore, he let it go.

“Vision arose, insight arose, discernment arose, knowledge arose, illumination arose within me with regard to things never heard before: ‘This is

the noble truth of stress’... ‘This noble truth of stress is to be comprehended’... ‘This noble truth of stress has been comprehended.’

‘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.’

“Vision arose, insight arose, discernment arose, knowledge arose, illumination arose within me with regard to things never heard before: ‘This is the noble truth of the way of practice leading to the cessation of stress’... ‘This noble truth of the way of practice leading to the cessation of stress is to be developed’... ‘This noble truth of the way of practice leading to the cessation of stress has been developed.’

“And, monks, as long as this—my three-round, twelve-permutation knowledge & vision concerning these four noble truths³⁴ as they have come to be—was not pure, I did not claim to have directly awakened to the right self-awakening unexcelled in the cosmos with its devas, Māras, & Brahmās, in this generation with its contemplatives & brahmins, its royalty & common people. But as soon as this—my three-round, twelve-permutation knowledge & vision concerning these four noble truths as they have come to be—was truly pure, then I did claim to have directly awakened to the right self-awakening unexcelled in the cosmos with its devas, Māras, & Brahmās, in this generation with its contemplatives & brahmins, its royalty & common people. Knowledge & vision arose in me: ‘Unprovoked is my release. This is the last birth. There is now no further-becoming.’” — [*SN 56:11*](#)

The Buddha’s later accounts of right view show that, in developing this twelve-permutation knowledge and vision, he reached a state in which the concepts even of existence and non-existence didn’t occur. In this state, the duties of the four noble truths collapsed into one—total dispassion for all phenomena, leading to their total end. This was the point at which the raft of the path could be abandoned.

Then Ven. Kaccāna Gotta approached the Blessed One and, on arrival, having bowed down to him, sat to one side. As he was sitting there he said to

the Blessed One: “Lord, ‘Right view, right view,’ it is said. To what extent is there right view?”

“By & large, Kaccāna, this cosmos is supported by [takes as its object] a polarity, that of existence & non-existence. But when one sees the origination of the cosmos³⁵ as it has come to be with right discernment, ‘non-existence’ with reference to the cosmos does not occur to one. When one sees the cessation of the cosmos as it has come to be with right discernment, ‘existence’ with reference to the cosmos does not occur to one.

“By & large, Kaccāna, this cosmos is in bondage to attachments, clingings/sustenances, & biases. But one such as this does not get involved with or cling to these attachments, clingings, fixations of awareness, biases, or obsessions; nor is he resolved on ‘my self.’ He has no uncertainty or doubt that mere stress, when arising, is arising; stress, when passing away, is passing away. In this, his knowledge is independent of others. It’s to this extent, Kaccāna, that there is right view.” — [SN 12:15](#)

“Suppose a man were traveling along a path. He would see a great expanse of water, with the near shore dubious & risky, the further shore secure & free from risk, but with neither a ferryboat nor a bridge going from this shore to the other. The thought would occur to him, ‘Here is this great expanse of water, with the near shore dubious & risky, the further shore secure & free from risk, but with neither a ferryboat nor a bridge going from this shore to the other. What if I were to gather grass, twigs, branches, & leaves and, having bound them together to make a raft, were to cross over to safety on the other shore in dependence on the raft, making an effort with my hands & feet?’ Then the man, having gathered grass, twigs, branches, & leaves, having bound them together to make a raft, would cross over to safety on the other shore in dependence on the raft, making an effort with his hands & feet. Having crossed over to the further shore, he might think, ‘How useful this raft has been to me! For it was in dependence on this raft that, making an effort with my hands & feet, I have crossed over to safety on the further shore. Why don’t I, having hoisted it on my head or carrying it on my back, go wherever I like?’ What do you think, monks? Would the man, in doing that, be doing what should be done with the raft?”

“No, lord.”

“And what should the man do in order to be doing what should be done with the raft? There is the case where the man, having crossed over, would think, ‘How useful this raft has been to me! For it was in dependence on this raft that, making an effort with my hands & feet, I have crossed over to safety on the further shore. Why don’t I, having dragged it on dry land or sinking it in the water, go wherever I like?’ In doing this, he would be doing what should be done with the raft.

“In the same way, monks, I have taught the Dhamma compared to a raft, for the purpose of crossing over, not for the purpose of holding onto. Understanding the Dhamma as taught compared to a raft, you should let go even of Dhammas, to say nothing of non-Dhammas.” — [*MN 22*](#)

UNBINDING

We have encountered the term unbinding (*nibbāna*) many times as the name for the goal the bodhisatta sought in the course of his quest for awakening. When a path of practice did not lead to unbinding, that was grounds for rejecting it. When it did, that was grounds for accepting it as right and true. The term itself seems to have been a common one for the spiritual goal sought by a wide variety of seekers in his time. Literally, it meant the extinguishing of a fire, but what did an extinguished fire represent to the Indians of the Buddha’s day? Anything but annihilation.

According to the ancient brahmans, when a fire was extinguished it went into a state of latency. Rather than ceasing to exist, it became dormant and in that state—unbound from any particular fuel—it became diffused throughout the cosmos. When the Buddha used the image to explain the goal of his practice to the brahmans of his day, he bypassed the question of whether an extinguished fire continues to exist or not, and focused instead on the impossibility of defining a fire that doesn’t burn: thus his statement that the person who has gone totally “out” can’t be described as existing, not existing, both, or neither.

When teaching his own disciples, however, the Buddha used unbinding more as an image of freedom. A common Indian belief at the time saw burning fire as agitated, dependent, and trapped, both clinging and being stuck to its fuel as it burned. To ignite a fire, one had to “seize” it. When fire went out, it let go of its fuel and so was “freed,” released from

its agitation, dependence, and entrapment—calm and unconfined. In this way, the Buddha used the term unbinding to indicate the freedom that comes when letting go of the clinging that constitutes suffering.

Knowledge of unbinding came to the Buddha as a result of developing right view, but is separate from right view because right view—like all the other factors of the path—is fabricated, whereas unbinding is not. Not only does unbinding lie beyond right view; it lies beyond space and time altogether. Although a person totally unbound cannot be described—given that people are defined by their clings and cravings, whereas a person unbound has gone beyond clinging and craving—the Buddha stated clearly that unbinding does exist, and that it is permanent and unchanging. In fact, he gave it many names and illustrated it with many similes to show that it was the highest, most desirable goal possible. These names and similes fall into five groups, conveying five important facets that anyone curious as to whether it's a worthwhile goal should know.

The first is that it's not a blank of nothingness. Instead, it's a type of consciousness. But unlike ordinary consciousness—as included in the aggregates or in dependent co-arising—it's not known through the six senses, and it doesn't engage in fabricating any experience at all, unlike, for example, the non-dual consciousness found in formless levels of concentration. The Buddha described this consciousness as “without surface” and “unestablished.” His image for it is a beam of light that lands nowhere. Although bright in and of itself, it doesn't engage in anything, and so can't be detected by anyone else. Because this consciousness is totally unrelated to the six senses ([MN 49](#)), it will not end when the arahant's six senses grow cold at death ([Iti 44](#)).

The second facet of this dimension is bliss: unadulterated, harmless, and safe. An important aspect of this bliss is that it is peaceful, entirely conflict-free.

The third facet is truth: Because it's outside of time, it doesn't change, doesn't deceive, doesn't turn into something different. And because the bliss of unbinding is permanent, unchanging, and true, it puts an end to all desires for further-becoming.

The fourth facet is freedom: from hunger, from suffering, from location, from restrictions of any kind.

The fifth facet is excellence, higher than anything known in even the highest heavens. In the Buddha's own words, it's amazing, astounding, ultimate, beyond.

“There is that dimension, monks, where there is neither earth, nor water, nor fire, nor wind; neither dimension of the infinitude of space, nor dimension of the infinitude of consciousness, nor dimension of nothingness, nor dimension of neither perception nor non-perception; neither this world, nor the next world, nor sun, nor moon. And there, I say, there is neither coming, nor going, nor staying; neither passing away nor arising: unestablished,³⁶ unevolving, without support [mental object]. This, just this, is the end of stress.” — [Ud 8:1](#)

“There is, monks, an unborn—unbecome—unmade—unfabricated. If there were not that unborn—unbecome—unmade—unfabricated, there would not be the case that escape from the born—become—made—fabricated would be discerned. But precisely because there is an unborn—unbecome—unmade—unfabricated, escape from the born—become—made—fabricated is discerned.” — [Ud 8:3](#)

“One who is dependent has wavering. One who is independent has no wavering. There being no wavering, there is calm. There being calm, there is no yearning. There being no yearning, there is no coming or going. There being no coming or going, there is no passing away or arising. There being no passing away or arising, there is neither a here nor a there nor a between-the-two. This, just this, is the end of stress.” — [Ud 8:4](#)

“Monks, there are these two unbinding properties. Which two? The unbinding property with fuel remaining & the unbinding property with no fuel remaining.³⁷

“And what is the unbinding property with fuel remaining? There is the case where a monk is an arahant whose effluents have ended, who has reached fulfillment, finished the task, laid down the burden, attained the true goal, destroyed the fetter of becoming, and is released through right gnosis. His five sense faculties still remain and, owing to their being intact, he experiences the pleasing & the displeasing, and is sensitive to pleasure & pain. His ending of

passion, aversion, & delusion is termed the unbinding property with fuel remaining.

“And what is the unbinding property with no fuel remaining? There is the case where a monk is an arahant whose effluents have ended, who has reached fulfillment, finished the task, laid down the burden, attained the true goal, destroyed the fetter of becoming, and is released through right gnosis. For him, all that is sensed, being unrelished, will grow cold right here. This is termed the unbinding property with no fuel remaining.”

These two
 proclaimed
 by the one with vision,
Unbinding properties
 the one independent,
 the one who is Such:^{[38](#)}
one property, here in this life,
with fuel remaining
 from the destruction of [craving],
 the guide to becoming,
and that with no fuel remaining,
 after this life,
in which all becoming
 totally ceases.

Those who know
this unfabricated state,
their minds released
through the destruction of [craving],
the guide to becoming,
they, attaining the Dhamma's heartwood,
delighting in ending,^{[39](#)}
have abandoned all becoming:
they, the Such. — *Iti 44*

“Therefore, monks, that dimension should be experienced where the eye [vision] ceases and the perception of form fades. That dimension should be experienced where the ear ceases and the perception of sound fades. That dimension should be experienced where the nose ceases and the perception of

aroma fades. That dimension should be experienced where the tongue ceases and the perception of flavor fades. That dimension should be experienced where the body ceases and the perception of tactile sensation fades. That dimension should be experienced where the intellect ceases and the perception of idea fades. That dimension should be experienced.” — [SN 35:117](#)

Consciousness without surface,
without end,
luminous all around:
Here water, earth, fire, & wind
have no footing.
Here long & short,
coarse & fine,
fair & foul,
here name & form
are all brought to a stop without trace.
With the cessation of (the aggregate of) consciousness
each is here brought to a stop.— [DN 11](#)

“Consciousness without surface, without end, luminous all around, is not experienced through the solidity of earth, the liquidity of water, the radiance of fire, the windiness of wind, the divinity of devas [and so on through a list of the various levels of higher divinities and then to] the allness of the All.”⁴⁰ — [MN 49](#)

“Just as if there were a roofed house or a roofed hall having windows on the north, the south, or the east. When the sun rises, and a ray has entered by way of the window, where does it land?”

“On the western wall, lord.”

“And if there is no western wall, where does it land?”

“On the ground, lord.”

“And if there is no ground, where does it land?”

“On the water, lord.”

“And if there is no water, where does it land?”

“It does not land, lord.”

“In the same way, where there is no passion for the nutriment of physical food... contact... intellectual intention... consciousness, where there is no delight, no craving, then consciousness does not land there or increase. Where consciousness does not land or increase, there is no alighting of name-&-form. Where there is no alighting of name-&-form, there is no growth of fabrications. Where there is no growth of fabrications, there is no production of renewed becoming in the future. Where there is no production of renewed becoming in the future, there is no future birth, aging, & death. That, I tell you, has no sorrow, affliction, or despair.” — [SN 12:64](#)

“Unbinding is the foremost bliss.” — [Dhp 203](#)

“Now, it’s possible, Ānanda, that some wanderers of other persuasions might say, ‘Gotama the contemplative speaks of the cessation of perception & feeling and yet describes it as pleasure. What is this? How is this?’ When they say that, they are to be told, ‘It’s not the case, friends, that the Blessed One describes only pleasant *feeling* as included under pleasure. Wherever pleasure is found, in whatever terms, the Blessed One describes it as pleasure.’” — [SN 36:19](#)

“Any form... feeling... perception... fabrication... consciousness by which one describing the Tathāgata would describe him: That the Tathāgata has abandoned, its root destroyed, made like a palmyra stump, deprived of the conditions of development, not destined for future arising. Freed from the classification of form... feeling... perception... fabrications... consciousness, 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.” — [MN 72](#)

“His release, being founded on truth, does not fluctuate, for whatever is deceptive is false; unbinding—the undeceptive—is true. Thus a monk so endowed is endowed with the highest determination for truth, for this—unbinding, the undeceptive—is the highest noble truth.” — [MN 140](#)

“All phenomena come to a final end in unbinding.” — [AN 10:58](#)

“Whatever is the ending of passion, the ending of aversion, the ending of delusion: This is called:

the unfabricated... the unbent... the effluent-free...
the true... the beyond...
the subtle... the very-hard-to-see...
the ageless... permanence... the undecaying...
the surfaceless... non-objectification...
peace... the deathless... the exquisite... bliss... rest...
the ending of craving... the amazing... the astounding...
the secure... security... unbinding... the unafflicted...
dispassion... purity... release... the attachment-free...
the island... shelter... the harbor... refuge...
the ultimate.” — [*SN 43*](#)

After the Awakening

I have heard that on one occasion, the Blessed One was dwelling near Uruvelā on the bank of the Nerañjarā River at the root of the Bodhi tree—the tree of awakening—newly awakened. And on that occasion he sat at the root of the Bodhi tree for seven days in one session, sensitive to the bliss of release. Then, with the passing of seven days, after emerging from that concentration, in the first watch of the night, he gave close attention to dependent co-arising in forward order, thus:

When this is, that is.

From the arising of this comes the arising of that.

In other words:

From ignorance as a requisite condition come fabrications.

From fabrications as a requisite condition comes consciousness.

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

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

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

From contact as a requisite condition comes feeling.

From feeling as a requisite condition comes craving.

From craving as a requisite condition comes clinging/sustenance.

From clinging/sustenance as a requisite condition comes becoming.

From becoming as a requisite condition comes birth.

From birth as a requisite condition, then aging-&-death, sorrow, lamentation, pain, distress, & despair come into play. Such is the origination of this entire mass of suffering & stress.⁴¹

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

“As phenomena grow clear
to the brahman—ardent, in jhāna—
his doubts all vanish
when he discerns

a phenomenon with its cause.”

I have heard that on one occasion, the Blessed One was dwelling near Uruvelā on the bank of the Nerañjarā River at the root of the Bodhi tree—the tree of awakening—newly awakened. And on that occasion he sat at the root of the Bodhi tree for seven days in one session, sensitive to the bliss of release. Then, with the passing of seven days, after emerging from that concentration, in the second watch of the night, he gave close attention to dependent co-arising in reverse order, thus:

When this isn't, that isn't.

From the cessation of this comes the cessation of that.

In other words:

From the cessation of ignorance comes the cessation of fabrications.

From the cessation of fabrications comes the cessation of consciousness. ...

From the cessation of birth, then aging-&-death, sorrow, lamentation, pain, distress, & despair all cease. Such is the cessation of this entire mass of suffering & stress.

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

“As phenomena grow clear
to the brahman—ardent, in jhāna—
his doubts all vanish
when he penetrates the ending
of requisite conditions.”

I have heard that on one occasion, the Blessed One was dwelling near Uruvelā on the bank of the Nerañjarā River at the root of the Bodhi tree—the tree of awakening—newly awakened. And on that occasion he sat at the root of the Bodhi tree for seven days in one session, sensitive to the bliss of release. Then, with the passing of seven days, after emerging from that concentration, in the third watch of the night, he gave close attention to dependent co-arising in forward and reverse order, thus:

When this is, that is.

From the arising of this comes the arising of that.

When this isn't, that isn't.

From the cessation of this comes the cessation of that. ⁴²

In other words:

From ignorance as a requisite condition come fabrications.

From fabrications as a requisite condition comes consciousness. ...

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

Now from the remainderless fading and cessation of that very ignorance comes the cessation of fabrications.

From the cessation of fabrications comes the cessation of consciousness. ...

From the cessation of birth, then aging-&-death, sorrow, lamentation, pain, distress, & despair all cease. Such is the cessation of this entire mass of suffering & stress.

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

“As phenomena grow clear
to the brahman—ardent, in jhāna—
he stands,
 routing Māra’s army,
as the sun,
 illumining the sky.” — [*Ud 1:1-3*](#)

I have heard that on one occasion, the Blessed One was dwelling near Uruvelā on the bank of the Nerañjarā River at the root of the Bodhi tree—the tree of awakening—newly awakened. And on that occasion he sat at the root of the Bodhi tree for seven days in one session, sensitive to the bliss of release. Then, with the passing of seven days, after emerging from that concentration, he surveyed the cosmos with the eye of an Awakened One. As he did so, he saw living beings burning with the many fevers and aflame with the many fires born of passion, aversion, & delusion.

Then, on realizing the significance of that, he on that occasion exclaimed:

“This cosmos is burning.
Afflicted by contact,
it calls disease a ‘self.’

By whatever means it supposes [anything],
it becomes otherwise than that.⁴³
Becoming otherwise,
the cosmos is
 attached to becoming,
 afflicted by becoming,
and yet delights
 in that very becoming.
Where there's delight,
 there is fear.
What one fears
 is stressful.
This holy life is lived
for the abandoning of becoming.

Whatever contemplatives or brahmans say that liberation from becoming is
by means of becoming,⁴⁴ all of them are not liberated from becoming, I say.

And whatever contemplatives or brahmans say that escape from becoming
is by means of non-becoming, all of them have not escaped from becoming, I
say.

For this stress comes into play
in dependence on every acquisition⁴⁵
With the ending of every clinging/sustenance,
there's no stress coming into play.
 Look at this cosmos:
Beings, afflicted with thick ignorance,
are unreleased
from passion for what has come to be.
All levels of becoming,
 anywhere,
 in any way,
are inconstant, stressful, subject to change.
Seeing this—as it's come to be—
with right discernment,
one abandons craving for becoming

and doesn't delight in non-becoming.⁴⁶
From the total ending of craving
comes fading & cessation without remainder:
 unbinding.
For the monk unbound
through lack of clinging/sustenance,
there's no further-becoming.
He has conquered Māra,
 won the battle,
having gone beyond becomings
 : Such. — [Ud 3:10](#)

Then, with the passing of seven days, after emerging from that concentration, the Blessed One went from the root of the Bodhi tree—the tree of awakening—to the Goatherd's Banyan tree, and sat at the root of the Goatherd's Banyan Tree for seven days in one session, sensitive to the bliss of release. Then a certain overbearing brahman went to the Blessed One and, on arrival, exchanged courteous greetings with him. After an exchange of friendly greetings & courtesies, he stood to one side. As he was standing there, he said to the Blessed One, "To what extent, Master Gotama, is one a brahman? And which are the qualities that make one a brahman?"

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

Any brahman
who has banished evil qualities,
—not overbearing,
not stained,
his mind controlled—
gone to the end of wisdom,
the holy life completed:
Rightly would that brahman
speak the holy teaching.
He has no swelling of pride
anywhere in the cosmos. — [Mv 1:2](#) (cf [Ud 1:4](#))

Then, with the passing of seven days, after emerging from that concentration, the Blessed One went from the root of the Goatherd's Banyan

tree to the Mucalinda tree, and sat at the root of the Mucalinda tree for seven days in one session, sensitive to the bliss of release.

And on that occasion a great, out-of-season storm-cloud rose up, with seven days of rainy weather, cold winds, & intense darkness. Then Mucalinda the nāga king—leaving his dwelling place and encircling the Blessed One’s body seven times with his coils—stood with his great hood spread over the Blessed One, (thinking,) “Don’t let the Blessed One be disturbed by cold. Don’t let the Blessed One be disturbed by heat. Don’t let the Blessed One be disturbed by the touch of flies, mosquitoes, wind, sun, & creeping things.”

Then, Mucalinda the nāga king, realizing that the sky had cleared and was free of clouds, unraveled his coils from the body of the Blessed One, retracted his own appearance and, assuming the appearance of a young man, stood in front of the Blessed One with hands before his heart, paying homage.

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

“Blissful is solitude
for one who’s content,
 who has heard the Dhamma,
 who sees.
Blissful is non-affliction
with regard to the world,
 restraint for living beings.
Blissful is dispassion
with regard to the world,
 the overcoming of sensuality.
But the subduing of the conceit “I am”:
That is truly
 the ultimate bliss.” — [*Mv 1:3*](#) (*cf* [*Ud 2:1*](#))

Then, with the passing of seven days, after emerging from that concentration, the Blessed One went from the root of the Mucalinda tree to the Rājāyatana Tree, and sat at the root of the Rājāyatana Tree for seven days in one session, sensitive to the bliss of release. Now at that time, the merchants Tapussa & Bhallika were traveling on the road from Ukkala to the countryside. Then a devatā who had been a blood-relative of Tapussa & Bhallika said to them, “There is the Blessed One, my dears, dwelling at the root of the

Rājāyatana Tree, newly awakened. Go and serve the Blessed One with cooked grain-meal & honey balls. That will be for your long-term welfare & happiness.”

Then the merchants Tapussa & Bhallika, taking cooked grain-meal & honey balls, went to the Blessed One and, on arrival, having bowed down to him, stood to one side. As they were standing there, the merchants Tapussa & Bhallika said to the Blessed One, “Lord, may the Blessed One accept our cooked grain-meal & honey balls, for that will be for our long-term welfare & happiness.”

Then it occurred to the Blessed One, “Tathāgatas do not accept things with their hands. With what shall I accept the cooked grain-meal & honey balls?”

Then the Four Great Kings, having known with their awareness the train of thought in the Blessed One’s awareness, presented four stone bowls from the four directions to the Blessed One, (thinking,) “May the Blessed One accept the cooked grain-meal & honey balls here.”

The Blessed One, having accepted the exquisite stone bowls, then accepted and ate the cooked grain-meal & honey balls.

Then the merchants Tapussa & Bhallika, {knowing that the Blessed One had finished his meal and had rinsed his bowl & hands, they fell down with their heads at the Blessed One’s feet and} ⁴⁷ said to him, “We go to the Blessed One for refuge and to the Dhamma. May the Blessed One remember us as lay followers who have gone for refuge from this day forward, for life.”

And they were the first two-statement ⁴⁸ lay followers in the world. —
[Mv 1:4](#)

Then, with the passing of seven days, after emerging from that concentration, the Blessed One went from the Rājāyatana Tree to the Goatherd’s Banyan Tree and stayed there at the root of the tree....

On one occasion, when the Blessed One was newly self-awakened, he was dwelling near Uruvelā on the bank of the Nerañjarā River, at the foot of the Goatherd’s Banyan Tree.

Then, when the Blessed One was alone in seclusion, this train of thought arose in his awareness, “Five faculties, when developed & pursued, gain a footing in the deathless, have the deathless as their goal & consummation. Which five?

“The faculty of conviction, when developed & pursued, gains a footing in the deathless, has the deathless as its goal & consummation. The faculty of persistence... mindfulness... concentration... discernment, when developed & pursued, gains a footing in the deathless, has the deathless as its goal & consummation.

“These five faculties, when developed & pursued, gain a footing in the deathless, have the deathless as their goal & consummation.”

Then Brahmā Sahampati—having known with his own awareness the line of thinking in the Blessed One's awareness—just as a strong man might extend his flexed arm or flex his extended arm, disappeared from the Brahmā world and appeared in front of the Blessed One.

Arranging his upper robe over one shoulder, he saluted the Blessed One with his hands palm-to-palm before his heart and said to him: “So it is, O Blessed One! So it is, O One Well-Gone! Five faculties, when developed and pursued, gain a footing in the deathless, have the deathless as their goal & consummation. Which five?

“The faculty of conviction... persistence... mindfulness... concentration... discernment, when developed & pursued, gains a footing in the deathless, has the deathless as its goal & consummation.

“These five faculties, when developed & pursued, gain a footing in the deathless, have the deathless as their goal & consummation.

“Lord, in the past I lived the holy life under the Blessed Kassapa. There they knew me as Sahako Bhikkhu. From the development and pursuit of these same five faculties, having become dispassionate toward sensual desire with regard to sensual pleasures, on the breakup of the body, after death, I arose in a good destination: the Brahmā world. There they know me as Brahmā Sahampati.

“So it is, O Blessed One! So it is, O One Well-Gone! I know, I see, how the five faculties, when developed & pursued, gain a footing in the deathless, have the deathless as their goal & consummation.” — *SN 48:57*

On one occasion, when the Blessed One was newly self-awakened, he was dwelling near Uruvelā on the bank of the Nerañjarā River, at the foot of the Goatherd's Banyan Tree.

Then, when the Blessed One was alone in seclusion, this train of thought arose in his awareness, “This is the direct path⁴⁹ for the purification of beings,

for the overcoming of sorrow & lamentation, for the disappearance of pain & distress, for the attainment of the right method, & for the realization of unbinding—in other words, the four establishings of mindfulness.

“Which four? There is the case where a monk remains focused on the body in & of itself—ardent, alert, & mindful—subduing greed & distress with reference to the world. Or he remains focused on feelings... mind... mental qualities in & of themselves—ardent, alert, & mindful—subduing greed & distress with reference to the world.

“This is the direct path for the purification of beings, for the overcoming of sorrow & lamentation, for the disappearance of pain & distress, for the attainment of the right method, & for the realization of unbinding—in other words, the four establishings of mindfulness.”

Then Brahmā Sahampati—having known with his own awareness the line of thinking in the Blessed One's awareness, just as a strong man might extend his flexed arm or flex his extended arm—disappeared from the Brahmā world and appeared in front of the Blessed One. Arranging his upper robe over one shoulder, he saluted the Blessed One with his hands palm-to-palm before his heart and said to him: “So it is, O Blessed One! So it is, O One Well-Gone! Lord, this is the direct path for the purification of beings, for the overcoming of sorrow & lamentation, for the disappearance of pain & distress, for the attainment of the right method, & for the realization of unbinding—in other words, the four establishings of mindfulness.

“Which four? A monk remains focused on the body in & of itself—ardent, alert, & mindful—subduing greed & distress with reference to the world. Or he remains focused on feelings... mind... mental qualities in & of themselves—ardent, alert, & mindful—subduing greed & distress with reference to the world.

“Lord, this is the direct path for the purification of beings, for the overcoming of sorrow & lamentation, for the disappearance of pain & distress, for the attainment of the right method, & for the realization of unbinding—in other words, the four establishings of mindfulness.”

That is what Brahma Sahampati said. He then said further:

“One sympathetic for welfare,
who sees the destruction & ending of birth,
discerns the direct path.

By this path,
they have crossed over in the past,
will cross over,
are crossing over
: the flood.” — *SN 47:18*

I have heard that on one occasion, when the Blessed One was newly self-awakened, he was dwelling near Uruvelā on the bank of the Nerañjarā River, at the root of the Goatherd's Banyan Tree.

Then, when the Blessed One was alone in seclusion, this train of thought arose in his awareness, “How released I am from that practice of extreme austerities! How good it is that I’m released from that useless practice of extreme austerities! How good it is that I’m released, that I have attained awakening!”

Then Māra the Evil One, having known with his awareness the train of thought in the Blessed One's awareness, went to the Blessed One and addressed him in verse:

“Shrinking from the ascetic acts
by which young brahmans are purified,
impure, you think you’re pure.
You’ve missed the path to purity.”
Then, having understood that “This is Mara the Evil One,” the
Blessed One replied to him in verses:

“Having known it to be useless,
any further austerity,
each bringing nothing,
like oars & a rudder on dry land:
Developing virtue, concentration, & discernment,
the path to awakening,
I’ve attained the highest purity.
But you, End-maker, are struck down.”

Then Mara the Evil One—sad & dejected at realizing, “The Blessed One knows me, the One Well-Gone knows me”—vanished right there. — [*SN 4:1*](#)

I have heard that on one occasion, when the Blessed One was newly self-awakened, he was dwelling near Uruvelā on the bank of the Nerañjarā River, at

the root of the Goatherd's Banyan Tree.

And at that time, Māra the Evil One had been following the Blessed One for seven years, looking for an opening, but unable to find one.

Then Māra the Evil One went to the Blessed One and addressed him in verse:

“Practicing jhāna in the forest—
are you overcome with grief?
Have you lost,
or do you desire, wealth?
Have you done something
blameworthy in the village?
Is it because
you become intimate with people,
but intimacy doesn't prosper for you
with anyone at all?”

The Buddha:

“Having dug up all the root of grief,
blameless, not grieving, I practice jhāna.
Defeating all greed,
all yearning for becoming,
I, without effluent, practice jhāna—
you, Kinsman of the Heedless.”

Māra:

“Of whatever they say,
'This is mine,'
and whoever says, 'mine,'
if your heart is here,
contemplative, you're not free from me.”

The Buddha:

“Of whatever they speak,
it's not mine.
And whoever speaks

they are not me.
Know that, Evil One.
You can't even see my tracks."

Māra:

"If the path has been awakened to—
secure, leading to the deathless—
then go away! Go alone!
What's the use of instructing others?"

The Buddha:

"People seeking the far side
ask about the deathless realm.
Asked by them, I explain
the truth that's acquisition-free."

Māra:

"Suppose, lord, that not far from a village or town was a pond. There in it was a crab. Then a number of boys & girls, leaving the village or town, would go to the pond and, on arrival, would take the crab out of the water and place it on the ground. And whenever the crab extended a leg, the boys or girls would cut it off, break it, and smash it with sticks or stones right there, so that the crab—with all its legs cut off, broken, & smashed—would be unable to get back in the pond as before.

"In the same way, whatever writhings, capers, & contortions [there are], the Blessed One has cut them off, broken them, and smashed them all. Now I'm unable to approach the Blessed One, looking for an opening."

Then Māra the Evil One recited these verses of dejection in the Blessed One's presence:

"A crow circled a stone
the color of fat—
'Perhaps I'll find something tender here,
Maybe there's something delicious'
—but not getting anything delicious there,
the crow went away.

Like a crow attacking the rock,
I weary myself with Gotama.”

Then Māra the Evil One, having recited these verses of dejection in the Blessed One’s presence, left that place and sat on the ground not far from the Blessed One, silent, abashed, with his shoulders drooping, his head down, brooding, at a loss for words, drawing in the dirt with a stick. — [SN 4:24](#)

Then Māra’s daughters—Craving, Discontent, & Passion—went to Māra the Evil One and, on arrival, addressed him in verse:

“What are you depressed about, Daddy?
For which man do you grieve?
We—having bound him
like a wilderness elephant
with a snare of passion—
will bring him to you.
Under your power he’ll be.”

Māra:

“An arahant, well-gone in the world,
isn’t easily brought in by passion.
He’s gone beyond Māra’s sway:
That’s why I’m so exceedingly sad.”

Then Māra’s daughters—Craving, Discontent, & Passion—went to the Blessed One and, on arrival, said to him, “We will serve you at your feet, contemplative.”

But the Blessed One paid them no attention, as he was released in the unexcelled ending of acquisitions.

Then Māra’s daughters—Craving, Discontent, & Passion—went off to one side and considered, “Various are the appetites of men. Why don’t we each assume the form of a hundred girls?”

So Māra’s daughters—Craving, Discontent, & Passion—having each assumed the form of a hundred girls, went to the Blessed One and, on arrival, said to him, “We will serve you at your feet, contemplative.”

Again, the Blessed One paid them no attention, as he was released in the unexcelled ending of acquisitions.

So Māra's daughters—Craving, Discontent, & Passion—went off to one side and considered, “Various are the appetites of men. Why don't we each assume the form of a hundred women who have never given birth... a hundred women who have borne one child... a hundred women who have borne two children... a hundred middle-aged women... a hundred older women?” So Māra's daughters—Craving, Discontent, & Passion—having each assumed the form of a hundred older women, went to the Blessed One and, on arrival, said to him, “We will serve you at your feet, contemplative.” Again, the Blessed One paid them no attention, as he was released in the unexcelled ending of acquisitions.

Then Māra's daughters—Craving, Discontent, & Passion—went off to one side and said, “I say: It's true what our father said:

‘An arahant, well-gone in the world,
isn't easily brought in by passion.
He's gone beyond Māra's sway:
That's why I'm so exceedingly sad.’

“Any contemplative or brahman who hadn't gone beyond passion, if we were to approach him with this approach: His heart would split or he would cough up hot blood or he would go mad, out of his mind. Just as a green reed cut down would dry out, wither, & fade, in the same way, he would dry out, wither, & fade.”

Then Māra's daughters—Craving, Discontent, & Passion—went to the Blessed One and, on arrival, stood to one side. As she was standing there, Māra's daughter Craving addressed the Blessed One with verses:

“Practicing jhāna in the forest—
are you overcome with grief?
Have you lost,
or do you desire, wealth?
Have you done something
blameworthy in the village?
Is it because
you become intimate people,
but intimacy doesn't prosper for you

with anyone at all?”

The Buddha:

“Having attained the goal—
peace of the heart—
having defeated the army
of dear & beloved forms,
practicing jhāna alone,
I awakened to bliss.
That’s why I don’t become intimate
with people,
why intimacy doesn’t prosper for me
with anyone at all.”

Then Māra’s daughter Discontent addressed the Blessed One in verse:

“How does a monk here often dwell,
who has crossed the five floods⁵⁰
and also the sixth?
How, while cultivating jhāna,
does he keep perceptions of sensuality far away?”

The Buddha:

“Calmed in body,
well released in mind,
without fabrications,
mindful, homeless,
having known the Dhamma,
practicing jhāna without directed thought,
he’s not provoked,
doesn’t flow, isn’t slothful:

Like this
a monk here often dwells,
who has crossed the five floods
and also the sixth.
Cultivating jhāna like this,
he keeps perceptions of sensuality

far away.”

Then Māra’s daughter Passion addressed the Blessed One in verse:

“Cutting off craving,
practicing with a group:
Yes, many & faithful
they’ll fare.
O, how this homeless one,
having snatched them
from the King of Death,
will lead a great crowd away.”

The Buddha:

“The Tathāgatas, great heroes,
do lead
 with the true Dhamma.
For those who know,
who lead by the Dhamma,
what’s the jealousy?”

Then Māra’s daughters—Craving, Discontent, & Passion—went to Māra the Evil One. He saw them coming from afar and, on seeing them, addressed them with verses:

“Fools!
Cleave a mountain
 with a lily-stalk.
Dig up a crag
 with your fingernails.
Chew on iron
 with your teeth.
Raising a rock
above your head,
 go over a cliff,
 into a pit.
Like striking your chest
on a stump—

you just weary yourselves with Gotama.” — [SN 4:25](#)

I have heard that on one occasion, when the Blessed One was newly self-awakened, he was dwelling near Uruvelā on the bank of the Nerañjarā River, at the foot of the Goatherd’s Banyan Tree. Then, while he was alone and in seclusion, this line of thinking arose in his awareness: “One suffers if dwelling without reverence or deference. Now, on what contemplative or brahman can I dwell in dependence, honoring and respecting him?”

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

“It would be for the sake of perfecting an unperfected aggregate of concentration... discernment... release... knowledge & vision of release that I would dwell in dependence on another contemplative or brahman, honoring and respecting him. However, in this cosmos with its devas, Māras, & Brahmās, in this generation with its contemplatives & brahmans, its royalty & common people, I don’t see another contemplative or brahman more consummate in knowledge & vision of release than I, on whom I could dwell in dependence, honoring and respecting him.

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

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

awakened one, dwell in dependence on the very Dhamma itself, honoring and respecting it.”

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

“Past Buddhas,
future Buddhas,
& he who is the Buddha now,
removing the sorrow of many—
all have dwelt,
will dwell, he dwells,
 revering the true Dhamma.
This, for Buddhas, is a natural law.
Therefore one who desires his own good,
aspiring for greatness,
should respect the true Dhamma,
 recollecting the Buddhas’ message.” — [*SN 6:2*](#)

As the following passage shows, the Buddha at this point became disinclined to teach the Dhamma he had discovered. The Commentary tries to explain his disinclination as feigned: that he fully intended to teach, in line with his aspiration of many lifetimes, but that he wanted to be invited by a Brahmā to teach, as such an invitation would impress the beings of the world. The passage, however, seems to indicate that the disinclination was genuine. Having finally penetrated the Dhamma, he realized how subtle it was, and how hard it would be to train others to attain it. Perhaps a better explanation for this incident is this: Having become totally released, the Buddha was under no compulsion to teach. This would mean that if he did decide to teach, the decision was not forced on him by an aspiration made while he was still unawakened. Instead, it was a choice freely made by a fully awakened and liberated mind.

I have heard that on one occasion, when the Blessed One was newly self-awakened, he was dwelling near Uruvelā on the bank of the Nerañjarā River, at the foot of the Goatherd’s Banyan Tree. Then, while he was alone and in seclusion, this line of thinking arose in his awareness: “This Dhamma that I have attained is deep, hard to see, hard to realize, peaceful, refined, beyond the scope of conjecture, subtle, to-be-experienced by the wise. But this generation

delights in attachment, is excited by attachment, enjoys attachment. For a generation delighting in attachment, excited by attachment, enjoying attachment, this/that conditionality and dependent co-arising are hard to see. This state, too, is hard to see: the pacification of all fabrications, the relinquishment of all acquisitions, the ending of craving; dispassion; cessation; unbinding. And if I were to teach the Dhamma and if others would not understand me, that would be tiresome for me, troublesome for me.”

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

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

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

Then Brahmā Sahampati, having known with his own awareness the line of thinking in the Blessed One's awareness, thought: “The world is lost! The world is destroyed! The mind of the Tathāgata, the Worthy One, the Rightly Self-awakened one inclines to dwelling at ease, not to teaching the Dhamma!” Then, just as a strong man might extend his flexed arm or flex his extended arm, Brahmā Sahampati disappeared from the Brahma-world and reappeared in front of the Blessed One. Arranging his upper robe over one shoulder, he knelt down with his right knee on the ground, saluted the Blessed One with his hands before his heart, and said to him: “Lord, let the Blessed One teach the Dhamma! Let the One Well-Gone teach the Dhamma! There are beings with

little dust in their eyes who are falling away because they do not hear the Dhamma. There will be those who will understand the Dhamma.”

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

“In the past
there appeared among the Magadhans
an impure Dhamma
devised by the stained.
Throw open the door to the deathless!
Let them hear the Dhamma
realized by the Stainless One!
Just as one standing on a rocky crag
might see people
all around below,
so, intelligent one, with all-around vision,
ascend the palace
fashioned of Dhamma.
Free from sorrow, behold the people
submerged in sorrow,
oppressed by birth & aging.
Rise up, hero, victor in battle!
O Teacher, wander without debt in the world.
Teach the Dhamma, O Blessed One:
There will be those who will understand.”

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

those with good attributes and those with bad, those easy to teach and those hard, some of them seeing disgrace & danger in the other world.

Having seen this, he answered Brahmā Sahampati in verse:

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

Then Brahmā Sahampati, thinking, “I’m the one who created the opportunity for the teaching of the Dhamma by the Blessed One!” bowed down to the Blessed One, circumambulated him, keeping him to his right, and disappeared right there. — [*SN 6:1*](#)

Contemporary Views

Now that the Buddha had completed his first major accomplishment—awakening to the end of suffering and stress—he was about to embark on the remaining two: teaching his contemporaries the path to awakening, and establishing the Dhamma and Vinaya so that the True Dhamma would last a long time. To understand the challenges he faced in accomplishing these tasks, it would be good to pause here for a brief sketch of what the Pāli Canon has to report about the philosophical and religious views current at his time.

A survey of these views is also useful in that it helps to clear up two common misunderstandings. The first relates to the fact that many of the wrong views taught by the Buddha's contemporaries are at present mistakenly attributed to the Buddha himself. These include the belief that past kamma can be burned away through non-reactivity; that past kamma fully determines one's present experience; that there is a self; that there is no self; that, to avoid clinging, one should take no position on the question of what is skillful or not. To realize that these views are not Dhamma helps to clarify what the Buddha's Dhamma actually is.

Second, this survey shows that, contrary to a belief widespread in the West, the Buddha's teachings on kamma and rebirth were a genuine novelty in his time. His contemporaries disagreed sharply as to whether kamma was predetermined, whether it played any role in shaping the course of life, or even if it existed at all. Similarly, they disagreed as to whether life was followed by rebirth or annihilation. Even among thinkers who accepted both kamma and rebirth, there was controversy over whether rebirth was influenced by kamma. So the idea that the Buddha adopted his teachings on kamma and rebirth uncritically from his culture is clearly wrong.

In some instances, the Canon reports the Buddha's grounds for criticizing his opponents' views. In others, it simply notes what those opposing views are, an example being the following four views, reported to the Buddha by King Ajātasattu. These were taught by a loose confederation of teachers collectively known as Ājīvakas. Although each

Ājīvaka teacher had his own separate sect, they all had in common the belief that human action was powerless, and that there were no genuine standards for labeling an action as right or wrong. Of the views taught by his various contemporaries, the Buddha would single these out as the most harmful of the doctrines taught at his time: the “impure Dhamma” cited by Brahmā Sahampati in the previous chapter.

King Ajātasattu: “Pūraṇa Kassapa said to me, ‘Great king, in acting or getting others to act, in mutilating or getting others to mutilate, in torturing or getting others to torture, in inflicting sorrow or in getting others to inflict sorrow, in tormenting or getting others to torment, in intimidating or getting others to intimidate, in taking life, taking what is not given, breaking into houses, plundering wealth, committing burglary, ambushing highways, committing adultery, speaking falsehood—one does no evil. If with a razor-edged disk one were to turn all the living beings on this earth to a single heap of flesh, a single pile of flesh, there would be no evil from that cause, no coming of evil. Even if one were to go along the right bank of the Ganges, killing and getting others to kill, mutilating and getting others to mutilate, torturing and getting others to torture, there would be no evil from that cause, no coming of evil. Even if one were to go along the left bank of the Ganges, giving and getting others to give, making sacrifices and getting others to make sacrifices, there would be no merit from that cause, no coming of merit. Through generosity, self-control, restraint, and truthful speech there is no merit from that cause, no coming of merit.’...

“Makkhali Gosāla said to me, ‘Great king, there is no cause, no requisite condition, for the defilement of beings. Beings are defiled without cause, without requisite condition. There is no cause, no requisite condition, for the purification of beings. Beings are purified without cause, without requisite condition. There is nothing self-caused, nothing other-caused, nothing human-caused. There is no strength, no effort, no human energy, no human endeavor. All living beings, all life, all beings, all souls are powerless, devoid of strength, devoid of effort. Subject to the changes of fate, serendipity, & nature, they are sensitive to pleasure & pain in the six great classes of birth.

“Though one might think, “Through this morality, this practice, this austerity, or this holy life I will ripen unripened kamma and eliminate ripened kamma whenever touched by it”—that is impossible. Pleasure & pain are measured out. The wandering-on is fixed in its limits. There is no shortening or

lengthening, no accelerating or decelerating. Just as a ball of string, when thrown, comes to its end simply by unwinding, in the same way, having transmigrated and wandered on, the wise & the foolish alike will put an end to pain.’...

“Ajita Kesakambalin said to me, ‘Great king, there is nothing given, nothing offered, nothing sacrificed. There is no fruit or result of good or bad actions. There is no this world, no next world, no mother, no father, no spontaneously reborn beings; no contemplatives or brahmans who, faring rightly and practicing rightly, proclaim this world and the next after having directly known and realized it for themselves. A person is a composite of four primary elements. At death, the earth (in the body) returns to and merges with the (external) earth-substance. The fire returns to and merges with the external fire-substance. The liquid returns to and merges with the external liquid-substance. The wind returns to and merges with the external wind-substance. The sense-faculties scatter into space. Four men, with the bier as the fifth, carry the corpse. Its eulogies are sounded only as far as the charnel ground. The bones turn pigeon-colored. The offerings end in ashes. Generosity is taught by idiots. The words of those who speak of existence after death are false, empty chatter. With the break-up of the body, the wise & the foolish alike are annihilated, destroyed. They do not exist after death.’...

“Pakudha Kaccāyana said to me, ‘Great king, there are these seven substances—unmade, irreducible, uncreated, without a creator, barren, stable as a mountain-peak, standing firm like a pillar—that do not alter, do not change, do not interfere with one another, are incapable of causing one another pleasure, pain, or both pleasure & pain. Which seven? The earth-substance, the liquid-substance, the fire-substance, the wind-substance, pleasure, pain, & the soul as the seventh....

“And among them there is no killer nor one who causes killing, no hearer nor one who causes hearing, no cognizer nor one who causes cognition. When one cuts off (another person’s) head, there is no one taking anyone’s life. It is simply between the seven substances that the sword passes.” — [DN 2](#)

Among the sectarian guilds of the time, the group that receives the most attention in the Pāli Canon is that of the Nigaṇṭhas, the precursors of the modern Jains. Unlike the above teachers, the Nigaṇṭhas taught kamma and its power to determine rebirth. However, their teachings deviated from the Buddha’s on two crucial points: 1) For them, kamma

was primarily physical, rather than mental; and 2) past kamma totally determined the present, leaving no room for present actions to shape the present at all. Both of these views, from the Buddha's point of view, stood in the way of awakening. This is why—to show that the similarity between his teachings and that of the Nigaṇṭhas was only superficial—he actually sought out Nigaṇṭhas to refute their views.

“Monks, there are some contemplatives & brahmans who teach in this way, who have this view: ‘Whatever a person experiences—pleasure, pain, or neither pleasure nor pain—all is caused by what was done in the past. Thus, with the destruction of old actions through asceticism and with the non-doing of new actions, there will be no flow into the future. With no flow into the future, there is the ending of action. With the ending of action, the ending of stress. With the ending of stress, the ending of feeling. With the ending of feeling, all suffering & stress will be exhausted.’ Such is the teaching of the Nigaṇṭhas.

“Going to Nigaṇṭhas who teach in this way, I have asked them, ‘Is it true, friend Nigaṇṭhas, that you teach in this way, that you have this view: “Whatever a person experiences—pleasure, pain, or neither pleasure nor pain—all is caused by what was done in the past. Thus, with the destruction of old actions through asceticism and with the non-doing of new actions, there will be no flow into the future. With no flow into the future, there is the ending of action. With the ending of action, the ending of stress. With the ending of stress, the ending of feeling. With the ending of feeling, all suffering & stress will be exhausted”?’

“Having been asked this by me, the Nigaṇṭhas admitted it: ‘Yes.’

“So I said to them, ‘But friends, do you know that you existed in the past, and that you did not not exist?’

“‘No, friend.’

“‘And do you know that you did evil actions in the past, and that you did not not do them?’

“‘No, friend.’

“‘And do you know that you did such-and-such evil actions in the past?’

“‘No, friend.’

“‘And do you know that so-and-so much stress has been exhausted, or that so-and-so much stress remains to be exhausted, or that with the exhaustion of so-and-so much stress all stress will be exhausted?’

“No, friend.’

“But do you know what is the abandoning of unskillful qualities and the attainment of skillful qualities in the here-&-now?’

“No, friend.’

“So, friends, it seems that you don’t know that you existed in the past, and that you did not not exist... you don’t know what is the abandoning of unskillful qualities and the attainment of skillful qualities in the here-&-now. That being the case, it’s not proper for you to assert that, “Whatever a person experiences—pleasure, pain, or neither pleasure nor pain—all is caused by what was done in the past. Thus, with the destruction of old actions through asceticism and with the non-doing of new actions, there will be no flow into the future. With no flow into the future, there is the ending of action. With the ending of action, the ending of stress. With the ending of stress, the ending of feeling. With the ending of feeling, all suffering & stress will be exhausted. ...

“When this was said, the Nigaṇṭhas said to me, ‘Friend, the Nigaṇṭha Nāṭaputta [the leader of the Nigaṇṭhas] is all-knowing, all-seeing, and claims total knowledge & vision thus: “Whether I am walking or standing, sleeping or awake, knowledge & vision are continuously & continually established in me.” He has told us, “Nigaṇṭhas, there are evil actions that you have done in the past. Exhaust them with these painful austerities. When in the present you are restrained in body, restrained in speech, and restrained in mind, that is the non-doing of evil action for the future. Thus, with the destruction of old actions through asceticism and with the non-doing of new actions, there will be no flow into the future. With no flow into the future, there is the ending of action. With the ending of action, the ending of stress. With the ending of stress, the ending of feeling. With the ending of feeling, all suffering & stress will be exhausted.” We approve of that (teaching), prefer it, and are gratified by it.’

“When this was said, I said to the Nigaṇṭhas, ‘Friend Nigaṇṭhas, there are five things that can turn out in two ways in the here-&-now. Which five? Conviction, liking, unbroken tradition, reasoning by analogy, & an agreement through pondering views. These are the five things that can turn out in two ways in the here-&-now. That being the case, what kind of conviction do you have for your teacher with regard to the past? What kind of liking? What kind of unbroken tradition? What kind of reasoning by analogy? What kind of

agreement through pondering views?’ But when I said this, I did not see that the Nigaṇṭhas had any legitimate defense of their teaching.

“So I asked them further, ‘Friend Nigaṇṭhas, what do you think? When there is fierce striving, fierce exertion, do you feel fierce, sharp, racking pains from harsh treatment? And when there is no fierce striving, no fierce exertion, do you feel no fierce, sharp, racking pains from harsh treatment?’

“‘Yes, friend...’

“... Then it’s not proper for you to assert that, “Whatever a person experiences—pleasure, pain, or neither pleasure nor pain—all is caused by what was done in the past. Thus, with the destruction of old actions through asceticism and with the non-doing of new actions, there will be no flow into the future. With no flow into the future, there is the ending of action. With the ending of action, the ending of stress. With the ending of stress, the ending of feeling. With the ending of feeling, all suffering & stress will be exhausted.”

“If it were the case that when there was fierce striving, fierce exertion, you felt fierce, sharp, racking pains from harsh treatment; and when there was no fierce striving, no fierce exertion, you still felt fierce, sharp, racking pains from harsh treatment, then—that being the case—it would be proper for you to assert that, “Whatever a person experiences—pleasure, pain, or neither pleasure nor pain—all is caused by what was done in the past. Thus, with the destruction of old actions through asceticism and with the non-doing of new actions, there will be no flow into the future. With no flow into the future, there is the ending of action. With the ending of action, the ending of stress. With the ending of stress, the ending of feeling. With the ending of feeling, all suffering & stress will be exhausted.” But because when there is fierce striving, fierce exertion, you feel fierce, sharp, racking pains from harsh treatment; and when there was no fierce striving, no fierce exertion, you feel no fierce, sharp, racking pains from harsh treatment, then—that being the case—it is not proper for you to assert that, “Whatever a person experiences—pleasure, pain, or neither pleasure nor pain—all is caused by what was done in the past. Thus, with the destruction of old actions through asceticism and with the non-doing of new actions, there will be no flow into the future. With no flow into the future, there is the ending of action. With the ending of action, the ending of stress. With the ending of stress, the ending of feeling. With the ending of feeling, all suffering & stress will be exhausted.” But when I said this, I did not

see that the Nigaṇṭhas had any legitimate defense of their teaching.” —

[MN 101](#)

Upāli the householder [a follower of the Nigaṇṭhas]: “What does the trivial mental rod [mental action] count for in comparison with the gross bodily rod [bodily action]? On the contrary, the bodily rod is the most greatly blameworthy for the doing of evil kamma, for the production of evil kamma, not so much the verbal rod, not so much the mental rod.”

“If, householder, you will confer by taking a stand on the truth, we might have some discussion here.”

“Lord, I will confer by taking a stand on the truth. Let us have some discussion here.”

“What do you think, householder? There might be the case where a Nigaṇṭha is diseased, pained, severely ill, refusing cold water, and taking warm water. He, not getting cold water, would die. Where would the Nigaṇṭha Nāṭaputta describe his reappearance?”

“Lord, there are the devas called Attached-in-Mind. He reappears there. Why is that? He is bound in mind when he dies.”

“Householder, householder, pay attention, and answer (only) after having paid attention! What you said after isn’t consistent with what you said before, nor is what you said before consistent with what you said after. And yet you made this statement: ‘Lord, I will confer by taking a stand on the truth. Let us have some discussion here.’”

“Lord, even though the Blessed One says that, still the bodily rod is the most greatly blameworthy for the doing of evil kamma, for the production of evil kamma, not so much the verbal rod, not so much the mental rod.”

“What do you think, householder? There might be the case where a Nigaṇṭha is restrained with the fourfold restraint: constrained by all constraints, yoked to all constraints, cleansed by all constraints, attained to all constraints. As he walks back & forth, he brings many small beings to destruction. What (kammic) result would the Nigaṇṭha Nāṭaputta describe for him?”

“What is unintended, lord, the Nigaṇṭha Nāṭaputta does not describe as greatly blameworthy.”

“But if he intends it?”

“Greatly blameworthy, lord.”

“And under what does Nigaṇṭha Nāṭaputta classify intention?”

“Under the mental rod, lord.”

“Householder, householder, pay attention, and answer (only) after having paid attention! What you said after isn’t consistent with what you said before, nor is what you said before consistent with what you said after. And yet you made this statement: ‘Lord, I will confer by taking a stand on the truth. Let us have some discussion here.’”...

“Actually, lord, I was gratified and won over by the Blessed One’s very first simile. But wanting to hear these very artful ways of handling questions from the Blessed One, I thought I should treat him as an opponent. Magnificent, lord! Magnificent! Just as if he were to place upright what was overturned, to reveal what was hidden, to show the way to one who was lost, or to carry a lamp into the dark so that those with eyes could see forms, in the same way has the Blessed One—through many lines of reasoning—made the Dhamma clear. I go to the Blessed One for refuge, to the Dhamma, and to the Saṅgha of monks. May the Blessed One remember me as a lay follower who has gone to him for refuge from this day forward, for life.”

“Make a careful scrutiny, householder. It is good for well known people like you to be careful scrutinizers.”

“That, lord, has me to an ever greater extent gratified & pleased with the Blessed One, that he says to me, ‘Make a careful scrutiny, householder. It is good for well known people like you to be careful scrutinizers.’ For other sectarians, on gaining me as a disciple, would carry a banner all around Nālandā, (announcing,) ‘Upāli the householder has entered into discipleship under us.’ Yet on the contrary, the Blessed One says to me, ‘Make a careful scrutiny, householder. It is good for well known people like you to be careful scrutinizers.’ For a second time, lord, I go to the Blessed One for refuge, to the Dhamma, and to the Saṅgha of monks. May the Blessed One remember me as a lay follower who has gone to him for refuge from this day forward, for life.”

“Householder, your family compound has long been like a waterhole for the Nigaṇṭhas, and you should consider that almsfood should be given to them when they come to it.”

“That, lord, has me to an ever greater extent gratified & pleased with the Blessed One, that he says to me, ‘Householder, your family compound has long

been like a waterhole for the Nigaṇṭhas, and you should consider that almsfood should be given to them when they come to it.’ I have heard it said, lord, that ‘Gotama the contemplative says, “A gift should be given only to me and not to others. A gift should be given only to my disciples and not to the disciples of others. What is given only to me bears great fruit, not what is given to others. What is given only to my disciples bears great fruit, not what is given to the disciples of others.”’ Yet on the contrary, the Blessed One encourages me to give gifts to the Nigaṇṭhas. But at any rate, lord, I will know the time for that. For a third time, lord, I go to the Blessed One for refuge, to the Dhamma, and to the Saṅgha of monks. May the Blessed One remember me as a lay follower who has gone to him for refuge from this day forward, for life.”

Then the Blessed One gave a graduated talk to Upāli the householder, i.e., a talk on giving, a talk on virtue, a talk on heaven; he proclaimed the drawbacks of, degradation in, & defilement in sensuality, and the rewards of renunciation. Then—when he knew that Upāli the householder was of ready mind, malleable mind, unhindered mind, exultant mind, confident mind—he proclaimed to him the distinctive teaching of the Buddhas: stress, origination, cessation, path. Just as a white cloth with stains removed would rightly take dye, in the same way, there arose for Upāli the householder the dustless, stainless Dhamma eye as he was sitting right there: “*Whatever is subject to origination is all subject to cessation.*” Then—having seen the Dhamma, having reached the Dhamma, known the Dhamma, gained a footing in the Dhamma, having crossed over & beyond doubt, having had no more perplexity—Upāli the householder gained fearlessness and was independent of others with regard to the Teacher’s message. — [MN 56](#)

The following passage shows that even though the Nigaṇṭhas taught a doctrine of action, the fact that they viewed the present as totally predetermined by the past meant that even one’s actions in the present had to be predetermined. This meant further that, in the Buddha’s eyes, they, like the Ājīvakas, taught a doctrine that denies the power of action. This passage, where he makes this point, is also interesting as an introduction to his pedagogy, telling what he felt a responsible teacher owed to his students: the protection that comes from having a solid basis for deciding what should and shouldn’t be done. (For more on the Buddha’s pedagogy, see [Chapter 10](#) and [Chapter 13](#).)

“Monks, there are these three sectarian guilds that—when cross-examined, pressed for reasons, & rebuked by wise people—even though they may explain otherwise, remain stuck in (a doctrine of) inaction....

“Having approached the contemplatives & brahmans who hold that... ‘Whatever a person experiences... is all caused by what was done in the past,’ I said to them: ‘Is it true that you hold that... whatever a person experiences... is all caused by what was done in the past?’ Thus asked by me, they admitted, ‘Yes.’ Then I said to them, ‘Then in that case, a person is a killer of living beings because of what was done in the past. A person is a thief... uncelibate... a liar... a divisive speaker... a harsh speaker... an idle chatterer... greedy... malicious... a holder of wrong views because of what was done in the past.’ When one falls back on what was done in the past as being essential, monks, there is no desire, no effort (at the thought), ‘This should be done. This shouldn’t be done.’ When one can’t pin down as a truth or reality what should & shouldn’t be done, one dwells bewildered & unprotected. One cannot righteously refer to oneself as a contemplative. This was my first righteous refutation of those contemplatives & brahmans who hold to such teachings, such views.

“Having approached the contemplatives & brahmans who hold that... ‘Whatever a person experiences... is all caused by a supreme being’s act of creation,’ I said to them: ‘Is it true that you hold that... whatever a person experiences... is all caused by a supreme being’s act of creation?’ Thus asked by me, they admitted, ‘Yes.’ Then I said to them, ‘Then in that case, a person is a killer of living beings because of a supreme being’s act of creation. A person is a thief... uncelibate... a liar... a divisive speaker... a harsh speaker... an idle chatterer... greedy... malicious... a holder of wrong views because of a supreme being’s act of creation.’ When one falls back on a supreme being’s act of creation as being essential, monks, there is no desire, no effort (at the thought), ‘This should be done. This shouldn’t be done.’ When one can’t pin down as a truth or reality what should & shouldn’t be done, one dwells bewildered & unprotected. One cannot righteously refer to oneself as a contemplative. This was my second righteous refutation of those contemplatives & brahmans who hold to such teachings, such views.

“Having approached the contemplatives & brahmans who hold that... ‘Whatever a person experiences... is all without cause, without condition,’ I said to them: ‘Is it true that you hold that... whatever a person experiences... is

all without cause, without condition?’ Thus asked by me, they admitted, ‘Yes.’ Then I said to them, ‘Then in that case, a person is a killer of living beings without cause, without condition. A person is a thief... uncelibate... a liar... a divisive speaker... a harsh speaker... an idle chatterer... greedy... malicious... a holder of wrong views without cause, without condition.’ When one falls back on lack of cause and lack of condition as being essential, monks, there is no desire, no effort (at the thought), ‘This should be done. This shouldn’t be done.’ When one can’t pin down as a truth or reality what should & shouldn’t be done, one dwells bewildered & unprotected. One cannot righteously refer to oneself as a contemplative. This was my third righteous refutation of those contemplatives & brahmans who hold to such teachings, such views.

“These are the three sectarian guilds that—when cross-examined, pressed for reasons, & rebuked by wise people—even though they may explain otherwise, remain stuck in inaction.” — [AN 3:62](#)

The dominant religious group of the Buddha’s time was the brahmanical caste, a hereditary priesthood that vied with the noble warriors for the status as the highest caste in Indian society. The caste system in India had not yet hardened into the rigid divisions that it was to assume in later centuries, and the Canon portrays the brahmans as a very heterogeneous group. It mentions the highest brahmanical goal—union with Brahmā—only to dismiss it as inferior to unbinding ([MN 83](#); [MN 97](#); [AN 10:29](#)). But rather than reporting any of the Buddha’s discussions with the brahmans over the merits of union with Brahmā, the Canon—as we will see below, [MN 49](#)—devotes a sutta to depicting an encounter in which he shows his superiority to a great Brahmā. It also devotes one of its most humorous passages ([DN 11](#)) to portraying the Great Brahmā as a pompous and ignorant hypocrite. Most of the Buddha’s disagreements with brahmans focus instead on two of their claims that touch on the issue of kamma.

First is their claim that their rituals, chants, and prayers can override the results of everyday intentional actions—a claim that the Buddha rejects out of hand.

On one occasion the Blessed One was staying near Nālandā in the Pāvārika Mango Grove. Then Asibandhakaputta the headman went to the Blessed One and on arrival, having bowed down to him, sat to one side. As he was sitting

there he said to the Blessed One: “The brahmins of the Western lands, lord—those who carry water pots, wear garlands of water plants, purify with water, & worship fire—can take (the spirit of) a dead person, lift it out, instruct it, & send it to heaven. But the Blessed One, worthy & rightly self-awakened, can arrange it so that all the world, at the break-up of the body, after death, reappears in a good destination, a heavenly world.”

“Very well, then, headman, I will cross-question you on this matter. Answer as you see fit. What do you think?... Suppose a man were to throw a large boulder into a deep lake of water, and a great crowd of people, gathering & congregating, would pray, praise, & circumambulate with their hands palm-to-palm over the heart (saying,) ‘Rise up, O boulder! Come floating up, O boulder! Come float to the shore, O boulder!’ What do you think? Would that boulder—because of the prayers, praise, & circumambulation of that great crowd of people—rise up, come floating up, or come float to the shore?”

“No, lord.”

“So it is with any man who takes life, steals, indulges in illicit sex; is a liar, one who speaks divisive speech, harsh speech, & idle chatter; is greedy, bears thoughts of ill-will, & holds to wrong views. Even though a great crowd of people, gathering & congregating, would pray, praise, & circumambulate with their hands palm-to-palm over the heart—(saying,) ‘May this man, at the break-up of the body, after death, reappear in a good destination, a heavenly world!’—still, at the break-up of the body, after death, he would reappear in a plane of deprivation, a bad destination, a lower realm, hell.

“Now what do you think?... Suppose a man were to throw a jar of ghee or a jar of oil into a deep lake of water, where it would break. There the shards & jar-fragments would go down, whereas the ghee or oil would come up. Then a great crowd of people, gathering & congregating, would pray, praise, & circumambulate with their hands palm-to-palm over the heart (saying,) ‘Sink, O ghee/oil! Submerge, O ghee/oil! Go down, O ghee/oil!’ What do you think? Would that ghee/oil, because of the prayers, praise, & circumambulation of that great crowd of people sink, submerge, or go down?”

“No, lord.”

“So it is with any man who refrains from taking life, from stealing, & from indulging in illicit sex; refrains from lying, from speaking divisive speech, from harsh speech, & from idle chatter; is not greedy, bears no thoughts of ill-will, & holds to right view. Even though a great crowd of people, gathering &

congregating, would pray, praise, & circumambulate with their hands palm-to-palm over the heart—(saying,) ‘May this man, at the break-up of the body, after death, reappear in a plane of deprivation, a bad destination, a lower realm, hell!’—still, at the break-up of the body, after death, he would reappear in a good destination, a heavenly world.” — [*SN 42:6*](#)

The second brahmanical claim that the Buddha refuted was that simply by birth, rather than by their actions, brahmans were superior to all others, a status that would extend into future lifetimes as well. Because the inherent racism of their belief was a blanket denial of the power of action, the Buddha debated it in a thoroughgoing manner.

Then the brahman student Assalāyana went with a large group of brahmans to the Blessed One and, on arrival, exchanged courteous greetings with him. After an exchange of friendly greetings & courtesies, he sat to one side. As he was sitting there he said to the Blessed One: “Master Gotama, the brahmans say, ‘Brahmans are the superior caste; any other caste is inferior. Only brahmans are the fair caste; any other caste is dark. Only brahmans are pure, not non-brahmans. Only brahmans are the sons & offspring of Brahmā: born of his mouth, born of Brahmā, created by Brahmā, heirs of Brahmā.’ What does Master Gotama have to say with regard to that?”

“But, Assalāyana, the brahmans’ brahman-women are plainly seen having their periods, becoming pregnant, giving birth, and nursing (their children). And yet the brahmans, being born through the birth canal, say, ‘Brahmans are the superior caste; any other caste is inferior. Only brahmans are the fair caste; any other caste is dark. Only brahmans are pure, not non-brahmans. Only brahmans are the sons & offspring of Brahmā: born of his mouth, born of Brahmā, created by Brahmā, heirs of Brahmā.’”

“Even though Master Gotama says that, still the brahmans think, ‘Brahmans are the superior caste... the sons & offspring of Brahmā: born of his mouth, born of Brahmā, created by Brahmā, heirs of Brahmā.’”...

“What do you think, Assalāyana? Is it only a noble warrior who—taking life, stealing, engaging in sexual misconduct, telling lies, speaking divisively, speaking harshly, engaging in idle chatter, greedy, bearing thoughts of ill will, and holding wrong views—on the break-up of the body, after death, reappears in a plane of deprivation, a bad destination, a lower realm, hell, and not a brahman? Is it only a merchant...? Is it only a worker who—taking life,

stealing, engaging in sexual misconduct, telling lies, speaking divisively, speaking harshly, engaging in idle chatter, greedy, bearing thoughts of ill will, and holding wrong views—on the break-up of the body, after death, reappears in a plane of deprivation, a bad destination, a lower realm, hell, and not a brahman?”

“No, Master Gotama. Even a noble warrior... Even a brahman... Even a merchant... Even a worker... (Members of) all four castes—if they take life, steal, engage in sexual misconduct, tell lies, speak divisively, speak harshly, engage in idle chatter, are greedy, bear thoughts of ill will, & hold wrong views—on the break-up of the body, after death, reappear in a plane of deprivation, a bad destination, a lower realm, hell.”

“So what strength is there, Assalāyana, what assurance, when the brahmins say, ‘Brahmins are the superior caste... the sons & offspring of Brahmā: born of his mouth, born of Brahmā, created by Brahmā, heirs of Brahmā?’”

“Even though Master Gotama says that, still the brahmins think, ‘Brahmins are the superior caste... the sons & offspring of Brahmā: born of his mouth, born of Brahmā, created by Brahmā, heirs of Brahmā.’”

“What do you think, Assalāyana? Is it only a brahman who—refraining from taking life, from stealing, from sexual misconduct, from telling lies, from speaking divisive speech, from harsh speech, & from idle chatter, not greedy, bearing no thoughts of ill-will, & holding to right view—on the break-up of the body, after death, reappears in a good destination, a heavenly world, and not a noble warrior, not a merchant, not a worker?”

“No, Master Gotama. Even a noble warrior... Even a brahman... Even a merchant... Even a worker... (Members of) all four castes—if they refrain from taking life, from stealing, from sexual misconduct, from telling lies, from speaking divisive speech, from harsh speech, & from idle chatter, are not greedy, bear no thoughts of ill-will, & hold to right view—on the break-up of the body, after death, reappear in a good destination, a heavenly world.”

“So what strength is there, Assalāyana, what assurance, when the brahmins say, ‘Brahmins are the superior caste... the sons & offspring of Brahmā: born of his mouth, born of Brahmā, created by Brahmā, heirs of Brahmā?’”

“Even though Master Gotama says that, still the brahmins think, ‘Brahmins are the superior caste... the sons & offspring of Brahmā: born of his mouth, born of Brahmā, created by Brahmā, heirs of Brahmā.’”

“What do you think, Assalāyana? Is it only a brahman who is capable of developing in any direction a heart of goodwill—free from animosity, free from ill will—and not a noble warrior, not a merchant, not a worker?”

“No, Master Gotama. Even a noble warrior... Even a brahman... Even a merchant... Even a worker... (Members of) all four castes are capable of developing in any direction a heart of goodwill—free from animosity, free from ill will.”

“So what strength is there, Assalāyana, what assurance, when the brahmins say, ‘Brahmins are the superior caste... the sons & offspring of Brahmā: born of his mouth, born of Brahmā, created by Brahmā, heirs of Brahmā’?”

“Even though Master Gotama says that, still the brahmins think, ‘Brahmins are the superior caste... the sons & offspring of Brahmā: born of his mouth, born of Brahmā, created by Brahmā, heirs of Brahmā.’”

“What do you think, Assalāyana? Is it only a brahman who is capable of taking a loofah & bath powder, going to a river, and scrubbing off dust & dirt, and not a noble warrior, not a merchant, not a worker?”

“No, Master Gotama. Even a noble warrior... Even a brahman... Even a merchant... Even a worker... (Members of) all four castes are capable of taking a loofah & bath powder, going to a river, and scrubbing off dust & dirt.”

“So what strength is there, Assalāyana, what assurance, when the brahmins say, ‘Brahmins are the superior caste... Only brahmins are pure, not non-brahmins. Only brahmins are the sons & offspring of Brahmā: born of his mouth, born of Brahmā, created by Brahmā, heirs of Brahmā’?”

“Even though Master Gotama says that, still the brahmins think, ‘Brahmins are the superior caste... Only brahmins are pure, not non-brahmins. Only brahmins are the sons & offspring of Brahmā: born of his mouth, born of Brahmā, created by Brahmā, heirs of Brahmā.’”...

“What do you think, Assalāyana? There is the case where there might be two brahman-student brothers, born of the same mother: one learned & initiated [in the brahmanical mantras], the other not learned & uninitiated. Which of the two would the brahmins serve first at a funeral feast, a milk-rice offering, a sacrifice, or a feast for guests?”

“The brahman student who was learned & initiated, Master Gotama.... For what great fruit would there be for what is given to one who is not learned & uninitiated?”

“What do you think, Assalāyana? There is the case where there might be two brahman-student brothers, born of the same mother: one learned & initiated (but) unvirtuous & of evil character, the other not learned & uninitiated, (but) virtuous & of fine character. Which of the two would the brahmans serve first at a funeral feast, a milk-rice offering, a sacrifice, or a feast for guests?”

“The brahman student who was not learned & uninitiated, (but) virtuous & of fine character, Master Gotama.... For what great fruit would there be for what is given to one who is unvirtuous & of evil character?”

“First, Assalāyana, you went by birth. Then, having gone by birth, you went by mantras. Then, having gone by mantras, putting them both aside, you have come around to the purity of the four castes that I prescribe [i.e., that people are purified by action, not by their caste].”

When this was said, the brahman student Assalāyana sat silent, abashed, his shoulders drooping, his head down, brooding, at a loss for words. — [MN 93](#)

In opposition to the brahmans, the Buddha stated repeatedly that a person deserves to be called a brahman—someone truly worthy of respect—not on the basis of birth, but on the basis of what he or she has accomplished.

Sunīta the Outcaste:

Into a lowly family I was born,
poor, with next to no food.
My work was degrading:
I gathered the spoiled,
the withered flowers from shrines
and threw them away.
People found me disgusting,
despised me, disparaged me.
Lowering my heart,
I showed reverence to many.
Then I saw the One Self-Awakened,
arrayed with a squadron of monks,
the Great Hero, entering the city,
supreme, of the Magadhans.

Throwing down my carrying pole,
I approached him to do reverence.
He—the supreme man—stood still
 out of sympathy
 just
 for me.

After paying homage
to the feet of the teacher,
 I stood to one side
 & requested the Going-forth from him,
supreme among all living beings.

The compassionate Teacher,
kind to all the world, said:
 “Come, monk.”

That was my Acceptance.

Alone, I stayed in the wilds,
 untiring,
I followed the Teacher’s words,
just as he, the Conqueror, had taught me.
In the first watch of the night,

 I recollected previous lives;
in the middle watch,
 purified the divine eye;
in the last,
 burst the mass of darkness.

Then, as night was ending
& the sun returning,
Indra & Brahmā came to pay homage to me,
hands palm-to-palm at their hearts:

 “Homage to you,
O thoroughbred of men,
 Homage to you,
O man supreme,
 whose effluents are ended.
 You, dear sir,
are worthy of offerings.”

Seeing me,
arrayed with a squadron of devas,
the Teacher smiled & said:
 “Through austerity, celibacy,
 restraint, & self-control:
 That’s how one is a brahman.
 He is a brahman supreme.” — [*Thag 12:2*](#)

In addition to the differing views on the nature and power of action, the Canon also makes frequent reference to a list of ten viewpoints that summarized the hot philosophical issues of the day: on the nature of the world, the soul, and the post-mortem fate of the spiritually perfected person. The Buddha was distinctive in that he refused to take a stand on any of these issues, on the grounds that they were not conducive to awakening.

“The cosmos is eternal. Only this is true; anything otherwise is worthless.

“The cosmos is not eternal. Only this is true; anything otherwise is worthless.

“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.” — [*AN 10:93*](#)

There were also other questions about the world that the Buddha refused to take a stand on.

Then a brahman cosmologist went to the Blessed One and, on arrival, exchanged courteous greetings with him. After an exchange of friendly greetings & courtesies, he sat to one side. As he was sitting there he said to the Blessed One, “Now, then, Master Gotama, does everything exist?”

“‘Everything exists’ is the senior form of cosmology, brahman.”

“Then, Master Gotama, does everything not exist?”

“‘Everything does not exist’ is the second form of cosmology, brahman.”

“Then is everything a Oneness?”

“‘Everything is a Oneness’ is the third form of cosmology, brahman.”

“Then is everything a plurality?”

“‘Everything is a plurality’ is the fourth form of cosmology, brahman.

Avoiding these two extremes, the Tathāgata teaches the Dhamma via the middle: From ignorance as a requisite condition come fabrications. [And so on , through the sequence of dependent co-arising.]” — [SN 12:48](#)

The fact that the Buddha didn’t take a stand on any of these issues, however, did not mean that he praised all those who refused to engage in debate. As we have seen, he did debate others on topics that were central to the issue of putting an end to stress. And he was particularly critical of those who refused to take a stand on the question of which kinds of action were skillful and which were not, as this question was the central issue that any responsible teacher should address.

“There is the case where a certain contemplative or brahman doesn’t discern as it has come to be that ‘This is skillful,’ or that ‘This is unskillful.’ The thought occurs to him: ‘I don’t discern as it has come to be that “This is skillful,” or that “This is unskillful.” If I—not discerning as it has come to be that “This is skillful,” not discerning as it has come to be that “This is unskillful”—were to declare that “This is skillful,” or that “This is unskillful”: That would be a falsehood on my part. Whatever would be a falsehood on my part would be a distress for me. Whatever would be a distress for me would be an obstacle for me.’ So, out of fear of falsehood, a loathing for falsehood, he does not declare that ‘This is skillful,’ or that ‘This is unskillful.’ Being asked questions regarding this or that, he resorts to verbal contortions, to eel-wriggling: ‘I don’t think so. I don’t think in that way. I don’t think otherwise. I don’t think not. I don’t think not not.’

[The second and third cases concern contemplatives or brahmins who don’t declare what is skillful or unskillful out of fear of clinging or fear of interrogation by “contemplatives & brahmins who are pundits, subtle, masters

of debate. Like hair-splitting marksmen, they prowl about, shooting (philosophical) standpoints to pieces, as it were, with their dialectic.”]

“As for the fourth... There is the case where a certain contemplative or brahman is dull & exceedingly stupid. Out of dullness & exceeding stupidity, he—being asked questions regarding this or that—resorts to verbal contortions, to eel-wriggling: “If you ask me if there exists another world [after death], if I thought that there exists another world, would I declare that to you? I don’t think so. I don’t think in that way. I don’t think otherwise. I don’t think not. I don’t think not not. If you asked me if there isn’t another world... both is & isn’t... neither is nor isn’t... if there are beings who wander on... if there aren’t... both are & aren’t... neither are nor aren’t... if the Tathāgata exists after death... doesn’t exist after death... both exists & doesn’t exist after death... neither exists nor doesn’t exist after death, would I declare that to you? I don’t think so. I don’t think in that way. I don’t think otherwise. I don’t think not. I don’t think not not.” — [*DN 1*](#)

Another series of questions that the Buddha refused to answer concerned the existence or non-existence of the self.

“Now, what are the ideas unfit for attention that he [the uninstructed person] attends to? Whatever ideas such that, when he attends to them, the unarisen effluent of sensuality arises in him, and the arisen effluent of sensuality increases; the unarisen effluent of becoming arises in him, and the arisen effluent of becoming increases; the unarisen effluent of ignorance arises in him, 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 suffering & stress.

“The well instructed disciple of the noble ones—who has regard for noble ones, is well versed & disciplined in their Dhamma; who has regard for people of integrity, is well versed & disciplined in their Dhamma—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....

“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: self-identification view, doubt, and grasping at habits & practices.” — [*MN 2*](#)

For the purpose of putting an end to suffering, the Buddha did encourage his students—as we will see—to stop their identification with the five clinging-aggregates. And one of the strategies he recommended was to apply the perception of not-self to them. Some writers have suggested that the “self” negated in this way referred specifically to the brahmanical notion of an infinite self at one with the cosmos and its creator; others have proposed, conversely, that it referred specifically to a notion of a separate, individual self. However, the self-views that the Buddha found among his contemporaries—including the brahmins—encompassed self-views of all kinds, universal as well as individual, finite as well as infinite.

“To what extent, Ānanda, does one delineate when delineating a self? Either delineating a self possessed of form & finite, one delineates that ‘My self is possessed of form & finite.’ Or, delineating a self possessed of form & infinite, one delineates that ‘My self is possessed of form & infinite.’ Or, delineating a self formless & finite, one delineates that ‘My self is formless & finite.’ Or,

delineating a self formless & infinite, one delineates that ‘My self is formless & infinite.’

“Now, the one who, when delineating a self, delineates it as possessed of form & finite, either delineates it as possessed of form & finite in the present, or of such a nature that it will (naturally) become possessed of form & finite [in the future/after death/when falling asleep], or the thought occurs to him that ‘Although it is not yet that way, I will convert it into being that way.’ This being the case, it is proper to say that speculation about a self possessed of form & finite obsesses him.”

[Similarly with the other three ways of delineating a self, yielding altogether twelve types of self-theory.] — [DN 15](#)

Here it’s useful to note that an examination of the Upaniṣads—brahmanical texts that appear to be contemporary with the Buddha—shows that there was no single view about the self held by all brahmans, and that no particular self-view qualifies as “the” brahmanical view. In fact, of the twelve possibilities listed in the above passage, the major Upaniṣads contain self-views that fall under eight, and possibly nine, of the categories.

1) Already possessed of form and finite: Bṛhad-āraṇyaka II.5.1; Maitrī VI.11

2) Naturally becoming possessed of form and finite: Bṛhad-āraṇyaka IV.3.19–21

3) Can be made possessed of form and finite: (none)

4) Already possessed of form and infinite: Bṛhad-āraṇyaka I.4.7–10; Bṛhad-āraṇyaka I.5.20; Chāndogya III.14.2–3; Muṇḍaka III.1.7

5) Naturally becoming possessed of form and infinite: Chāndogya VIII.3.4; Chāndogya VIII.12.2–3

6) Can be made possessed of form and infinite: Praśna IV.6–11; Subāla III; Kaivalya VI

7) Already formless and finite: Kaṭha I.3.1–4 (?—the description here suggests, but does not explicitly state, that the self is formless)

8) Naturally becoming formless and finite: (none)

9) Can be made formless and finite: (none)

10) Already formless and infinite: Bṛhad-āraṇyaka III.8.8–11

11) Naturally becoming formless and infinite: Praśna IV.6–11

12) Can be made formless and infinite: Kaṭha I.3.13–15; Subāla III; Subāla IX.15; Paiṅgala III.6

So there were many self-views at the time that the Buddha had to refute to help his followers not identify with suffering and its causes.

The Buddha saw that it would be necessary to refute these and many other forms of wrong view because of what he had learned in the second knowledge on the night of his awakening: that clinging to them would result in unskillful actions, leading to an unfortunate rebirth. Thus, in refuting them, he was not simply scoring points. His attacks on wrong views were intended as an act of kindness. When those who held to those views could be induced to abandon them—and to act, instead, in line with right view—they could reach a dimension beyond views, the ending of all suffering and stress, which would be for their long-term welfare and happiness.

“With regard to this, the Tathāgata discerns that ‘These standpoints, thus seized, thus grasped at, lead to such & such a destination, to such & such a state in the world beyond.’ That the Tathāgata discerns. And he discerns what is higher than that. And yet, discerning that, he does not grasp at it. And as he is not grasping at it, unbinding [*nibbuti*] is experienced right within. Knowing, as they have come to be, the origination, ending, allure, & drawbacks of feelings, along with the escape from feelings, the Tathāgata, monks—through lack of clinging/sustenance—is released....

“[Those who hold to their view standpoints] all experience [their approval of their view standpoints] through repeated contact at the six sense media. For them, from feeling as a requisite condition comes craving. From craving as a requisite condition comes clinging/sustenance. From clinging/sustenance as a requisite condition comes becoming. From becoming as a requisite condition comes birth. From birth as a requisite condition, then aging-&-death, sorrow, lamentation, pain, distress, & despair come into play. Such is the origination of this entire mass of stress & suffering.

“But when a monk discerns the origination, ending, allure, drawbacks of, & emancipation from the six sense media, he discerns what is higher than all of this.” — [*DN 1*](#)

So, for the sake of leading others to what is higher than all of this, the Buddha left his seclusion and began to teach.

Spreading the Dhamma

Then the thought occurred to the Blessed One, “To whom should I teach the Dhamma first? Who will quickly understand this Dhamma?” Then the thought occurred to him, “This Āḷāra Kālāma is wise, competent, intelligent. He has long had little dust in his eyes. What if I were to teach him the Dhamma first? He will quickly understand this Dhamma.” Then an invisible devatā informed the Blessed One, “Lord, Āḷāra Kālāma died seven days ago.” And knowledge & vision arose within him: “Āḷāra Kālāma died seven days ago.” The thought occurred to him, “Greatly deprived is Āḷāra Kālāma. If he had heard this Dhamma, he would have quickly understood it.”

Then the thought occurred to the Blessed One, “To whom should I teach the Dhamma first? Who will quickly understand this Dhamma?” Then the thought occurred to him, “This Uddaka Rāmaputta is wise, competent, intelligent. He has long had little dust in his eyes. What if I were to teach him the Dhamma first? He will quickly understand this Dhamma.” Then an invisible devatā informed the Blessed One, “Lord, Uddaka Rāmaputta died last night.” And knowledge & vision arose within him: “Uddaka Rāmaputta died last night.” The thought occurred to him, “Greatly deprived is Uddaka Rāmaputta. If he had heard this Dhamma, he would have quickly understood it.”

Then the thought occurred to the Blessed One, “To whom should I teach the Dhamma first? Who will quickly understand this Dhamma?” Then the thought occurred to him, “They were very helpful to me, the group of five monks who attended to me when I was resolute in exertion. What if I were to teach them the Dhamma first?” Then the thought occurred to the Blessed One, “Where are the group of five monks staying now?” And with the divine eye, purified & surpassing the human, he saw that they were staying near Vārāṇasī in the Isipatana game reserve.

Then, having stayed at Uruvelā as long as he liked, the Blessed One set out to wander by stages to Vārāṇasī. Upaka the Ājīvaka saw him on the road between Gayā and the (place of) awakening, and on seeing him said to him, “Clear, my friend, are your faculties. Pure your complexion, and bright. On

whose account have you gone forth? Who is your teacher? In whose Dhamma do you delight?”

When this was said, the Blessed One replied to Upaka the Ājīvaka in verses:

“All-conquering,
all-knowing am I,
with regard to all things,
unadhering.
All-abandoning,
released in the ending of craving:
Having fully known on my own,
to whom should I point as my teacher?

I have no teacher,
and one like me can’t be found.
In the cosmos with its devas,
I have no counterpart.
For I am an arahant in the cosmos;
I, the unexcelled teacher.
I, alone, am rightly self-awakened.
Cooled am I, unbound.

To set rolling the wheel of Dhamma
I go to the city of Kāsi.
In a world become blind,
I beat the drum of the deathless.”

“From your claims, my friend, you must be an infinite victor.”

“Victors are those like me
who have reached the end of effluents.
I’ve defeated evil qualities,
and so, Upaka, I’m a victor.”

When this was said, Upaka said, “May it be so, my friend,” and—shaking his head, taking a side road—he left.

Then, wandering by stages, the Blessed One arrived at Vārāṇasī, at the Isipatana game reserve, where the group of five monks were staying. They saw him coming from afar and, on seeing him, made a pact with one another, (saying,) “Friends, here comes Gotama the contemplative: living luxuriously,

straying from his exertion, backsliding into abundance. He isn't to be bowed down to, to be greeted by standing up, or to have his robe & bowl received. Still, a seat should be laid out; if he wants to, he can sit down." But as the Blessed One approached, the group of five monks, unable to keep to their pact, went out to greet him. One received his robe & bowl. Another laid out a seat. Another set out water for washing his feet. Another set out a foot stand. Another set out a pebble foot-washer.

The Blessed One sat down on the seat laid out and, seated, washed his feet. Still, they addressed the Blessed One by name and as "friend." When this was said, the Blessed One said to them, "Monks, don't address the Tathāgata by name and as 'friend.' The Tathāgata, monks, is a worthy one, rightly self-awakened. Lend ear, monks: The deathless has been attained. I will instruct you. I will teach you the Dhamma. Practicing as instructed, you will in no long time reach & remain in the supreme goal of the holy life for which clansmen rightly go forth from home into homelessness, knowing & realizing it for yourselves in the here-&-now."

When this was said, the group of five monks replied to the Blessed One, "But, friend Gotama, by that practice, that conduct, that performance of austerities you did not attain any superior human states, any distinction in knowledge & vision worthy of a noble one. So how can you now—living luxuriously, straying from your exertion, backsliding into abundance—have attained any superior human states, any distinction in knowledge & vision worthy of a noble one?"

When this was said, the Blessed One replied to them, "The Tathāgata, monks, is not living luxuriously, has not strayed from his exertion, has not backslid into abundance. The Tathāgata, friends, is a worthy one, rightly self-awakened. Lend ear, friends: The deathless has been attained. I will instruct you. I will teach you the Dhamma. Practicing as instructed, you will in no long time reach & remain in the supreme goal of the holy life for which clansmen rightly go forth from home into homelessness, knowing & realizing it for yourselves in the here-&-now."

A second time... A third time, the group of five monks said to the Blessed One, "But, friend Gotama, by that practice, that conduct, that performance of austerities you did not attain any superior human states, any distinction in knowledge & vision worthy of a noble one. So how can you now—living luxuriously, straying from your exertion, backsliding into abundance—have

attained any superior human states, any distinction in knowledge & vision worthy of a noble one?”

When this was said, the Blessed One replied to the group of five monks, “Do you recall my ever having said this⁵¹ before now?”

“No, lord.”

“The Tathāgata, monks, is a worthy one, rightly self-awakened. Lend ear, monks: The deathless has been attained. I will instruct you. I will teach you the Dhamma. Practicing as instructed, you will in no long time reach & remain in the supreme goal of the holy life for which clansmen rightly go forth from home into homelessness, knowing & realizing it for yourselves in the here-&-now.”

And so the Blessed One was able to convince them. Then the group of five monks listened carefully to the Blessed One. They lent their ears and determined their minds for the sake of knowledge.

SETTING THE WHEEL OF DHAMMA IN MOTION

The Blessed One then addressed the group of five monks:

“There are these two extremes that are not to be indulged in by one who has gone forth: that which is devoted to sensual pleasure with reference to sensual objects: base, vulgar, common, ignoble, unprofitable; and that which is devoted to self-affliction: painful, ignoble, unprofitable. Avoiding both of these extremes, the middle way realized by the Tathāgata—producing vision, producing knowledge—leads to calm, to direct knowledge, to self-awakening, to unbinding.

“And what is the middle way realized by the Tathāgata that—producing vision, producing knowledge—leads to calm, to direct knowledge, to self-awakening, to unbinding? Precisely this noble eightfold path: right view, right resolve, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness, right concentration. This is the middle way realized by the Tathāgata that—producing vision, producing knowledge—leads to calm, to direct knowledge, to self-awakening, to unbinding.

“Now this, monks, is the noble truth of stress:⁵² Birth is stressful, aging is stressful, death is stressful; sorrow, lamentation, pain, distress, & despair are stressful; association with the unbeloved is stressful, separation from the loved

is stressful, not getting what is wanted is stressful. In short, the five clinging-aggregates are stressful.⁵³

“And this, monks, is the noble truth of the origination of stress: the craving that makes for further-becoming—accompanied by passion & delight, relishing now here & now there—i.e., craving for sensual pleasure, craving for becoming, craving for non-becoming.⁵⁴

“And this, monks, is the noble truth of the cessation of stress: the remainderless fading & cessation, renunciation, relinquishment, release, & letting go of that very craving.

“And this, monks, is the noble truth of the way of practice leading to the cessation of stress: precisely this noble eightfold path—right view, right resolve, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness, right concentration.⁵⁵

“Vision arose, insight arose, discernment arose, knowledge arose, illumination arose within me with regard to things never heard before: ‘This is the noble truth of stress.’ Vision arose, insight arose, discernment arose, knowledge arose, illumination arose within me with regard to things never heard before: ‘This noble truth of stress is to be comprehended.’ Vision arose, insight arose, discernment arose, knowledge arose, illumination arose within me with regard to things never heard before: ‘This noble truth of stress has been comprehended.’

“Vision arose, insight arose, discernment arose, knowledge arose, illumination arose within me with regard to things never heard before: ‘This is the noble truth of the origination of stress’... ‘This noble truth of the origination of stress is to be abandoned’⁵⁶ ... ‘This noble truth of the origination of stress has been abandoned.’

“Vision arose, insight arose, discernment arose, knowledge arose, illumination arose within me with regard to things never heard before: ‘This is the noble truth of the cessation of stress’... ‘This noble truth of the cessation of stress is to be directly experienced’... ‘This noble truth of the cessation of stress has been directly experienced.’

“Vision arose, insight arose, discernment arose, knowledge arose, illumination arose within me with regard to things never heard before: ‘This is the noble truth of the way of practice leading to the cessation of stress’... ‘This

noble truth of the way of practice leading to the cessation of stress is to be developed’... ‘This noble truth of the way of practice leading to the cessation of stress has been developed.’

“And, monks, as long as this—my three-round, twelve-permutation knowledge & vision concerning these four noble truths⁵⁷ as they have come to be—was not pure, I did not claim to have directly awakened to the right self-awakening unexcelled in the cosmos with its devas, Māras, & Brahmās, with its contemplatives & brahmans, its royalty & common people. But as soon as this—my three-round, twelve-permutation knowledge & vision concerning these four noble truths as they have come to be—was truly pure, then I did claim to have directly awakened to the right self-awakening unexcelled in the cosmos with its devas, Māras & Brahmās, with its contemplatives & brahmans, its royalty & common people. Knowledge & vision arose in me: ‘Unprovoked is my release. This is the last birth. There is now no further-becoming.’”

And while this explanation was being given, there arose for Ven. Koṇḍañña the dustless, stainless Dhamma eye: “*Whatever is subject to origination is all subject to cessation.*”

And when the Blessed One had set the Wheel of Dhamma in motion, the Earth Devas cried out: “Near Vārāṇasī, in the Isipatana game reserve, the Blessed One has set in motion the unexcelled Wheel of Dhamma that cannot be stopped by contemplative or brahman, deva, Māra, or Brahmā, or anyone at all in the cosmos.” On hearing the Earth Devas’ cry, the Devas of the Four Great Kings took up the cry... the Devas of the Thirty-three... the Devas of the Hours... the Contented [Tusita] Devas... the Devas Delighting in Creation... the Devas Wielding Power over the Creations of Others... the Devas of Brahmā’s Retinue took up the cry: “Near Vārāṇasī, in the Isipatana game reserve, the Blessed One has set in motion the unexcelled Wheel of Dhamma that cannot be stopped by contemplative or brahman, deva, Māra, or Brahmā, or anyone at all in the cosmos.”

So in that moment, that instant, the cry shot right up to the Brahmā worlds. And this ten-thousand fold cosmos shivered & quivered & quaked, while a great, measureless radiance appeared in the cosmos, surpassing the effulgence of the devas.

Then the Blessed One exclaimed: “So you really know, Koṇḍañña? So you really know?”⁵⁸ And that is how Ven. Koṇḍañña acquired the name Añña-

Koṇḍañña—Koṇḍañña who knows.

Then Ven. Añña-Koṇḍañña—having seen the Dhamma, having attained the Dhamma, having known the Dhamma, having gained a footing in the Dhamma, having crossed over and beyond uncertainty, having no more perplexity, having gained fearlessness, independence of others with regard to the Teacher’s message—said to the Blessed One, “May I receive the Going-forth in the Blessed One’s presence? May I receive the Acceptance?”

“Come, monk,” said the Blessed One. “Well taught is the Dhamma. Live the holy life for the right ending of stress.” That was the venerable one’s Acceptance.

Then the Blessed One taught and admonished the remaining monks with a talk on Dhamma. Then, for Ven. Vappa & Ven. Bhaddiya—as they were being taught and admonished by the Blessed One with a talk on Dhamma—there arose the dustless, stainless Dhamma eye: “*Whatever is subject to origination is all subject to cessation.*”

They—having seen the Dhamma, having attained the Dhamma, having known the Dhamma, having gained a footing in the Dhamma, having crossed over and beyond uncertainty, having no more perplexity, having gained fearlessness, independence of others with regard to the Teacher’s message—said to the Blessed One, “May we receive the Going-forth in the Blessed One’s presence? May we receive the Acceptance?”

“Come, monks,” said the Blessed One. “Well taught is the Dhamma. Live the holy life for the right ending of stress.” That was the venerable ones’ Acceptance.

Then the Blessed One, subsisting on food brought to him, taught and admonished the remaining monks with talk on the Dhamma. Whatever three monks brought back, having gone on their almsround, all six of the group sustained themselves with that. Then, for Ven. Mahānāma and Ven. Assaji—as they were being taught and admonished by the Blessed One with talk on Dhamma—there arose the dustless, stainless Dhamma eye: “*Whatever is subject to origination is all subject to cessation.*” They—having seen the Dhamma, having attained the Dhamma, having known the Dhamma, having gained a footing in the Dhamma, having crossed over and beyond uncertainty, having no more perplexity, having gained fearlessness, independence of others with regard to the Teacher’s message—said to the Blessed One, “May we receive the Going-forth in the Blessed One’s presence? May we receive the Acceptance?”

“Come, monks,” said the Blessed One. “Well taught is the Dhamma. Live the holy life for the right ending of stress.” That was the venerable ones’ Acceptance.

THE NOT-SELF DISCOURSE

Then the Blessed One addressed the group of five monks:

“Form, monks, is not self. If form were the self, this form would not lend itself to dis-ease. It would be possible (to say) with regard to form, ‘Let my form be thus. Let my form not be thus.’ But precisely because form is not self, this form lends itself to dis-ease. And it is not possible (to say) with regard to form, ‘Let my form be thus. Let my form not be thus.’

“Feeling is not self....

“Perception is not self....

“Fabrications are not self....

“Consciousness is not self. If consciousness were the self, this consciousness would not lend itself to dis-ease. It would be possible (to say) with regard to consciousness, ‘Let my consciousness be thus. Let my consciousness not be thus.’ But precisely because consciousness is not self, consciousness lends itself to dis-ease. And it is not possible (to say) with regard to consciousness, ‘Let my consciousness be thus. Let my consciousness not be thus.’

“What do you think, monks? Is form constant or inconstant?”

“Inconstant, lord.”

“And is that which is inconstant easeful or stressful?”

“Stressful, lord.”

“And is it fitting to regard what is inconstant, stressful, subject to change as: ‘This is mine. This is my self. This is what I am?’”

“No, lord.”

“... Is feeling constant or inconstant?”—“Inconstant, lord.”...

“... Is perception constant or inconstant?”—“Inconstant, lord.”...

“... Are fabrications constant or inconstant?”—“Inconstant, lord.”...

“What do you think, monks? Is consciousness constant or inconstant?”

“Inconstant, lord.”

“And is that which is inconstant easeful or stressful?”

“Stressful, lord.”

“And is it fitting to regard what is inconstant, stressful, subject to change as: ‘This is mine. This is my self. This is what I am?’”

“No, lord.”

“Thus, monks, any form whatsoever that is past, future, or present; internal or external; blatant or subtle; common or sublime; far or near: Every⁵⁹ form is to be seen with right discernment as it has come to be: ‘This is not mine. This is not my self. This is not what I am.’

“Any feeling whatsoever...

“Any perception whatsoever...

“Any fabrications whatsoever...

“Any consciousness whatsoever that is past, future, or present; internal or external; blatant or subtle; common or sublime; far or near: Every consciousness is to be seen with right discernment as it has come to be: ‘This is not mine. This is not my self. This is not what I am.’

“Seeing thus, the instructed disciple of the noble ones grows disenchanted with form, disenchanted with feeling, disenchanted with perception, disenchanted with fabrications, disenchanted with consciousness. Disenchanted, he becomes dispassionate. Through dispassion, he is released. With release, there is the knowledge, ‘Released.’ He discerns that ‘Birth is ended, the holy life fulfilled, the task done. There is nothing further for this world.’”

That is what the Blessed One said. Gratified, the group of five monks delighted in the Blessed One’s words. And while this explanation was being given, the minds of the group of five monks, through lack of clinging/sustenance, were released from effluents.

At that time there were six arahants in the world. — [*Mv 1:6*](#)

“Then the group of five monks—thus exhorted, thus instructed by me—being subject themselves to birth, seeing the drawbacks of birth, seeking the unborn, unexcelled rest from the yoke, unbinding, reached the unborn, unexcelled rest from the yoke: unbinding. Being subject themselves to aging... illness... death... sorrow... defilement, seeing the drawbacks of aging... illness... death... sorrow... defilement, seeking the aging-less, illness-less, deathless, sorrow-less, unexcelled rest from the yoke, unbinding, they reached

the aging-less, illness-less, deathless, sorrow-less, unexcelled rest from the yoke: unbinding. Knowledge & vision arose in them: ‘Unprovoked is our release. This is the last birth. There is now no further-becoming.’” — [MN 26](#)

At that time in Vārāṇasī there was young man of good family named Yasa—delicate, a moneylender’s son. He had three palaces: one for the cold season, one for the hot season, and one for the rainy season. During the four months of the rainy season he was entertained in the rainy-season palace by minstrels without a single man among them, and he did not come down once from the palace.

Then the young man Yasa, enjoying himself, provided & endowed with the five strings of sensuality, fell asleep first. Then his retinue fell asleep afterward. An oil lamp was left burning the whole night.

Then Yasa, waking up first, saw his retinue sleeping—one with a lute under her arm, another with a *mudiṅga* drum around her neck, another with an *āḷambara* drum on her chest, another with disheveled hair, another drooling, another babbling in her sleep—like a charnel ground, as it were, right within reach. Seeing this, the drawbacks [of sensuality] became apparent, and his mind became established in disenchantment. He exclaimed: “How distressing! How oppressive!”

Then Yasa put on his golden slippers and went to the door of the residence. Non-human beings opened the door, (thinking,) “May there not be any obstacles to Yasa’s Going-forth from home into homelessness.” Then Yasa went to the gate of the city. Non-human beings opened the gate, (thinking,) “May there not be any obstacles to Yasa’s Going-forth from home into homelessness.” Then Yasa went to the Isipatana game reserve.

At that time, the Blessed One, having gotten up as the night was ending, was walking back and forth in the open air. He saw Yasa coming from afar and, on seeing him, got down from the walking path and sat down on a seat laid out.

Yasa, not far from the Blessed One, exclaimed: “How distressing! How oppressive!”

Then the Blessed One said to Yasa, “Yasa, this isn’t distressing. This isn’t oppressive. “Come, Yasa. Sit down. I’ll teach you the Dhamma.”

Then Yasa, (thinking,) “He says this isn’t distressing, this isn’t oppressive,” thrilled & exultant, took off his golden slippers, 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 gave him a graduated talk: a talk on giving, a talk on virtue, a talk on heaven; he proclaimed the drawbacks of, degradation in, & defilement in sensuality, and the rewards of renunciation. Then—when he knew that Yasa was of ready mind, malleable mind, unhindered mind, exultant mind, confident mind—he proclaimed to him the distinctive teaching of the Buddhas: stress, origination, cessation, path. Just as a clean piece of cloth, free from grime, would properly take dye, in the same way, the dustless, stainless Dhamma eye arose for Yasa as he was sitting right there: “*Whatever is subject to origination is all subject to cessation.*”

Then Yasa’s mother, going up into the palace and not seeing Yasa, went to the moneylender and, on arrival, said to him, “Householder, your son Yasa is nowhere to be seen.”

So the moneylender sent messengers on horseback out in the four directions whereas he himself went to the Isipatana game reserve. He saw the tracks of the golden slippers and, on seeing them, followed them.

The Blessed One saw him coming from afar, and the thought occurred to him, “Why don’t I fabricate a fabrication of supranormal power such that the moneylender, sitting here, wouldn’t see Yasa sitting here?” So the Blessed One fabricated such a fabrication of supranormal power.

The moneylender approached the Blessed One and said, “Perhaps, lord, the Blessed One has seen Yasa, the son of a good family?”

“In that case, householder, sit down. Perhaps, sitting here, you might see Yasa sitting here.”

Then the moneylender—(thinking,) “He says I might, sitting right here, see Yasa sitting here,” thrilled & exultant, bowed down to the Blessed One and sat to one side. As he was sitting there, the Blessed One gave him a graduated talk: a talk on giving, a talk on virtue, a talk on heaven; he proclaimed the drawbacks of, degradation in, & defilement in sensuality, and the rewards of renunciation. Then—when he knew that the moneylender was of ready mind, malleable mind, unhindered mind, exultant mind, confident mind—he proclaimed to him the distinctive teaching of the Buddhas: stress, origination, cessation, path. Just as a clean piece of cloth, free from grime, would properly take dye, in the same way, the dustless, stainless Dhamma eye arose for the moneylender as he was sitting right there: “*Whatever is subject to origination is all subject to cessation.*”

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

And so he was the first three-statement lay disciple in the world.

As Yasa's father was being taught the Dhamma, and as Yasa was reflecting on his own state (of mind) as he saw and knew it, his mind was, through lack of clinging/sustenance, released from effluents. Then the thought occurred to the Blessed One, "As Yasa's father was being taught the Dhamma, and as Yasa was reflecting on his own state (of mind) as he saw and knew it, his mind was, through lack of clinging/sustenance, released from effluents. It would be impossible for Yasa to revert to the lower life and indulge in sensuality as he did before as a householder. Why don't I make that fabrication of supranormal power subside?"

So the Blessed One made that fabrication of supranormal power subside. The moneylender saw Yasa sitting there and on seeing him said to him, "Yasa, my son, your mother is lamenting and full of grief. Give your mother her life!"

Then Yasa looked to the Blessed One, so the Blessed One said to the moneylender, "What do you think, householder: For one who has seen and known the Dhamma with the knowledge and vision of one in training, just as you have, reflecting on this state (of mind) as he saw and knew it, whose mind was, through lack of clinging/sustenance, released from effluents: Would it be possible for him to revert to the lower life and indulge in sensuality as he did before as a householder?"

"No, lord."

"Householder, Yasa has seen and known the Dhamma with the knowledge and vision of one in training, just as you have. Reflecting on his own state as he saw and knew it, his mind was, through lack of clinging/sustenance, released from effluents. It would be impossible for Yasa to revert to the lower life and indulge in sensuality as he did before as a householder."

"It's a gain for Yasa, lord, a great gain for Yasa, that his mind is, through lack of clinging/sustenance, released from effluents! May the Blessed One acquiesce

to my meal tomorrow, with Yasa as your attendant monk.”

The Blessed One acquiesced with silence.

Then the moneylender, understanding the Blessed One’s acquiescence, got up from his seat, bowed down to the Blessed One, circumambulated him, keeping him to his right, and left.

Then Yasa, not long after the moneylender had left, said to the Blessed One, “May I receive the Going-forth in the Blessed One’s presence? May I receive the Acceptance?”

“Come, monk,” said the Blessed One. “Well taught is the Dhamma. Live the holy life.”⁶⁰

That was the venerable one’s Acceptance.

Now there were seven arahants in the world. — *Mv 1:7*

Ven. Yasa:

Well perfumed, well dressed,
adorned with every adornment,
I attained the three knowledges.

The Buddha’s bidding: done. — *Thag 1:117*

Then, early in the morning, the Blessed One—having adjusted his under robe and carrying his bowl & outer robe, and with Ven. Yasa as his attendant monk—went to the moneylender’s residence and, on arrival, sat down on a seat laid out. Then Ven. Yasa’s mother & his former wife went to the Blessed One and, on arrival, having bowed down, sat to one side. The Blessed One gave them a graduated talk: a talk on giving, a talk on virtue, a talk on heaven; he proclaimed the drawbacks of, degradation in, & defilement in sensuality, and the rewards of renunciation. Then—when he knew that they were of ready mind, malleable mind, unhindered mind, exultant mind, confident mind—he proclaimed to them the distinctive teaching of the Buddhas: stress, origination, cessation, path. Just as a clean piece of cloth, free from grime, would properly take dye, in the same way, the dustless, stainless Dhamma eye arose for them as they were sitting right there: “*Whatever is subject to origination is all subject to cessation.*”

Then they, having seen the Dhamma... said to the Blessed One, “Magnificent, lord! Magnificent! ... May the Blessed One remember us as

female lay followers who have gone for refuge from this day forward, for life.”

They were the first three-statement female lay disciples in the world.

Then Ven. Yasa’s mother, father, & former wife, with their own hands, served & satisfied the Blessed One and Ven. Yasa with exquisite staple & non-staple food. When the Blessed One had finished his meal and had rinsed his bowl & hands, they sat to one side. The Blessed One, having instructed, urged, roused, & encouraged Yasa’s mother, father, & former wife with Dhamma talk, got up from his seat and left. — [*Mv 1:8*](#)

Four of Yasa’s householder friends—Vimala, Subāhu, Puṇṇaji, & Gavampati—sons of wealthy & moderately wealthy families in Vārāṇasī, heard that “Yasa, they say, has shaved off his hair & beard, clothed himself in the ochre robes, and gone forth from home into homelessness.”

Having heard that, the thought occurred to them, “It must not be lowly, this Dhamma & Vinaya, nor lowly this Going-forth, in which Yasa—having shaved off his hair & beard and clothing himself in ochre robes—went forth.”

They went to Ven. Yasa and, on arrival, bowed down to him and stood to one side. Then Ven. Yasa took his four householder friends to the Blessed One. On arrival, they bowed down to the Blessed One and sat to one side. As he was sitting there, Ven. Yasa said, “Lord, these are four of my householder friends—Vimalo, Subāhu, Puṇṇaji, & Gavampati—sons of wealthy & moderately wealthy families in Vārāṇasī. May the Blessed One teach and exhort them.”

The Blessed One gave them a graduated talk: a talk on giving, a talk on virtue, a talk on heaven; he proclaimed the drawbacks of, degradation in, & defilement in sensuality, and the rewards of renunciation. Then—when he knew that they were of ready mind, malleable mind, unhindered mind, exultant mind, confident mind—he proclaimed to them the distinctive teaching of the Buddhas: stress, origination, cessation, path. Just as a clean piece of cloth, free from grime, would properly take dye, in the same way, the dustless, stainless Dhamma eye arose for them as they were sitting right there: “*Whatever is subject to origination is all subject to cessation.*”

Then they—having seen the Dhamma... said to the Blessed One, “May we receive the Going-forth in the Blessed One’s presence? May we receive the Acceptance?”

“Come, monks,” said the Blessed One. “Well taught is the Dhamma. Live the holy life for the right ending of stress.”

That was the venerable ones' Acceptance.

Then the Blessed One taught and exhorted the monks with talk on the Dhamma. Being taught and exhorted by the Blessed One with talk on the Dhamma, their minds were, through lack of clinging/sustenance, released from effluents.

Now there were eleven arahants in the world.

Fifty of Yasa's householder friends from the countryside—sons of prominent and moderately prominent families—heard, "Yasa, they say, has shaved off his hair & beard, clothed himself in the ochre robes, and gone forth from home into homelessness."

Having heard that, the thought occurred to them, "It must not be lowly, this Dhamma & Vinaya, nor lowly this Going-forth, in which Yasa—having shaved off his hair & beard and clothing himself in ochre robes—went forth."

They went to Ven. Yasa and, on arrival, bowed down to him and stood to one side. Then Ven. Yasa took his fifty householder friends to the Blessed One. On arrival, they bowed down to the Blessed One and sat to one side. As he was sitting there, Ven. Yasa said to the Blessed One, "Lord, these are fifty of my householder friends from the countryside—sons of prominent and moderately prominent families. May the Blessed One teach and exhort them."

The Blessed One gave them a graduated talk: a talk on giving, a talk on virtue, a talk on heaven; he proclaimed the drawbacks of, degradation in, & defilement in sensuality, and the rewards of renunciation. Then—when he knew that they were of ready mind, malleable mind, unhindered mind, exultant mind, confident mind—he proclaimed to them the distinctive teaching of the Buddhas: stress, origination, cessation, path. Just as a clean piece of cloth, free from grime, would properly take dye, in the same way, the dustless, stainless Dhamma eye arose for them as they were sitting right there: "*Whatever is subject to origination is all subject to cessation.*"

Then they—having seen the Dhamma... said to the Blessed One, "May we receive the Going-forth in the Blessed One's presence? May we receive the Acceptance?"

"Come, monks," said the Blessed One. "Well taught is the Dhamma. Live the holy life for the right ending of stress."

That was the venerable ones' Acceptance.

Then the Blessed One taught and exhorted the monks with talk on the Dhamma. Then, being taught and exhorted by the Blessed One with talk on the Dhamma, their minds were, through lack of clinging/sustenance, released from effluents.

Now there were sixty-one arahants in the world.

Then the Blessed One addressed the monks, “I am released, monks, from all snares, human & divine. You, too, monks, are also released from all snares, human & divine. Wander, monks, for the benefit & happiness of many, out of sympathy for the world, for the welfare, benefit, & happiness of devas & human beings. Don’t any two of you go by the same way. Teach the Dhamma fine in the beginning, fine in the middle, fine in the end. Proclaim the holy life both in its particulars & in its essence, entirely complete, surpassingly pure. There are beings with little dust in their eyes who are falling away because they do not hear the Dhamma. There will be those who will understand the Dhamma. As for me, I will go to the military town of Uruvelā to teach the Dhamma.”

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

Māra:

“You’re bound by all snares,
human & divine.
You’re bound by a great bond.
Contemplative,
you’re not freed from me.”

The Buddha:

“I’m released from all snares,
human & divine.
I’m freed from the great bond.
You, End-maker,
are struck down.”

Māra:

”A snare of the mind,
traveling in the air—

I will bind you with it.
Contemplative,
you're not freed from me.”

The Buddha:

“Forms, sounds, aromas, & tastes,
tactile sensations that delight the mind:
My desire there is gone.
You, End-maker,
are struck down.”

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

At that time, the monks were bringing those wanting the Going-forth and wanting the Acceptance from many countries & many directions, (thinking,) “The Blessed One will give them the Going-forth & the Acceptance.” That tired the monks, along with those wanting the Going-forth, wanting the Acceptance.

Then, when the Blessed One was alone in seclusion, this train of thought arose in his awareness: “At this time, the monks are bringing those wanting the Going-forth and those wanting the Acceptance from many countries & many directions, (thinking,) ‘The Blessed One will give them the Going-forth & the Acceptance.’ That tires the monks, along with those wanting the Going-forth, wanting the Acceptance. Why don’t I allow the monks: ‘Monks, you may now give the Going-forth & the Acceptance in whatever country, in whatever direction.’”

Then, in the late afternoon, rising from seclusion, the Blessed One had the monks assembled for that reason, on that occasion, and gave them a Dhamma talk. He addressed the monks, “Just now, when I was alone in seclusion, this train of thought arose in my awareness: ‘At this time, the monks are bringing those wanting the Going-forth.... Why don’t I allow the monks: “Monks, you may now give the Going-forth & the Acceptance in whatever country, in whatever direction.” I allow you, monks, to now give the Going-forth & the Acceptance in whatever country, in whatever direction.’”

“The Going-forth & Acceptance should be given like this: First—having gotten him to shave his head & beard, to clothe himself in ochre robes, to arrange his robe over one shoulder, to bow down at the feet of the monks, to sit

in the kneeling position, and to raise his hands palm-to-palm in front of the heart—tell him, ‘Say this: “I go to the Buddha for refuge. I go to the Dhamma for refuge. I go to the Saṅgha for refuge. A second time, I go to the Buddha for refuge. A second time, I go to the Dhamma for refuge. A second time, I go to the Saṅgha for refuge. A third time, I go to the Buddha for refuge. A third time, I go to the Dhamma for refuge. A third time, I go to the Saṅgha for refuge.”’

“Monks, I allow the Going-forth & the Acceptance by means of these three goings for refuge.”

At that time, having spent the Rains, the Blessed One addressed the monks, “It was through appropriate attention & appropriate right exertion that I attained unexcelled release, realized unexcelled release. It was through appropriate attention & appropriate right exertion that you, too, attained unexcelled release, realized unexcelled release.”

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

Māra:

“You’re bound by Māra’s snares,
human & divine.
You’re bound by Māra’s⁶¹ bond—
Contemplative,
you’re not freed from me.”

The Buddha:

“I’m released from Māra’s snares,
human & divine.
I’m freed from Māra’s bond—
You, End-maker,
are struck down.”

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

THE THIRTY FRIENDS

Then the Blessed One, having stayed near Vārāṇasī as long as he liked, set out wandering toward Uruvelā. Coming down from the road, the Blessed One went to a certain forest grove and, on arrival, plunging into it, sat down at the root of a certain tree.

At that time, a group of thirty friends, Bhaddavaggiyas, were entertaining themselves with their wives in the forest grove. One of them had no wife, so, for that purpose, they brought a prostitute. As they were heedlessly entertaining themselves, the prostitute took the one man's belongings and ran off.

Then the other friends, as they were helping him out—searching for the woman and wandering around in the forest grove—saw the Blessed One sitting at the root of a certain tree. They went to him and said, “Perhaps, lord, the Blessed One has seen a woman?”

“Young men, what do you want with a woman?”

“Just now, lord, we thirty friends, Bhaddavaggiyas, were entertaining ourselves with our wives in the forest grove. One of us has no wife, so, for that purpose, we brought along a prostitute. Then, as we were heedlessly entertaining ourselves, the prostitute took his belongings and ran off. For that reason⁶² we're helping him out—searching for the woman and wandering around in the forest grove.”

“What do you think, young men, which is better for you: that you search for a woman or that you search for yourselves?”

“Surely, lord, it's better for us to search for ourselves.”

“In that case, young men, sit down. I'll teach you the Dhamma.”

Responding, “As you say, lord” to the Blessed One, the group of friends bowed down to the Blessed One and sat to one side.

The Blessed One gave them a graduated talk: a talk on giving, a talk on virtue, a talk on heaven; he proclaimed the drawbacks of, degradation in, & defilement in sensuality, and the rewards of renunciation. Then—when he knew that they were of ready mind, malleable mind, unhindered mind, exultant mind, confident mind—he proclaimed to them the distinctive teaching of the Buddhas: stress, origination, cessation, path. Just as a clean piece of cloth free from grime would properly take dye, in the same way, the

dustless, stainless Dhamma eye arose for them as they were sitting right there: “*Whatever is subject to origination is all subject to cessation.*”

Then they—having seen the Dhamma... said to the Blessed One, “May we receive the Going-forth in the Blessed One’s presence? May we receive the Acceptance?”

“Come, monks,” said the Blessed One. “Well taught is the Dhamma. Live the holy life for the right ending of stress.” That was the venerable ones’ Acceptance.

THE THREE KASSAPA BROTHERS

Then the Blessed One, traveling by stages, arrived at Uruvelā. At that time, three dreadlocked ascetics were dwelling near Uruvelā: Uruvelakassapa, Nadīkassapa, & Gayākassapa. Among them, Uruvelakassapa was the leader of five hundred dreadlocked ascetics—their trainer, head, foremost, & chief. Nadīkassapa was the leader of three hundred dreadlocked ascetics—their trainer, head, foremost, & chief. Gayākassapa was the leader of two hundred dreadlocked ascetics—their trainer, head, foremost, & chief.

Then the Blessed One went to Uruvelakassapa’s ashram and said to Uruvelakassapa, “If it’s not a burden for you, Kassapa, we would stay one night in your fire hall.”

“It’s not a burden for me, Great Contemplative. But there is a fierce nāga king there—powerful, a fanged snake, terrifyingly poisonous. May he not harass you.”

A second time... A third time, the Blessed One said to Uruvelakassapa, “If it’s not a burden for you, Kassapa, we would stay one night in your fire hall.”

“It’s not a burden for me, Great Contemplative. But there is a fierce nāga king there—powerful, a fanged snake, terrifyingly poisonous. May he not harass you.”

“Perhaps he wouldn’t harass me. Please, Kassapa, allow the fire hall.”

“Stay as you like, Great Contemplative.”

Then the Blessed One, having entered the fire hall and laid out a grass mat, sat down cross-legged with his body erect, establishing mindfulness to the fore. The nāga saw that the Blessed One had entered and, on seeing him, was upset, disgruntled, and emitted smoke. The thought occurred to the Blessed One,

“Why don’t I—without damaging his outer skin, inner skin, flesh, tendons, bones, or bone marrow—consume the nāga’s fire with my own fire?”

Then the Blessed One fabricated such a fabrication of supranormal power that he emitted smoke. The nāga, unable to bear the insult, blazed up. The Blessed One entered the fire property and blazed up. With both of them all ablaze, the fire hall was as if on fire—flaming & glowing.

Then the dreadlocked ascetics surrounded the fire hall and thought, “That handsome Great Contemplative is being harassed by the nāga!”

Then, as the night was ending, the Blessed One, having consumed the nāga’s fire with fire—without damaging his outer skin, inner skin, flesh, tendons, bones, or bone marrow—put him in his bowl and showed him to Uruvelakassapa, the dreadlocked ascetic, “Here, Kassapa, is your nāga, his fire consumed by fire.”

The thought occurred to Uruvelakassapa, “He’s powerful, the Great Contemplative, and mighty, in that he consumed with fire the fire of the fierce nāga king, the fanged snake, terrifyingly poisonous! But still, he’s not an arahant like me.”

At the Nerañjarā,
the Blessed One said
to the dreadlocked ascetic Uruvelakassapa,
“If it’s not a burden, Kassapa,
I’ll stay a day in your fire hall.”

“It’s no burden, Great Contemplative,
but—desiring your comfort—
I forbid it.

A fierce nāga king is there—
powerful, a fanged snake,
terrifyingly poisonous.

I don’t want him to harass you.”

“Perhaps he won’t harass me.
Come now, Kassapa,
allow me the fire hall.”

Knowing that “It’s given,”
fearless—gone beyond fear—he entered.
Seeing the seer enter,

the nāga-snake, disgruntled,
emitted smoke.

With joyous mind,
confident mind,

the nāga⁶³ of a man
also emitted smoke.

Not bearing the insult,
the nāga-snake blazed up
like an inferno.

Skilled in the fire property,
the nāga of a man
blazed up right there as well.

With both of them as if on fire,
the fire hall was ablaze,
glowing & flaming.
The dreadlocked ascetics stared—
“That handsome Great Contemplative,
is being harassed by the nāga!”
they said.

Then at the night’s end
the nāga-snake’s flames were no more,
but the many-colored flames
of the Powerful One remained:
blue & also red,
crimson, yellow,
& the color of quartz,
on the body of the Radiant One.
Multi-colored were the flames.

Putting him in his bowl,
he showed the nāga snake
to the brahman.

“This is your nāga, Kassapa,
his fire by fire consumed.”⁶⁴

Then Uruvelakassapa, the dreadlocked ascetic, impressed at this, the marvel of the Blessed One's supranormal power, said to him, "Stay right here, Great Contemplative. I'll provide you with regular meals.

So the Blessed One stayed in a certain forest grove not far from Uruvelakassapa's ashram.

Then, in the far extreme of the night, the Four Great Kings, their extreme radiance lighting up the entirety of the forest grove, went to the Blessed One and, on arrival, bowed down to him and stood in the four directions (from the Blessed One), like great masses of fire.

As the night was ending, Uruvelakassapa went to the Blessed One and, on arrival, said to him, "It's time, Great Contemplative. The meal is ready. But who were they whose extreme radiance lit up the entirety of the forest grove in the far extreme of the night, who went to you and, on arrival, bowed down to you and stood in the four directions like great masses of fire?"

"Those, Kassapa, were the Four Great Kings, who came to me to listen to the Dhamma."

The thought occurred to Uruvelakassapa, "He's powerful, the Great Contemplative, and mighty, in that even the Four Great Kings come to listen to the Dhamma. But still, he's not an arahant like me."

Then the Blessed One, having eaten the meal provided by Uruvelakassapa, stayed on in the forest grove.

Then Sakka the deva-king, in the far extreme of the night, his extreme radiance lighting up the entirety of the forest grove, went to the Blessed One and, on arrival, bowed down to him and stood to one side, like a great mass of fire—more extreme and refined than the previous radiances of color.

As the night was ending, Uruvelakassapa went to the Blessed One and, on arrival, said to him, "It's time, Great Contemplative. The meal is ready. But who was that whose extreme radiance lit up the entirety of the forest grove in the far extreme of the night, who went to you and, on arrival, bowed down to you and stood to one side like a great mass of fire—more extreme and refined than the previous radiances of color?"

"That, Kassapa, was Sakka the deva-king, who came to me to listen to the Dhamma."

The thought occurred to Uruvelakassapa, "He's powerful, the Great Contemplative, and mighty, in that even Sakka the deva-king comes to listen to

the Dhamma. But still, he's not an arahant like me."

Then the Blessed One, having eaten the meal provided by Uruvelakassapa, stayed on in the forest grove.

Then the Brahmā Sahampati, in the far extreme of the night, his extreme radiance lighting up the entirety of the forest grove, went to the Blessed One and, on arrival, bowed down to him and stood to one side like a great mass of fire—more extreme and refined than the previous radiances of color.

As the night was ending, Uruvelakassapa went to the Blessed One and, on arrival, said to him, "It's time, Great Contemplative. The meal is ready. But who was that whose extreme radiance lit up the entirety of the forest grove in the far extreme of the night, who went to you and, on arrival, bowed down to you and stood to one side like a great mass of fire—more extreme and refined than the previous radiances of color?"

"That, Kassapa, was the Brahmā Sahampati, who came to me to listen to the Dhamma."

The thought occurred to Uruvelakassapa, "He's powerful, the Great Contemplative, and mighty, in that even the Brahmā Sahampati comes to listen to the Dhamma. But still, he's not an arahant like me."

Then the Blessed One, having eaten the meal provided by Uruvelakassapa, stayed on in the forest grove.

At that time, Uruvelakassapa had prepared a great sacrifice, and people from the whole area of Magadha & Aṅga wanted to come, bringing along lots of staple & non-staple food. Then it occurred to Uruvelakassapa, "Right now I have prepared a great sacrifice, and people from the whole area of Magadha & Aṅga will come, bringing along lots of staple & non-staple food. If the Great Contemplative performs a marvel in front of the large crowd of people, his gains & honor will increase, whereas my gains & honor will dwindle. Oh, I hope the Great Contemplative doesn't come tomorrow!"

Then the Blessed One, having known with his awareness the train of thought in Uruvelakassapa's awareness, went to the northern Kuru country and, taking almsfood from there, consumed it at Anotatta Lake and spent the day right there.

As the night was ending, Uruvelakassapa went to the Blessed One and, on arrival, said to him, "It's time, Great Contemplative. The meal is ready. But why didn't you come yesterday, Great Contemplative? I even remember (thinking,)

‘Why isn’t the Great Contemplative coming?’ Your share of staple & non-staple food was set aside.”

“Didn’t it occur to you, ‘Right now I have prepared a great sacrifice, and people from the whole area of Magadha & Aṅga will come, bringing along lots of staple & non-staple food. If the Great Contemplative performs a marvel in front of the large crowd of people, his gains & honor will increase, whereas my gains & honor will dwindle. Oh, I hope the Great Contemplative doesn’t come tomorrow!’ Kassapa, having known with my awareness the train of thought in your awareness, I went to the northern Kuru country and, taking almsfood from there, consumed it at Anotatta Lake and spent the day right there.”

The thought occurred to Uruvelakassapa, “He’s powerful, the Great Contemplative, and mighty, in that he knew my awareness with his awareness. But still, he’s not an arahant like me.”

Then the Blessed One, having eaten the meal provided by Uruvelakassapa, stayed on in the forest grove.

At that time a cast-off cloth accrued to the Blessed One. He thought, “Where might I wash this cast-off cloth?”

Then Sakka the deva-king, having known with his awareness the train of thought in the Blessed One’s awareness, dug a reservoir with his hand and said to the Blessed One, “Lord, may the Blessed One wash the cast-off cloth here.”

The Blessed One thought, “On what might I scrub the cast-off cloth?”

Then Sakka the deva-king, having known with his awareness the train of thought in the Blessed One’s awareness, placed a large rock nearby, (saying,) “Lord, may the Blessed One scrub the cast-off cloth here.”

The Blessed One thought, “What will I hold onto to come out (of the water)?”

Then the deva living in the *kakudha* tree, having known with her awareness the train of thought in the Blessed One’s awareness, bent down a branch, (saying,) “Lord, may the Blessed One hold on here and come out.”

The Blessed One thought, “On what might I set out the cast-off cloth (to dry)?”

Then Sakka the deva-king, having known with his awareness the train of thought in the Blessed One’s awareness, placed a large rock nearby, (saying,) “Lord, may the Blessed One set out the cast-off cloth here.”

Then, as the night was ending, Uruvelakassapa went to the Blessed One and said to him, “It’s time, Great Contemplative. The meal is ready. But why is it, Great Contemplative, that before there wasn’t a reservoir here, and now there is a reservoir here? Before this rock wasn’t placed here. Who placed this rock here? Before the branch of this kakudha tree wasn’t bent down—now it’s bent down.”

“Just now, Kassapa, a cast-off cloth accrued to me. I thought, ‘Where might I wash this cast-off cloth?’

“Then Sakka the deva-king, having known with his awareness the train of thought in my awareness, dug a reservoir with his hand and said to me, ‘Lord, may the Blessed One wash the cast-off cloth here.’

“Kassapa, this reservoir was dug with a non-human hand.

“I thought, ‘On what might I scrub the cast-off cloth?’

“Then Sakka the deva-king, having known with his awareness the train of thought in my awareness, placed a large rock nearby, (saying,) ‘Lord, may the Blessed One scrub the cast-off cloth here.’

“Kassapa, this rock was placed by a non-human.

“I thought, ‘What will I hold onto to come out (of the water)?’

“Then the deva living in the kakudha tree, having known with her awareness the train of thought in my awareness, bent down a branch, (saying,) ‘Lord, may the Blessed One hold on here and come out.’

“This kakudha tree was brought to my hand.

“I thought, ‘On what might I set out the cast-off cloth (to dry)?’

“Then Sakka the deva-king, having known with his awareness the train of thought in my awareness, placed a large rock nearby, (saying,) ‘Lord, may the Blessed One set out the cast-off cloth here.’

“Kassapa, this rock was placed by a non-human.”

The thought occurred to Uruvelakassapa, “He’s powerful, the Great Contemplative, and mighty, in that Sakka the deva-king performed a service for him. But still, he’s not an arahant like me.”

Then the Blessed One, having eaten the meal provided by Uruvelakassapa, stayed on in the forest grove.

As the night was ending, Uruvelakassapa went to the Blessed One and, on arrival, said to him, “It’s time, Great Contemplative. The meal is ready.”

Sending Uruvelakassapa away—“You go on, Kassapa; I’m coming”—he took a fruit from the rose-apple tree after which the ‘Rose-apple Continent’⁶⁵ is named, arrived first, and sat down in the fire hall.

Uruvelakassapa the dreadlocked ascetic saw the Blessed One sitting in the fire hall and, on seeing him, said, “By which road did you come, Great Contemplative? I set out before you, but you, arriving first, are sitting in the fire hall.”

“Just now, Kassapa, I sent you away and then—taking a fruit from the rose-apple tree after which the ‘Rose-apple Continent’ is named—arrived first and sat down in the fire hall. This is the rose-apple: consummate in color, consummate in aroma, and consummate in flavor. Eat it if you like.”

“Enough, Great Contemplative, you yourself brought it, you eat it yourself.”

The thought occurred to Uruvelakassapa, “He’s powerful, the Great Contemplative, and mighty, in that he, sending me away first, took a fruit from the rose-apple tree after which the ‘Rose-apple Continent’ is named, arrived first, and sat down in the fire hall. But still, he’s not an arahant like me.”

Then the Blessed One, having eaten the meal provided by Uruvelakassapa, stayed on in the forest grove.

As the night was ending, Uruvelakassapa went to the Blessed One and, on arrival, said to him, “It’s time, Great Contemplative. The meal is ready.”

Sending Uruvelakassapa away—“You go on, Kassapa; I’m coming”—he took a mango from a tree not far from the rose-apple tree after which the ‘Rose-apple Continent’ is named, arrived first, and sat down in the fire hall.

... a myrobalan from a tree not far from the rose-apple tree...

... a yellow myrobalan from a tree not far from the rose-apple tree...

... having gone to the (Heaven of the) Thirty-Three, he took a coral tree flower, arrived first, and sat down in the fire hall. Uruvelakassapa the dreadlocked ascetic saw the Blessed One sitting in the fire hall and, on seeing him, said, “By which road did you come, Great Contemplative? I set out before you, but you, coming first, are sitting in the fire hall.”

“Just now, Kassapa, I sent you away and then—having gone to the (Heaven of the) Thirty-Three and taking a coral tree flower—arrived first and am sitting down in the fire hall. This is the coral tree flower: consummate in color and consummate in aroma.”⁶⁶

The thought occurred to Uruvelakassapa, “He’s powerful, the Great Contemplative, and mighty, in that he, sending me away first, going to the (Heaven of the) Thirty-Three and taking a coral tree flower, arrived first and sat down in the fire hall. But still, he’s not an arahant like me.”

At that time the dreadlocked ascetics, wanting to attend to the fires, were unable to split the firewood. It occurred to the dreadlocked ascetics, “No doubt it’s because of the supranormal power of the Great Contemplative that we’re unable to split the firewood.”

Then the Blessed One said to Uruvelakassapa, “Kassapa, may the firewood be split.”

“May it be split, Great Contemplative!”

At once, five hundred pieces of firewood were split. The thought occurred to Uruvelakassapa, “He’s powerful, the Great Contemplative, and mighty, in that the pieces of firewood were split. But still, he’s not an arahant like me.”

At that time the dreadlocked ascetics, wanting to attend to the fires, were unable to light the fires. It occurred to the dreadlocked ascetics, “No doubt it’s because of the supranormal power of the Great Contemplative that we’re unable to light the fires.”

Then the Blessed One said to Uruvelakassapa, “Kassapa, may the fires be lit.”

“May they be lit, Great Contemplative!”

At once, five hundred fires were lit. The thought occurred to Uruvelakassapa, “He’s powerful, the Great Contemplative, and mighty, in that the fires were lit. But still, he’s not an arahant like me.”

At that time the dreadlocked ascetics, wanting to attend to the fires, were unable to put out the fires. It occurred to the dreadlocked ascetics, “No doubt it’s because of the supranormal power of the Great Contemplative that we’re unable to put out the fires.”

Then the Blessed One said to Uruvelakassapa, “Kassapa, may the fires go out.”

“May they go out, Great Contemplative!”

At once, five hundred fires went out. The thought occurred to Uruvelakassapa, “He’s powerful, the Great Contemplative, and mighty, in that the fires went out. But still, he’s not an arahant like me.”

Then the dreadlocked ascetics, in the cold, winter “middle-eight nights,”⁶⁷ in the time of snowfall, were submerging & emerging in the Nerañjarā River—doing submerging-&-emerging. The Blessed One materialized five hundred charcoal heaters at which the dreadlocked ascetics warmed themselves after coming out (of the water).

It occurred to the dreadlocked ascetics, “No doubt it’s because of the supranormal power of the Great Contemplative that these charcoal heaters have materialized.”

The thought occurred to Uruvelakassapa, “He’s powerful, the Great Contemplative, and mighty, in that he materialized so many charcoal heaters. But still, he’s not an arahant like me.”

At that time, a great, out-of-season storm-cloud rained down, and a great flood was produced. The place where the Blessed One was staying was inundated with the water. He thought, “Why don’t I, pushing the water back all around, walk back & forth in the middle on dusty ground?”

Then the Blessed One, pushing the water back all around, walked back & forth in the middle on dusty ground.

Then Uruvelakassapa, (thinking,) “May the Great Contemplative not be carried away by the water!” went by boat with many dreadlocked ascetics to the place where the Blessed One was staying. Uruvelakassapa saw the Blessed One, having pushed the water back all around, walking back & forth in the middle on dusty ground. He said, “Are you here, Great Contemplative?”

Saying, “Yes, I am, Kassapa,” the Blessed One rose up into the air and came down in the boat.

The thought occurred to Uruvelakassapa, “He’s powerful, the Great Contemplative, and mighty, in that he wasn’t carried away by the water. But still, he’s not an arahant like me.”

Then it occurred to the Blessed One, “For a long time this worthless man keeps having the thought, ‘He’s powerful, the Great Contemplative, and mighty, but still, he’s not an arahant like me.’ What if I were to terrify this dreadlocked ascetic?”

So he said to Uruvelakassapa, “You, Kassapa, are neither an arahant nor one endowed with the path to arahantship. You don’t even have a way of practice by which you would become an arahant or one endowed with the path to arahantship.”

Then Uruvelakassapa, putting his head down at the feet of the Blessed One, said, “May I receive the Going-forth in the Blessed One’s presence? May I receive the Acceptance?”

“Kassapa, you are the leader of five hundred dreadlocked ascetics—their trainer, head, foremost, & chief. Inform them of this, (so that) they will do what they think (is appropriate).”

Then Uruvelakassapa went to the dreadlocked ascetics and, on arrival, said to them, “Sirs, I want to live the holy life under the Great Contemplative. Do what you think (is appropriate).”

“For a long time, sir, we have been highly impressed with the Great Contemplative. If you are going to live the holy life under him, all of us will likewise live the holy life under him.”

So the dreadlocked ascetics—having let the water carry away the mingled mess of their hair, their dreadlocks, their ritual vessels, carrying poles, & fire-worship paraphernalia—went to the Blessed One. On arrival, having put their heads at the Blessed One’s feet, they said, “May we receive the Going-forth in the Blessed One’s presence? May we receive the Acceptance?”

“Come, monks,” said the Blessed One. “Well taught is the Dhamma. Live the holy life for the right ending of stress.”

That was the venerable ones’ Acceptance. — [*Mv 1:9.1–20.19*](#)

Ven. Uruvelakassapa:

“Having seen the marvels
of the prestigious Gotama,
I still didn’t fall down before him—
deceived by envy, conceit.

Knowing my resolves,
he reproved me—
the trainer of men.
Then I was terrified, amazed,
my hair standing on end!

Whatever limited power I had before,
as a dreadlocked ascetic:
Repudiating it right then,
I went forth

in the Victor's dispensation.

Before, I was content with sacrifices,
and honored the property of sensuality.

Later, I uprooted
passion, aversion, & delusion.

I know where I was born before.

My divine eye is purified.

Having supranormal powers,
knowing the minds of others,
I've attained the divine ear.

And the goal for which I went forth,
from home into homelessness:

That goal of mine
has been attained by me—the ending
of all fetters.” — *Thag 6:1*

Then Nadikassapa the dreadlocked ascetic saw the mingled mess of hair, dreadlocks, ritual vessels, carrying poles, & fire-worship paraphernalia being carried away by the water, and on seeing it he thought, “I hope my brother hasn't met with disaster!”

So he sent the dreadlocked ascetics, “Go find out about my brother.” And he himself went with the three hundred dreadlocked ascetics to Ven. Uruvelakassapa. On arrival, he said to Ven. Uruvelakassapa, “Is this better, Kassapa?”

“Yes, friend, it's better.”

So the dreadlocked ascetics—having let the water carry away the mingled mess of their hair, their dreadlocks, their ritual vessels, carrying poles, & fire-worship paraphernalia—went to the Blessed One. On arrival, having put their heads at the Blessed One's feet, they said, “May we receive the Going-forth in the Blessed One's presence? May we receive the Acceptance?”

“Come, monks,” said the Blessed One. “Well taught is the Dhamma. Live the holy life for the right ending of stress.”

That was the venerable ones' Acceptance. — [*Mv 1:20.20–21*](#)

Ven. Nadikassapa:

How truly for my welfare
did the Buddha come
to the River Nerañjarā!
Hearing his Dhamma,
I renounced wrong view.

I had performed sacrifices,
 great & small,
made fire oblations,
supposing, “This is purification”:
 run-of-the-mill, blind.

Having jumped
into a thicket of views,
deluded by grasping,
I supposed impurity was purity:
 unknowing, blind.

I’ve abandoned wrong view,
torn apart all states of becoming.
I make an oblation
to the fire worthy of offerings:
 I pay homage
 to the Tathāgata.

I’ve abandoned all delusion,
torn apart craving for becoming.
Totally ended is birth-wandering-on:
 There is now no further-becoming. — *Thag 5:6*

Then Gayākassapa the dreadlocked ascetic saw the mingled mess of hair, dreadlocks, ritual vessels, carrying poles, & fire-worship paraphernalia being carried away by the water, and on seeing it he thought, “I hope my brothers haven’t met with disaster!”

So he sent the dreadlocked ascetics, “Go find out about my brothers.” And he himself went with the two hundred dreadlocked ascetics to Ven. Uruvelakassapa. On arrival, he said to Ven. Uruvelakassapa, “Is this better, Kassapa?”

“Yes, friend, it’s better.”

So the dreadlocked ascetics—having let the water carry away the mingled mess of their hair, their dreadlocks, their ritual vessels, carrying poles, & their fire-worship paraphernalia—went to the Blessed One. On arrival, having put their heads at the Blessed One’s feet, they said, “May we receive the Going-forth in the Blessed One’s presence? May we receive the Acceptance?”

“Come, monks,” said the Blessed One. “Well taught is the Dhamma. Live the holy life for the right ending of stress.”

That was the venerable ones’ Acceptance. — [*Mv 1:20.22–23*](#)

Ven. Gayākassapa:

Morning, mid-day, & evening,
three times a day,
I went down into the water, (thinking,)
“By this Gaya-phaggunī ritual at Gayā,
whatever evil I have done,
in other, past lives,
I now cause them to be carried away”:
I used to be of that view.

But having heard the well spoken word,
verses connected with
the Dhamma,
the goal,
I reflected appropriately
on the truth
in accordance with the goal.

Washed of all evil am I—
stainless, cleansed, clean—
the Pure One’s pure heir,
the Awakened One’s child,
his son.

Having plunged into the eightfold stream,
I’ve caused all evil to be carried away.
I’ve attained the three knowledges.
The Buddha’s bidding: done. — *Thag 5:7*

THE FIRE SERMON

Then the Blessed One, having stayed near Uruvelā as long as he liked, set out for Gayā Head with a large Saṅgha of monks—a thousand monks, all of them the former dreadlocked ascetics. And the Blessed One stayed right there at Gayā Head with the thousand monks. There he addressed the monks:

“Monks, the All is aflame. What All is aflame? The eye is aflame. Forms are aflame. Consciousness at the eye is aflame. Contact at the eye is aflame. And whatever there is that arises in dependence on contact at the eye—experienced as pleasure, pain or neither-pleasure-nor-pain—that too is aflame. Aflame with what? Aflame with the fire of passion, the fire of aversion, the fire of delusion. Aflame, I tell you, with birth, aging, & death, with sorrows, lamentations, pains, distresses, & despairs.

“The ear is aflame. Sounds are aflame....

“The nose is aflame. Aromas are aflame....

“The tongue is aflame. Flavors are aflame....

“The body is aflame. Tactile sensations are aflame....

“The intellect is aflame. Ideas are aflame. Consciousness at the intellect is aflame. Contact at the intellect is aflame. And whatever there is that arises in dependence on contact at the intellect—experienced as pleasure, pain or neither-pleasure-nor-pain—that too is aflame. Aflame with what? Aflame with the fire of passion, the fire of aversion, the fire of delusion. Aflame, I say, with birth, aging, & death, with sorrows, lamentations, pains, distresses, & despairs.

“Seeing thus, the well instructed disciple of the noble ones grows disenchanted with the eye, disenchanted with forms, disenchanted with consciousness at the eye, disenchanted with contact at the eye. And whatever there is that arises in dependence on contact at the eye, experienced as pleasure, pain, or neither-pleasure-nor-pain: With that, too, he grows disenchanted.

“He grows disenchanted with the ear....

“He grows disenchanted with the nose....

“He grows disenchanted with the tongue....

“He grows disenchanted with the body....

“He grows disenchanted with the intellect, disenchanted with ideas, disenchanted with consciousness at the intellect, disenchanted with contact at the intellect. And whatever there is that arises in dependence on contact at the intellect, experienced as pleasure, pain, or neither-pleasure-nor-pain: He grows disenchanted with that too. Disenchanted, he becomes dispassionate. Through dispassion, he is fully released. With full release, there is the knowledge, ‘Fully released.’ He discerns that ‘Birth is ended, the holy life fulfilled, the task done. There is nothing further for this world.’”

That is what the Blessed One said. Gratified, the monks delighted at his words. And while this explanation was being given, the hearts of the one thousand monks, through lack of clinging/sustenance, were fully released from effluents.

Then the Blessed One, having stayed at Gayā Head as long as he liked, set out on a wandering tour toward Rājagaha with the large Saṅgha of monks—a thousand monks, all of them the former dreadlocked ascetics. Traveling by stages, he arrived at Rājagaha. And there near Rājagaha the Blessed One stayed at the Suppatitṭha Shrine in the Sapling Forest Park.

KING BIMBISĀRA OF MAGADHA

Then the King of Magadha, Seniya Bimbisāra, heard, “Master Gotama the contemplative—a son of the Sakyans, having gone forth from the Sakyan clan—has arrived at Rājagaha and is dwelling at the Suppatitṭha Shrine in the Sapling Forest Park. And of that Master Gotama this fine reputation has spread: ‘He is indeed a Blessed One, worthy & rightly self-awakened, consummate in clear-knowing & conduct, well-gone, an expert with regard to the cosmos, unexcelled trainer of people fit to be tamed, teacher of devas & human beings, awakened, blessed. He makes known—having realized it through direct knowledge—this cosmos with its devas, Māras, & Brahmās, this generation with its contemplatives & brahmans, its royalty & common people. He explains the Dhamma admirable in the beginning, admirable in the middle, admirable in the end; he proclaims the holy life both in its particulars & in its essence, entirely complete, surpassingly pure.’ It is good to see such a worthy one.”

Then the King of Magadha, Seniya Bimbisāra, accompanied by 120,000 Magadhan householders & brahmans, went to the Blessed One. On arrival, he

bowed down to the Blessed One and sat to one side. Some of the 120,000 Magadhan householders & brahmans also bowed down to the Blessed One and sat to one side. Some of them exchanged courteous greetings with the Blessed One and, after an exchange of friendly greetings & courtesies, sat to one side. Some of them, having raised their hands palm-to-palm in front of the heart to the Blessed One, sat to one side. Some of them, after announcing their name & clan in the Blessed One's presence, sat to one side. Some of them, staying silent, sat to one side.

Then the thought occurred to the 120,000 Magadhan householders & brahmans, "Is the Great Contemplative practicing the holy life under Uruvelakassapa, or is Uruvelakassapa practicing the holy life under the Great Contemplative?"

The Blessed One, having known with his awareness the train of thought in the awarenesses of the 120,000 Magadhan householders & brahmans, addressed Ven. Uruvelakassapa with a verse:

"Having seen what,
while living at Uruvelā,
has the teacher of thin ascetics
abandoned the fire?
I ask you about this matter, Kassapa:
How was your fire oblation abandoned?"

Ven. Uruvelakassapa:

"Forms, sounds, & flavors too,
sensuality with women—
sacrifices promise these.
Having seen of acquisitions,
'This is stained,'
I no longer delight in oblations or sacrifices."

The Buddha:

"Now that your mind doesn't delight
in forms, sounds,
or even flavors,
then in the cosmos

with its human beings & devas,
what is your mind's delight?
Explain it to me, Kassapa."

Ven. Uruvelakassapa:

"Having seen the state of peace
without acquisitions,
having nothing,
unattached
to sensuality & becoming,
the state unchanging,
leading to nothing else,
I no longer delight in oblations or sacrifices."

Then Ven. Uruvelakassapa got up from his seat, arranged his upper robe over one shoulder and, putting his head at the Blessed One's feet, said, "The Blessed One is my teacher. I am his disciple. The Blessed One is my teacher. I am his disciple."

The thought occurred to the 120,000 Magadhan householders & brahmans, "Uruvelakassapa is practicing the holy life under the Great Contemplative."

Then the Blessed One, having known with his awareness the train of thought in the awarenesses of the 120,000 Magadhan householders & brahmans, gave them a graduated talk: a talk on giving, a talk on virtue, a talk on heaven; he proclaimed the drawbacks of, degradation in, & defilement in sensuality, and the rewards of renunciation. Then—when he knew that they were of ready mind, malleable mind, unhindered mind, exultant mind, confident mind—he proclaimed to them the distinctive teaching of the Buddhas: stress, origination, cessation, path. Just as a clean piece of cloth, free from grime, would properly take dye, in the same way, the dustless, stainless Dhamma eye arose for 110,000 Magadhan householders & brahmans, headed by Bimbisāra, as they were sitting right there: "*Whatever is subject to origination is all subject to cessation.*"

(The remaining) ten thousand declared themselves lay followers.

Then the King of Magadha, Seniya Bimbisāra, having seen the Dhamma... said to the Blessed One, "Lord, before, when I was still a prince, I had five aspirations. Now they are fulfilled for me.

“Lord, before, when I was still a prince, I thought, ‘O! May I be consecrated as king!’ That, lord, was my first aspiration. Now it is fulfilled for me.

“May an arahant, rightly self-awakened, alight in my kingdom!’ This, lord, was my second aspiration. Now it is fulfilled for me.

“And may I attend on that Blessed One!’ This, lord, was my third aspiration. Now it is fulfilled for me.

“And may that Blessed One teach me the Dhamma!’ This, lord, was my fourth aspiration. Now it is fulfilled for me.

“And may I understand that Blessed One’s Dhamma!’ This, lord, was my fifth aspiration. Now it is fulfilled for me.

“Lord, before, when I was still a prince, I had these five aspirations. Now they are fulfilled for me. Magnificent, lord! Magnificent! ... May Master Gotama remember me as a lay follower who has gone for refuge from this day forward, for life. And may the Blessed One acquiesce to my meal tomorrow, along with the Saṅgha of monks.”

The Blessed One acquiesced with silence.

Then the King of Magadha, Seniya Bimbisāra, understanding the Blessed One’s acquiescence, got up from his seat, bowed down to him, circumambulated him, keeping him to his right, and left.

As the night was ending, the King of Magadha, Seniya Bimbisāra, having ordered exquisite staple & non-staple food prepared, had the time announced to the Blessed One: “It’s time, lord. The meal is ready.”

Then, early in the morning, the Blessed One—having adjusted his under robe and carrying his bowl & outer robe—entered Rājagaha with the large Saṅgha of monks, a thousand monks, all of them the former dreadlocked ascetics. Now at that time, Sakka the deva-king, assuming the form of a brahman youth, went along ahead of the large Saṅgha of monks headed by the Buddha, singing this verse:

“The Tamed One,
with the tamed—
the former dreadlocked ascetics!
The Thoroughly Released One,
with the thoroughly released!
The color of golden ginger,
the Blessed One has entered Rājagaha.

The Released One...

The One who has Crossed Over...

The Peaceful One,
with the peaceful ones—
the former dreadlocked ascetics!
The Thoroughly Released One,
with the thoroughly released!
The color of golden ginger,
the Blessed One has entered Rājagaha.

He has

ten dwellings,
ten strengths—

knower of

ten qualities,
endowed with

ten⁶⁸—

surrounded by ten hundreds,
the Blessed One has entered Rājagaha.”

On seeing Sakka the deva-king, the people said, “How handsome, that brahman youth! How good-looking, that brahman youth! How inspiring, that brahman youth! Whose (son/student) is that brahman youth?”

When that was said, Sakka the deva-king addressed the people in verse:

“That enlightened one,
everywhere tamed,
the pure, matchless individual,
worthy, well-gone in the world:
His attendant am I.”

Then the Blessed One went to the King of Magadha, Seniya Bimbisāra’s residence and sat down on a seat laid out, along with the Saṅgha of monks. Then the King of Magadha, Seniya Bimbisāra, with his own hands, served & satisfied the Saṅgha of monks headed by the Blessed One with exquisite staple & non-staple food.

When the Blessed One had finished his meal and had rinsed his bowl & hands, the king sat to one side. As he was sitting there, it occurred to him, “Where should the Blessed One stay, that would be neither too far from the village nor too close, accessible, where interested people could come out, not crowded by day, with few noises or sounds of voices at night, with an air of isolation, private from human beings, and appropriate for seclusion?”

He thought, “I have this Bamboo Forest [Veḷuvana] Park, which is neither too far from the village nor too close... appropriate for seclusion. Why don’t I give the Bamboo Forest Park to the Saṅgha of monks headed by the Blessed One?”

So the King of Magadha, Seniya Bimbisāra, taking a golden water vessel [and pouring water on the ground], made this offering to the Blessed One, “I give this Bamboo Forest Park to the Saṅgha of monks headed by the Blessed One.”

The Blessed One accepted the monastery. Then, having instructed, urged, roused, & encouraged the King of Magadha, Seniya Bimbisāra, with Dhamma talk, he got up from his seat and left.

Then, having given a Dhamma talk on this subject, the Blessed One addressed the monks, “Monks, I allow a monastery.”

THE TWO CHIEF DISCIPLES

Now at that time the wanderer Sañjaya was dwelling in Rājagaha with a large company of wanderers—250 in all. And at that time Sāriputta & Moggallāna were living the holy life under Sañjaya. They had made this pact: “Whoever attains the deathless first will inform the other.”

Then, early in the morning, Ven. Assaji—having adjusted his under robe and carrying his bowl & outer robe—entered Rājagaha for alms: gracious in the way he approached and departed, looked forward and behind, drew in and stretched out (his arm); his eyes downcast, his every movement consummate. Sāriputta the wanderer saw Ven. Assaji going for alms in Rājagaha: gracious... his eyes downcast, his every movement consummate. On seeing him, the thought occurred to him: “Surely, of those monks in this world who are arahants or who are endowed with the path to arahantship, this is one. What if I were to go to him and question him: ‘Friend, on whose account have you gone forth? Or who is your teacher? Or in whose Dhamma do you delight?’”

But then the thought occurred to Sāriputta the wanderer: “This is the wrong time to question him. Having entered among houses, he is going for alms. What if I were to follow behind this monk? The path is found by those who seek it.”

Then Ven. Assaji, having gone for alms in Rājagaha, took his almsfood and left. Then Sāriputta the wanderer went to Ven. Assaji and, on arrival, exchanged courteous greetings with him. After an exchange of friendly greetings & courtesies, he stood to one side. As he was standing there, Sāriputta the wanderer said to Ven. Assaji, “Clear, my friend, are your faculties—pure your complexion, and bright. On whose account have you gone forth? Who is your teacher? In whose Dhamma do you delight?”

“There is, friend, the Great Contemplative—a son of the Sakyans, gone forth from the Sakyan clan. I have gone forth on account of that Blessed One. That Blessed One is my teacher, and I delight in his Dhamma.”

“What is your teacher’s doctrine? What is his teaching?”

“I am new, friend, not long gone forth, and have just recently come to this Dhamma & Vinaya. I can’t teach the Dhamma in detail, but I can tell you its essence in brief.”

Then Sāriputta the wanderer said to Ven. Assaji,

“May it be so, friend.
Speak a little or a lot,
but tell me just the gist.
Just the gist is what I want.
What use is a lot of verbosity?”

So Ven. Assaji spoke this Dhamma-explanation to Sāriputta the wanderer:

“Whatever phenomena arise from cause:
their cause
& their cessation.
Such is the teaching of the Tathāgata,
the Great Contemplative.”

Then, when he had heard this Dhamma-explanation, the dustless, stainless Dhamma eye arose for Sāriputta the wanderer: “*Whatever is subject to origination is all subject to cessation.*”

Just this Dhamma,
just this much,
and you experienced
the sorrowless state—
unseen, neglected,
for many ten-thousands of eons.

Then Sāriputta the wanderer went to Moggallāna the wanderer. Moggallāna the wanderer saw Sāriputta the wanderer coming from afar and, on seeing him, said to him, “Clear, my friend, are your faculties—pure your complexion, and bright. Have you attained the deathless, my friend?”

“Yes, my friend, I have attained the deathless.”⁶⁹

“But how did you attain the deathless?”

“Just now I saw the monk Assaji entering Rājagaha for alms: gracious in the way he approached and departed, looked forward and behind, drew in and stretched out (his arm); his eyes downcast, his every movement consummate. On seeing him, the thought occurred to me: ‘Surely, of those monks in this world who are arahants or are endowed with the path to arahantship, this is one. What if I were to go to him and question him: “Friend, on whose account have you gone forth? Or who is your teacher? Or in whose Dhamma do you delight?”’

“But then the thought occurred to me: ‘This is the wrong time to question him. Having entered among houses, he is going for alms. What if I were to follow behind this monk? The path is found by those who seek it.’

“Then Ven. Assaji, having gone for alms in Rājagaha, took his almsfood and left. I went to him and, on arrival, exchanged courteous greetings with him. After an exchange of friendly greetings & courtesies, I stood to one side. As I was standing there, I said to him, ‘Clear, my friend, are your faculties—pure your complexion, and bright. On whose account have you gone forth? Who is your teacher? In whose Dhamma do you delight?’”

“‘There is, friend, the Great Contemplative—a son of the Sakyans, gone forth from the Sakyan clan. I have gone forth on account of that Blessed One. That Blessed One is my teacher, and I delight in his Dhamma.’”

“‘What is your teacher’s doctrine? What is his teaching?’”

“‘I am new, friend, not long gone forth, and have just recently come to this Dhamma & Vinaya. I can’t teach the Dhamma in detail, but I can tell you its

essence in brief.”

“Then I said to Ven. Assaji,

‘May it be so, friend.
Speak a little or a lot,
but tell me just the gist.
The gist is what I want.
What use is a lot of verbosity?’

“So Ven. Assaji spoke this Dhamma-explanation:

‘Whatever phenomena arise from cause:
their cause
& their cessation.
Such is the teaching of the Tathāgata,
the Great Contemplative.”

Then, when he had heard this Dhamma-explanation, the dustless, stainless Dhamma eye arose for Moggallāna the wanderer: “*Whatever is subject to origination is all subject to cessation.*”...

Then Moggallāna the wanderer said to Sāriputta the wanderer, “Let’s go to the Blessed One’s presence, my friend. The Blessed One is our teacher.”

“There are these 250 wanderers, my friend, who live here in dependence on us and look up to us. Let’s inform them of this. They will do whatever they think (is appropriate).”

So Sāriputta & Moggallāna went to the wanderers and said to them, “Friends, we are going to the Blessed One’s presence. The Blessed One is our teacher.”

“We are living here in dependence on you and look up to you. If you are going to live the holy life under the Great Contemplative, all of us will likewise live the holy life under the Great Contemplative.”

Then Sāriputta & Moggallāna went to Sañjaya the wanderer and said to him, “Friend, we are going to the Blessed One’s presence. The Blessed One is our teacher.”

“Enough, friends. Don’t go. Let all three of us look after this group.”

A second time... A third time, Sāriputta & Moggallāna said to Sañjaya the wanderer, “Friend, we are going to the Blessed One’s presence. The Blessed One

is our teacher.”

“Enough, friends. Don’t go. Let all three of us look after this group.”

Then Sāriputta & Moggallāna, taking along the 250 wanderers, went to the Bamboo Forest, but Sañjaya the wanderer coughed up hot blood from his mouth right there.

The Blessed One saw Sāriputta & Moggallāna coming from afar and, on seeing them, addressed the monks, “Monks, these two friends who are approaching, Kolita & Upatissa⁷⁰: They will be my pair of disciples, my foremost, most auspicious pair.

“Deep their range of knowledge,
unsurpassed in the destruction of acquisitions,
released,
they’ve arrived at the Bamboo Forest.
Then the Teacher said of them:
“These two friends who are approaching,
Kolita & Upatissa:
They will be my pair of disciples,
my foremost, most auspicious pair.”

Then Sāriputta & Moggallāna went to the Blessed One and, on arrival, put their heads at the Blessed One’s feet and said, “May we receive the Going-forth in the Blessed One’s presence? May we receive the Acceptance?”

“Come, monks,” said the Blessed One. “Well taught is the Dhamma. Live the holy life for the right ending of stress.”

That was the venerable ones’ Acceptance.

At that time, many sons of well known Magadhan families were living the holy life under the Blessed One. People criticized & complained & spread it about, “The contemplative Gotama is practicing for the sake of heirlessness. The contemplative Gotama is practicing for the sake of widowhood. The contemplative Gotama is practicing for the sake of cutting off family lineages. Now the thousand dreadlocked ascetics have been given the Going-forth by him, and also these 250 wanderers of Sañjaya. And many, many well known sons of Magadhan families are living the holy life under him.”

It got so bad that on seeing monks, they would taunt them with this verse:

“The Great Contemplative has come,

to the mountain fortress of the Magadhans.
Having led away all of Sañjaya's,
who will he lead away now?"

The monks heard the people criticizing & complaining & spreading this about, so they reported the matter to the Blessed One.

"Monks, the noise won't last long. After seven days it will disappear. Monks, in case anybody taunts you with this verse,

"The Great Contemplative has come,
to the mountain fortress of the Magadhans.
Having led away all of Sañjaya's,
who will he lead away now?"

"counter the taunt with this one:

"The Tathāgatas, great heroes,
do lead with the true Dhamma.
For those who know,
who lead by the Dhamma,
what's the jealousy?"

Then at that time, on seeing monks, people would taunt them with the verse:

"The Great Contemplative has come,
to the mountain fortress of the Magadhans.
Having led away all of Sañjaya's,
who will he lead away now?"

The monks would counter the taunt with this verse:

"The Tathāgatas, great heroes,
do lead with the true Dhamma.
For those who know,
who lead by the Dhamma,
what's the jealousy?"

The people said, "The Sakyan-son contemplatives lead by Dhamma, not by non-Dhamma, they say."

The noise lasted just seven days. With the passage of seven days, it disappeared. — [*Mv 1:21–24*](#)

The Canon tells of the teachings that, according to the Commentary, eventually led Ven. Moggallāna to full awakening.

Once the Blessed One was living among the Bhaggas in the Deer Park at Bhesakalā Forest, near Crocodile Haunt. At that time Ven. Mahā Moggallāna [prior to his awakening] sat nodding near the village of Kallavālamutta in Magadha. The Blessed One, with his purified divine eye, surpassing the human, saw Ven. Mahā Moggallāna as he sat nodding near the village of Kallavālamutta in Magadha. As soon as he saw this—just as a strong man might extend his flexed arm or flex his extended arm—he disappeared from among the Bhaggas in the Deer Park... and re-appeared... right in front of Ven. Mahā Moggallāna. There he sat down on a seat laid out. Seated, the Blessed One said to Ven. Mahā Moggallāna, “Are you nodding, Moggallāna? Are you nodding?”

“Yes, lord.”

“Well then, Moggallāna, whatever perception you have in mind when drowsiness descends on you, don’t attend to that perception, don’t pursue it. It’s possible that by doing this you will shake off your drowsiness.

“But if by doing this you don’t shake off your drowsiness, then recall to your awareness the Dhamma as you have heard & memorized it, re-examine it, & ponder it over in your mind. It’s possible that by doing this you will shake off your drowsiness.

“But if by doing this you don’t shake off your drowsiness, then repeat aloud in detail the Dhamma as you have heard & memorized it. It’s possible that by doing this you will shake off your drowsiness.

“But if by doing this you don’t shake off your drowsiness, then pull both your earlobes and rub your limbs with your hands. It’s possible that by doing this you will shake off your drowsiness.

“But if by doing this you don’t shake off your drowsiness, then get up from your seat and, after washing your eyes out with water, look around in all directions and upward to the major stars & constellations. It’s possible that by doing this you will shake off your drowsiness.

“But if by doing this you don’t shake off your drowsiness, then attend to the perception of light, resolve on the perception of daytime, (dwelling) by night as by day, and by day as by night. By means of an awareness thus open & unhampered, develop a brightened mind. It’s possible that by doing this you will shake off your drowsiness.

“But if by doing this you don’t shake off your drowsiness, then—percipient of what lies in front & behind—set a distance to meditate walking back & forth, your senses inwardly immersed, your mind not straying outwards. It’s possible that by doing this you will shake off your drowsiness.

“But if by doing this you don’t shake off your drowsiness, then—reclining on your right side—take up the lion’s posture, one foot placed on top of the other, mindful, alert, with your mind set on getting up. As soon as you wake up, get up quickly, with the thought, ‘I won’t stay indulging in the pleasure of lying down, the pleasure of reclining, the pleasure of drowsiness.’ That is how you should train yourself.

“And further, Moggallāna, should you train yourself: ‘I will not visit families with my pride [literally: my trunk (i.e., an elephant’s trunk)] lifted high.’ That is how you should train yourself. Among families there are many jobs that have to be done, so that people don’t pay attention to a visiting monk. If a monk visits them with his trunk lifted high, the thought will occur to him, ‘Now who, I wonder, has caused a split between me and this family? The people seem to have no liking for me.’ Getting nothing, he becomes abashed. Abashed, he becomes restless. Restless, he becomes unrestrained. Unrestrained, his mind is far from concentration.

“And further, Moggallāna, should you train yourself: ‘I will speak no confrontational speech.’ That is how you should train yourself. When there is confrontational speech, a lot of discussion can be expected. When there is a lot of discussion, there is restlessness. One who is restless becomes unrestrained. Unrestrained, his mind is far from concentration.

“It’s not the case, Moggallāna, that I praise association of every sort. But it’s not the case that I criticize association of every sort. I don’t praise association with householders & renunciates. But as for dwelling places that are free from noise, free from sound, their atmosphere devoid of people, appropriately secluded for resting undisturbed by human beings: I praise association with dwelling places of this sort.”

When this was said, Ven. Moggallāna said to the Blessed One: “Briefly, lord, in what respect is a monk released through the ending of craving, utterly complete, utterly free from bonds, a follower of the utterly holy life, utterly consummate: foremost among devas & human beings?”

“There is the case, Moggallāna, where a monk has heard, ‘*All dhammas are unworthy of attachment.*’ Having heard that all dhammas are unworthy of attachment, he directly knows every dhamma. Directly knowing every dhamma, he comprehends every dhamma. Comprehending every dhamma, then whatever feeling he experiences—pleasure, pain, neither pleasure nor pain—he remains focused on inconstancy, focused on dispassion, focused on cessation, focused on relinquishing with regard to that feeling. As he remains focused on inconstancy, focused on dispassion, focused on cessation, focused on relinquishing with regard to that feeling, he is unsustained by [doesn’t cling to] anything in the world. Unsustained, he isn’t agitated. Unagitated, he totally unbinds right within. He discerns: ‘Birth is ended, the holy life fulfilled, the task done. There is nothing further for this world.’

“It’s in this respect, Moggallāna, that a monk, in brief, is released through the ending of craving, utterly complete, utterly free from bonds, a follower of the utterly holy life, utterly consummate: foremost among devas & human beings.” — [AN 7:58](#)

The Canon itself states that the following teachings led to Ven. Sāriputta’s full awakening.

I have heard that on one occasion the Blessed One was dwelling near Rājagaha on Vulture Peak Mountain, in the Boar’s Cave. Then LongNails the wanderer⁷¹ went to the Blessed One and, on arrival, exchanged courteous greetings with him. After an exchange of friendly greetings & courtesies, he stood to one side. As he was standing there, he said to the Blessed One, “Master Gotama, I am of the view, of the opinion, that ‘All is not pleasing to me.’”

“But even this view of yours, Aggivessana—‘All is not pleasing to me’—is even that not pleasing to you?”

“Even if this view of mine were pleasing to me, Master Gotama, it would still be the same, it would still be the same.”

“Well, Aggivessana, there are more than many in the world who say, ‘It would still be the same, it would still be the same,’ yet they both do not

abandon that view and they cling to another view. There are fewer than few in the world who say, 'It would still be the same, it would still be the same,' and they both abandon that view and do not cling to another view.

"There are some contemplatives & brahmans who are of the view, of the opinion, that 'All is pleasing to me.' There are some contemplatives & brahmans who are of the view, of the opinion, that 'All is not pleasing to me.' There are some contemplatives & brahmans who are of the view, of the opinion, that 'A part is pleasing to me; a part is not pleasing to me.'

"With regard to those contemplatives & brahmans who are of the view, of the opinion, that 'All is pleasing to me': That view of theirs is close to being impassioned, close to bondage, close to delighting, close to holding, close to clinging. With regard to those contemplatives & brahmans who are of the view, of the opinion, that 'All is not pleasing to me': That view of theirs is close to not being impassioned, close to non-bondage, close to not-delighting, close to not-holding, close to not-clinging."

When this was said, LongNails the wanderer said to the Blessed One, "Master Gotama commends my viewpoint. Master Gotama recommends my viewpoint."

"With regard to those contemplatives & brahmans who are of the view, of the opinion that 'A part is pleasing to me; a part is not pleasing to me': Whatever is pleasing to them, their view is close to being impassioned, close to bondage, close to delighting, close to holding, close to clinging. Whatever is not pleasing to them, their view is close to not being impassioned, close to non-bondage, close to not-delighting, close to not-holding, close to not-clinging.

"With regard to those contemplatives & brahmans who are of the view, of the opinion, 'All is pleasing to me': A wise person among them considers that 'If I were to grasp and insist firmly on this view of mine that "All is pleasing to me," and to state that "Only this is true, all else is worthless," I would clash with two—the contemplative or brahman who is of the view, of the opinion that "All is not pleasing to me" and the contemplative or brahman who is of the view, of the opinion that "A part is pleasing to me; a part is not pleasing to me." I would clash with these two. Where there is a clash, there is dispute. Where there is a dispute, quarreling. Where there is quarreling, annoyance. Where there is annoyance, frustration.' Envisioning for himself clash, dispute, quarreling, annoyance, frustration, he both abandons that view and does not cling to

another view. Thus there is the abandoning of these views; thus there is the relinquishing of these views.

“With regard to those contemplatives & brahmans who are of the view, of the opinion that ‘All is not pleasing to me’... ‘A part is pleasing to me; a part is not pleasing to me’: A wise person among them considers that ‘If I were to grasp and insist firmly on this view of mine that “A part is pleasing to me; a part is not pleasing to me,” and to state that “Only this is true, all else is worthless,” I would clash with two....’... Thus there is the abandoning of these views; thus there is the relinquishing of these views.

“Now, Aggivessana, this body—endowed with form, composed of the four primary elements, born from mother & father, nourished with rice & porridge, subject to inconstancy, rubbing, pressing, dissolution, and dispersion—should be envisioned as inconstant, stressful, a disease, a cancer, an arrow, painful, an affliction, alien, a disintegration, an emptiness, not-self. In one who envisions the body as inconstant, stressful, a disease, a cancer, an arrow, painful, an affliction, alien, a disintegration, an emptiness, not-self, any desire for the body, attraction to the body, following after the body is abandoned.

“There are these three kinds of feeling: pleasant feeling, painful feeling, and neither-pleasant-nor-painful feeling. On the occasion when one feels a pleasant feeling, one does not feel either a painful feeling or a neither-pleasant-nor-painful feeling. One feels only a pleasant feeling on that occasion. On the occasion when one feels a painful feeling, one does not feel either a pleasant feeling or a neither-pleasant-nor-painful feeling. One feels only a painful feeling on that occasion. On the occasion when one feels a neither-pleasant-nor-painful feeling, one does not feel either a pleasant feeling or a painful feeling. One feels only a neither-pleasant-nor-painful feeling on that occasion.

“A pleasant feeling is inconstant, fabricated, dependently co-arisen, subject to ending, subject to vanishing, fading, ceasing. A painful feeling is also inconstant, fabricated, dependently co-arisen, subject to ending, subject to vanishing, fading, ceasing. A neither-pleasant-nor-painful feeling is also inconstant, fabricated, dependently co-arisen, subject to ending, subject to vanishing, fading, ceasing.

“Seeing this, an instructed disciple of the noble ones grows disenchanted with pleasant feeling, disenchanted with painful feeling, disenchanted with neither-pleasant-nor-painful feeling. Disenchanted, he grows dispassionate. From dispassion, he is released. With release, there is the knowledge, ‘Released.’

He discerns, ‘Birth is ended, the holy life fulfilled, the task done. There is nothing further for this world.’ A monk whose mind is thus released does not take sides with anyone, does not dispute with anyone. He words things by means of what is said in the world but without grasping at it.”

Now at that time Ven. Sāriputta was sitting⁷² behind the Blessed One, fanning him. The thought occurred to him, “Indeed, it seems that the Blessed One speaks to us of the abandoning of each of these mental qualities through direct knowledge.⁷³ Indeed, it seems that the One Well-Gone speaks to us of the relinquishing of each of these mental qualities through direct knowledge.” As Ven. Sāriputta was reflecting thus, his mind was released from effluents through not-clinging,⁷⁴ whereas for LongNails the wanderer there arose the dustless, stainless Dhamma eye: “*Whatever is subject to origination is all subject to cessation.*”

Then LongNails the wanderer, having seen the Dhamma... said to the Blessed One:

“Magnificent, Master Gotama! Magnificent! ... May Master Gotama remember me as a lay follower who has gone to him for refuge from this day forward, for life.” — [*MN 74*](#)

Returning Home

The Canon's account of the Buddha's return home to visit his family after his awakening is fairly piecemeal. Later literature, beginning with the commentaries, tried to fill in many of the blanks, imagining some of the more personal and dramatic scenes, such as the Buddha's first encounters with his father; with his stepmother and maternal aunt, Mahāpajāpatī Gotamī; and with his wife. But with only a few exceptions, the Canon limits its accounts to incidents that carried lessons in Dhamma & Vinaya.

This chapter begins with one of the few exceptions: a poem attributed to Ven. Kāludāyin, a monk not otherwise identified in the Vinaya or the four nikāyas. The Commentary asserts that, as a lay person, he was sent by the Buddha's father to invite the Buddha to return home. On arriving in the Buddha's presence, he first asked for the Acceptance, and then recited the first part of this poem. Whatever the facts of the case, the connection with the Buddha's father seems likely, in that Ven. Kāludāyin, in the second part of this poem, is addressing him at the time of the Buddha's return, perhaps to make Suddhodana favorably inclined to receive his son.⁷⁵

Covered in embers now are the trees,
shedding their canopy, lord, in search of fruit.
As if flaring up, they glow.
The time, great hero, partakes of savors.

The trees in bloom, delightful,
waft delights
all around, in all directions,
dropping their petals in hope of fruit.

Now, O hero, is the time to set forth.
Neither too cold nor too hot:
Pleasant the season, lord, fit for a journey.
Let them see you—the Sakyans & Koliyans—
facing west, crossing in the Rohiṇī.⁷⁶

In hope they plow the field.
In hope the seed is sown.
In hope do merchants go to sea,
bringing back wealth.
Let the hope in which I stand bear fruit.⁷⁷

Again & again they sow the seed.⁷⁸
Again & again the deva-kings rain.
Again & again farmers plow the fields.
Again & again grain comes to the kingdom.
Again & again beggars wander.
Again & again lords of giving give.
Again & again having given, the lords of giving
again & again go to the heavenly place.

* * *

Truly, an enlightened⁷⁹ one of deep discernment
cleanses, back for seven generations,
the family in which he's born.

I would imagine you to be Sakka,⁸⁰ the deva of devas
for you engendered a sage truly named.

Suddhodana is the name of the Great Seer's father,
and Māyā name of the Buddha's mother⁸¹
who, having nurtured the bodhisatta with her womb,
at the breakup of the body, rejoices in the threefold deva realm.⁸²

She, Gotamī, having passed away,
having fallen away from here,
is now endowed with heavenly sensual pleasures.
She rejoices in the five strings of sensuality,
surrounded by those groups of devas.

I am the son of the Buddha,
who endures what is hard to endure—

Aṅgīrasa⁸³ : incomparable, Such.
You, Sakka, are my father's father.

In the Dhamma, Gotama,
you are my grandfather. — [*Thag 10:1*](#)

The Canon indicates that Nanda, the Buddha's half brother, was ordained as a monk during the Buddha's first visit home, although it does not tell the circumstances of his ordination. Later traditions filled in this blank in great detail. However, the Canon does tell of how Rāhula, the Buddha's son, received the Going-forth at this time.

Then the Blessed One, having stayed at Rājagaha as long as he liked, set out on a wandering tour toward Kapilavatthu and, traveling by stages, arrived at Kapilavatthu. There he stayed among the Sakyans near Kapilavatthu in the Banyan Park.

Then, early in the morning, the Blessed One—having adjusted his under robe and carrying his bowl & outer robe—went to the residence of Suddhodana the Sakyan and, on arrival, sat down on a seat laid out.

Then the queen, Rāhula's mother, said to Prince Rāhula, “Rāhula, that's your father. Go and ask for your inheritance.”

So Prince Rāhula went to the Blessed One and, on arrival, stood in front of him, (saying,) “Contemplative, your shadow is pleasant.”

Then the Blessed One, getting up from his seat, left.

So Prince Rāhula followed along behind the Blessed One, (saying,) “Contemplative, give me my inheritance. Contemplative, give me my inheritance.”

Then the Blessed One addressed Ven. Sāriputta, “In that case, Sāriputta, give Prince Rāhula the Going-forth.”

“How should I give Prince Rāhula the Going-forth, lord?”

Then the Blessed One, having given a Dhamma talk with regard to this cause, to this incident, addressed the monks: “Monks, I allow the Going-forth for a novice by means of the three goings for refuge...”

So Ven. Sāriputta gave Prince Rāhula the Going-forth.

Then Suddhodana the Sakyan went to the Blessed One and, on arrival, having bowed down to him, sat to one side. As he was sitting there, he said to the Blessed One, “Lord, I have one favor to ask of the Blessed One.”

“Tathāgatas have gone beyond favors, Gotama.”

“One that is allowable & blameless.”

“Say it, Gotama.”

“When the Blessed One went forth, lord, I suffered not just a little. Likewise for Nanda, and exceedingly so for Rāhula. Lord, love for a son cuts through the outer skin. Having cut through the outer skin, it cuts through the inner skin. Having cut through the inner skin, it cuts through the flesh. Having cut through the flesh, it cuts through the tendon. Having cut through the tendon, it cuts into the bone. Having cut into the bone, it penetrates the bone marrow and stays there. It would be good, lord, if the Masters didn’t give the Going-forth to sons without the parents’ permission.”

Then the Blessed One instructed, urged, roused, & encouraged Suddhodana the Sakyan with a Dhamma talk.

Having been instructed, urged, roused, & encouraged by the Blessed One with a Dhamma talk, Suddhodana the Sakyan got up from his seat and, having bowed down to the Blessed One, circumambulated him, keeping him to his right, and left.

Then the Blessed One, having given a Dhamma talk with regard to this cause, to this incident, addressed the monks: “Monks, a son without permission from his parents should not be given the Going-forth. Whoever should give it: an offense of wrongdoing.” — [*Mv 1:54*](#)

We do not know how many times the Buddha returned to visit Kapilavatthu. It may have been on this first trip, or on a later one, that a great convocation of devas occurred.

I have heard that on one occasion the Blessed One was dwelling among the Sakyans at Kapilavatthu in the Great Forest, together with a large Saṅgha of approximately five hundred monks, all of them arahants. And most of the devatās from ten world-systems had gathered in order to see the Blessed One & the Saṅgha of monks.

A verse of tribute, composed in an archaic style, lists the names of many of the devas who had come, along with two events that occurred during the convocation.

Then there have also come nāgas
from Lake Nābhasa, Vesālī & Tacchaka:

Kambalas, Assataras, Pāyāgas, & their kin.

And from the River Yāmuna

comes the prestigious nāga, Dhataratṭha.

The great nāga Erāvaṇṇa:

He, too, has come to the forest meeting.

They who swoop down swiftly on nāga kings,

divine, twice-born, winged, their eyesight pure:

(Garuḍas) came from the sky to the midst of the forest.

Citra & Supaṇṇa are their names.

But the Buddha, giving safety to the nāga kings,

made them secure from Supaṇṇa.

Addressing one another with affectionate words,

the nāgas & Supaṇṇas made the Buddha their refuge.

* * *

When all these devas with Indras & Brahmās had come,

Māra's army came as well.

Now look at the Dark One's foolishness!

[He said:] "Come seize them! Bind them!

Tie them down with passion!

Surround them on every side!

Don't let anyone at all escape!"

Thus the great warlord urged on his dark army,

slapping the ground with his hand,

making a horrendous din, as when

a storm cloud bursts with thunder,

lightning, & torrents of rain.

But then he withdrew—enraged,

with none under his sway.

Realizing all this,

the One-with-Eyes felt moved to speak.

The Teacher then said to them,

disciples delighting in his instruction,

"Māra's army has approached. Detect them, monks!"

Listening to the Awakened One's instruction,

they made an ardent effort.

The army retreated from those without passion,
without raising even a hair on their bodies.
Having all won the battle—prestigious, past fear—
they rejoice with all beings:
disciples outstanding among the human race. — [*DN 20*](#)

As time passed, many Sakyans joined the Saṅgha.

At that time the Buddha, the Blessed One, was dwelling near Anupiyā.
Anupiyā is a town of the Mallans.

Now, at that time, many well known Sakyan young men were going forth, following the Blessed One who had gone forth. And at that time, Mahānāma the Sakyan and Anuruddha the Sakyan were two brothers. Anuruddha the Sakyan had been delicately brought up. He had three palaces: one for the cold season, one for the hot season, one for the rainy season. During the four months of the rainy season, he was entertained in the rainy-season palace by minstrels without a single man among them, and he did not come down once from the palace.

The thought occurred to Mahānāma the Sakyan, “At this time, many well known Sakyan princes are going forth, following the Blessed One who has gone forth. But no one in our family has gone forth from home into homelessness. What if I or Anuruddha were to go forth?”

So Mahānāma the Sakyan went to Anuruddha the Sakyan and, on arrival, said to him, “Little brother Anuruddha, at this time many well known Sakyan princes are going forth, following the Blessed One who has gone forth. But no one in our family has gone forth from home into homelessness. So then, you go forth or I’ll go forth.”

“I’m delicately brought up. I can’t go forth from home into homelessness. You go forth.”

“Come, then, little brother Anuruddha, I’ll instruct you in the subject of household life. First, the field is to be ploughed. After it’s been ploughed, it has to be planted. After it’s planted, water has to be let in. After water has been let in, it has to be directed (to the plants.) After the water has been directed, (animals and weeds) have to be removed. After having the (animals and weeds) removed, you have to have it harvested. After it’s been harvested, you have to have it gathered up. After it’s been gathered up, a haystack has to be made.

After a haystack has been made, it has to be threshed. After it's been threshed, the straw has to be taken away. After the straw has been taken away, the chaff has to be winnowed. After the chaff has been winnowed, it has to be sifted. After it's been sifted, it has to be carried up (into a granary). After it's been carried up, in the next year you have to do the very same thing. And then the next year you have to do the very same thing."

"The tasks aren't finished—their end is not discerned! When are the tasks finished? When will their end be discerned? When will we rest and enjoy ourselves, provided and endowed with the five strings of sensuality?"

"Little brother Anuruddha, the tasks aren't finished—their end is not discerned. Our parents and grandfathers died with the tasks not yet finished."

"In that case, you instruct yourself in the subject of household life. I'm going to go forth from home into homelessness."

So Anuruddha went to his mother and, on arrival, said to her, "Mom, I want to go forth from home into homelessness. Mom, please give me your permission to go forth from home into homelessness."

When that was said, Anuruddha's mother said to him, "Anuruddha, my son, you two sons of mine are dear & beloved, not loathsome. Even by death I wouldn't want to be separated from you, so how could I give my permission for you to go forth from home into homelessness while you're still alive?"

A second time... A third time, Anuruddha said to his mother, "Mom, I want to go forth from home into homelessness. Mom, please give me your permission to go forth from home into homelessness."

Now at that time, Bhaddiya the Sakyan king exercised rulership over the Sakyans.⁸⁴ He and Anuruddha the Sakyan were friends.

Then Anuruddha's mother, (thinking,) "This Bhaddiya the Sakyan king, exercising rulership over the Sakyans, is Anuruddha's friend; he wouldn't go forth from home into homelessness," said to Anuruddha, "Anuruddha, my son, if Bhaddiya the Sakyan king goes forth from home into homelessness, then you may also go forth."

So Anuruddha went to Bhaddiya the Sakyan king and, on arrival, said to him, "My friend, my Going-forth depends on yours."

"Whether your Going-forth depends on mine or not, my friend, may it come about. I'm on your side. Go forth as you like."⁸⁵

“Come, my friend, let’s both go forth from home into homelessness.”

“My friend, I can’t go forth from home into homelessness, like the (other) Sakyans. Whatever else I’m able to do for you, I’ll do for you. You go forth.”

“My friend, my mother said to me, ‘Anuruddha, my son, if Bhaddiya the Sakyan king goes forth from home into homelessness, then you may also go forth.’ My friend, this statement was spoken by you, ‘Whether your Going-forth depends on mine or not, my friend, may it come about. I’m on your side. Go forth as you like.’ Come, my friend, let’s both go forth from home into homelessness.”

At that time, people spoke the truth and were true to their word.

So Bhaddiya the Sakyan king said to Anuruddha, “Wait, my friend, for seven years. After seven years we’ll both go forth from home into homelessness.”

“My friend, seven years is too long. I can’t wait seven years.”

“My friend, wait six years... five years... four years... three years... two years... one year. After one year we’ll both go forth from home into homelessness.”

“My friend, one year is too long. I can’t wait one year.”

“Wait, my friend, for seven months. After seven months we’ll both go forth from home into homelessness.”

“My friend, seven months is too long. I can’t wait seven months.”

“My friend, wait six months... five months... four months... three months... two months... one month... half a month. After half a month we’ll both go forth from home into homelessness.”

“My friend, half a month is too long. I can’t wait half a month.”

“My friend, wait for seven days, while I hand over rulership to my sons & brothers.”

“My friend, seven days isn’t long. I’ll wait.”

Then Bhaddiya the Sakyan king, Anuruddha, Ānanda, Bhagu, Kimbila, & Devadatta, with Upāli the barber as the seventh, headed out to the parade ground—as they had done in the past—with a four-fold army.

Having gone far, sending the army back, they went down into another country, removed their ornaments and, bundling them up in an upper cloth,

said to Upāli the barber, “I say, Upāli, go back. This much is enough for your livelihood.”

As Upāli the barber was going back, the thought occurred to him, “These Sakyans are fierce. (Thinking,) ‘The princes were struck down by him,’ they could even have me killed. Now, these Sakyan princes are going to go forth from home into homelessness, so why shouldn’t I?”

Loosening the bundle and hanging the contents up on a tree, saying, “Whoever sees this, it’s given. Take it,” he went to the Sakyan princes. They saw Upāli the barber coming from afar and, on seeing him, said to him, “I say, Upāli, why have you come back?”

“Just now, young masters, as I was going back, the thought occurred to me, ‘These Sakyans are fierce. (Thinking,) ‘The princes were struck down by him,’ they could even have me killed. Now, these Sakyan princes are going to go forth from home into homelessness, so why shouldn’t I?’ So I loosened the bundle and hung the contents up on a tree, saying, ‘Whoever sees this, it’s given. Take it.’ Then I came back again.”

“Well done, I say, Upāli, and that you didn’t go back. The Sakyans are fierce. (Thinking,) ‘The princes were struck down by him,’ they could even have had you killed.”

So the Sakyan princes, taking Upāli the barber along, went to the Blessed One and, on arrival, bowed down to him and sat to one side.

As they were sitting there, the Sakyan princes said to the Blessed One, “Lord, we Sakyans tend to be conceited. This is our barber, Upāli, our longtime servant. May the Blessed One give him the Going-forth first. We will bow down to him, rise up to greet him, salute him with hands raised palm-to-palm over the heart, and perform other forms of respect to him. In this way, the Sakyan-conceit of us Sakyans will be humbled.

So the Blessed One gave Upāli the barber the Going-forth first, and afterwards the Sakyan princes.

Then Ven. Bhaddiya realized the three knowledges⁸⁶ during that very Rains.

Ven. Anuruddha gave rise to the divine eye.

Ven. Ānanda realized the fruit of stream-entry.

Devadatta produced run-of-the-mill supranormal powers.⁸⁷

At that time, Ven. Bhaddiya, on going to the wilderness, to the root of a tree, or to an empty dwelling, would repeatedly exclaim, “Oh, what bliss! Oh, what bliss!”

Then several monks went to the Blessed One and, on arrival, bowed down and sat to one side.

As they were sitting there, they said to the Blessed One, “Lord, Ven. Bhaddiya, on going to the wilderness, to the root of a tree, or to an empty dwelling, repeatedly exclaims, ‘Oh, what bliss! Oh, what bliss!’ Doubtless Ven. Bhaddiya is living the holy life very unsatisfied. Either that or, remembering the pleasures of his former kingship—when having gone to the wilderness, the root of a tree, or an empty dwelling—he repeatedly exclaims, ‘Oh, what bliss! Oh, what bliss!’”

So the Blessed One addressed a certain monk, “Go, monk, and address the monk Bhaddiya in my name, ‘The teacher calls you.’”

Responding, “Yes, Lord,” to the Blessed One, the monk went to Ven. Bhaddiya and, on arrival, said to him, “Friend Bhaddiya, the Teacher calls you.”

Responding, “Yes, friend,” to the monk, Ven. Bhaddiya went to the Blessed One. On arrival he bowed down and sat to one side.

As he was sitting there, the Blessed One said to him, “Is it true what they say, Bhaddiya, that—when having gone to the wilderness, to the root of a tree, or to an empty dwelling—you repeatedly exclaim, ‘Oh, what bliss! Oh, what bliss!’?”

“Yes, lord.”

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

“Before, lord, when I was a king, 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 off the gifts of others, with my mind like a wild deer. This is the compelling reason I have in mind that—on going to the wilderness, to the root of a tree, or to an empty dwelling—I repeatedly exclaim, ‘Oh, what bliss! Oh, what bliss!’”

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

“From whose heart
there is no provocation,
and for whom becoming & non-becoming
are overcome,
he— beyond fear,
blissful,
with no grief—
is one the devas can’t see.” — *Cv 7:1*

Meanwhile, the Buddha was careful to give his son a thorough grounding in the basic principles of the Dhamma.

I have heard that on one occasion the Blessed One was dwelling near Rājagaha, at the Bamboo Forest, the Squirrels’ Feeding Ground.

At that time Ven. Rāhula⁸⁸ was dwelling 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 his feet. The Blessed One sat down on the seat set out and, seated, washed his feet. Ven. Rāhula, bowing down to the Blessed One, sat to one side.

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

“Yes, sir.”

“That’s how little of a contemplative⁸⁹ there is in anyone who feels no shame at telling a deliberate lie.”

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

“Yes, sir.”

“Rāhula, 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.”

“Rāhula, 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.”

“Rāhula, 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 keeps protecting 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.’

“In the same way, Rāhula, when anyone 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.’

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

“For reflection, sir.”

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

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

consequences, pleasant results, then any bodily action of that sort is fit for you to do.

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

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

[Similarly with verbal actions.]

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

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

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

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

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

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

“Thus, Rāhula, you should train yourself: ‘I will purify my bodily actions through repeated reflection. I will purify my verbal actions through repeated reflection. I will purify my mental actions through repeated reflection.’ That’s how you should train yourself.”

That is what the Blessed One said. Gratified, Ven. Rāhula delighted in the Blessed One’s words.⁹⁰ — [MN 61](#)

Training the Saṅgha

As we have seen, the Buddha began legislating rules for the Saṅgha early in his teaching career, beginning with his allowances for Acceptance and for monasteries. However, it wasn't until later that he began legislating a Pāṭimokkha, a code of rules, that eventually became the backbone of the Vinaya. The events leading up to the legislation of the first rule in the Pāṭimokkha are these:

At that time, the Awakened One, the Blessed One, was dwelling in Verañjā at the foot of Naḷeru's *nimba* tree with a large Saṅgha of monks, approximately five hundred monks. A Verañjā brahman heard, "Master Gotama the contemplative—a son of the Sakyans, having gone forth from the Sakyan clan—is dwelling in Verañjā at the foot of Naḷeru's *nimba* tree with a large Saṅgha of monks, approximately five hundred monks. And of that Master Gotama this fine reputation has spread: 'He is indeed a Blessed One, worthy & rightly self-awakened, consummate in clear-knowing & conduct, well-gone, an expert with regard to the cosmos, unexcelled trainer of people fit to be tamed, teacher of devas & human beings, awakened, blessed. He makes known—having realized it through direct knowledge—this cosmos with its devas, Māras, & Brahmās; this generation with its contemplatives & brahmans, its royalty & common people. He explains the Dhamma admirable in the beginning, admirable in the middle, admirable in the end; he proclaims the holy life both in its particulars & in its essence, entirely complete & pure.' It is good to see such a worthy one."

So the Verañjā brahman went to the Blessed One and, on arrival, exchanged courteous greetings with him. After an exchange of friendly greetings & courtesies, he sat to one side. As he was sitting there he said to the Blessed One, "I have heard it said, Master Gotama, that 'Gotama the contemplative does not raise his hands in respect to aged, venerable brahmans—advanced in years, come to the last stage of life—nor does he rise up to greet them, nor does he offer them a seat.' Insofar as Master Gotama doesn't raise his hands in respect to aged, venerable brahmans—advanced in years, come to the last stage of life—nor rise up to greet them, nor offer them a seat, that is simply not right, Master Gotama."

“That’s because, brahman, I do not see in this world with its devas, Māras, & Brahmās, in this generation with its contemplatives & brahmins, its royalty & common people, anyone for whom I should raise my hands in respect, rise up to greet, or offer a seat. Anyone to whom the Tathāgata would raise his hands in respect, rise up to greet, or offer a seat, that person’s head would split into pieces.”

“Master Gotama seems to have no taste.”

“There is, brahman, a manner of speaking, rightly speaking in line with which, one could say of me, ‘Gotama the contemplative seems to have no taste.’ Any taste for sights, taste for sounds, taste for aromas, taste for flavors, or taste for tactile sensations: That the Tathāgata has abandoned, destroyed at the root, made like a palmyra stump—deprived of the conditions of development, not destined for future arising. That, brahman, is the manner of speaking, rightly speaking in line with which, one could say of me, ‘Gotama the contemplative seems to have no taste.’ But surely you weren’t speaking in reference to that.”

“Master Gotama is anti-social.”

“There is, brahman, a manner of speaking, rightly speaking in line with which, one could say of me, ‘Gotama the contemplative is anti-social.’ Any sociability with sights, sociability with sounds, sociability with aromas, sociability with flavors, or sociability with tactile sensations: That the Tathāgata has abandoned, destroyed at the root, made like a palmyra stump—deprived of the conditions of development, not destined for future arising. That, brahman, is the manner of speaking, rightly speaking in line with which, one could say of me, ‘Gotama the contemplative is anti-social.’ But surely you weren’t speaking in reference to that.”

“Master Gotama is a teacher of inaction.”

“There is, brahman, a manner of speaking, rightly speaking in line with which, one could say of me, ‘Gotama the contemplative is a teacher of inaction.’ For I do teach non-doing: I teach the non-doing of bodily misconduct, verbal misconduct, mental misconduct, and of many types of evil, unskillful actions. That, brahman, is the manner of speaking, rightly speaking in line with which, one could say of me, ‘Gotama the contemplative is a teacher of inaction.’ But surely you weren’t speaking in reference to that.”

“Master Gotama is a teacher of annihilation.”

“There is, brahman, a manner of speaking, rightly speaking in line with which, one could say of me, ‘Gotama the contemplative is a teacher of annihilation.’ For I do teach annihilation: I teach the annihilation of passion, aversion, delusion, and of many types of evil, unskillful actions. That, brahman, is the manner of speaking, rightly speaking in line with which, one could say of me, ‘Gotama the contemplative is a teacher of annihilation.’ But surely you weren’t speaking in reference to that.”

“Master Gotama is standoffish.”

“There is, brahman, a manner of speaking, rightly speaking in line with which, one could say of me, ‘Gotama the contemplative is standoffish.’ For I do stand off: I stand off, away from bodily misconduct, verbal misconduct, mental misconduct, and from the attainment of many types of evil, unskillful actions. That, brahman, is the manner of speaking, rightly speaking in line with which, one could say of me, ‘Gotama the contemplative is standoffish.’ But surely you weren’t speaking in reference to that.”

“Master Gotama is a subversive.”

“There is, brahman, a manner of speaking, rightly speaking in line with which, one could say of me, ‘Gotama the contemplative is a subversive.’ For I do teach the Dhamma for the sake of subverting: I teach the Dhamma for the sake of subverting bodily misconduct, verbal misconduct, mental misconduct, and many types of evil, unskillful actions. That, brahman, is the manner of speaking, rightly speaking in line with which, one could say of me, ‘Gotama the contemplative is a subversive.’ But surely you weren’t speaking in reference to that.”

“Master Gotama is an incendiary.”

“There is, brahman, a manner of speaking, rightly speaking in line with which, one could say of me, ‘Gotama the contemplative is an incendiary.’ For I do say that evil, unskillful actions—bodily misconduct, verbal misconduct, & mental misconduct—should be incinerated. Anyone in whom evil, unskillful actions that should be incinerated have been abandoned, destroyed at the root, made like a palmyra stump—deprived of the conditions of development, not destined for future arising: That person I call an incendiary. And in the Tathāgata, evil, unskillful actions that should be incinerated have been abandoned, destroyed their root, made like a palmyra stump—deprived of the conditions of development, not destined for future arising. That, brahman, is the manner of speaking, rightly speaking in line with which, one could say of

me, ‘Gotama the contemplative is an incendiary.’ But surely you weren’t speaking in reference to that.”

“Master Gotama will never find a womb to be reborn in.”

“There is, brahman, a manner of speaking, rightly speaking in line with which, one could say of me, ‘Gotama the contemplative will never find a womb to be reborn in.’ Anyone for whom the entry into the womb, the production of future becoming, has been abandoned, destroyed at the root, made like a palmyra stump—deprived of the conditions of development, not destined for future arising: That person I call one who will never find a womb to be reborn in. And for the Tathāgata the entry into the womb, the production of future becoming has been abandoned, destroyed at the root, made like a palmyra stump—deprived of the conditions of development, not destined for future arising. That, brahman, is the manner of speaking, rightly speaking in line with which, one could say of me, ‘Gotama the contemplative will never find a womb to be reborn in.’ But surely you weren’t speaking in reference to that.

“Suppose, brahman, that there was a hen with eight, ten, or twelve eggs that she had rightly covered, rightly incubated, and rightly warmed. The first among those baby chicks to pierce its shell with the point of its claw or its beak and break through to safety: What should it be called? The eldest or the youngest?”

“It should be called the eldest, Master Gotama, because it is the eldest among them.”

“In the same way, brahman, in this generation immersed in ignorance, become like an egg, covered over, I—having pierced the shell of ignorance—am the only one in the world to have awakened to the unexcelled right self-awakening. I am the eldest, the best of the world.

“Unflagging persistence was aroused in me, brahman, and unmuddled mindfulness established. My body was calm & unaroused, my mind concentrated & single. Quite secluded from sensuality, secluded from unskillful qualities, I entered and remained in the first jhāna... the second jhāna... the third jhāna... the fourth jhāna: purity of equanimity & mindfulness, neither pleasure nor pain.

“When the mind was thus concentrated, purified, bright, unblemished, rid of defilement, pliant, malleable, steady, & attained to imperturbability, I directed it to the knowledge of recollecting my past lives.... This, brahman, was my first breakthrough, like the baby chick from the eggshell.... I directed the mind to the knowledge of the passing away & reappearance of beings.... This,

brahman, was my second breakthrough, like the baby chick from the eggshell.... I directed the mind to the knowledge of the ending of effluents. I directly knew, as it had come to be, 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.'* My heart, thus knowing, thus seeing, was released from the effluent of sensuality, released from the effluent of becoming, released from the effluent of ignorance. With release, there was the knowledge, 'Released.' I directly knew that 'Birth is ended, the holy life fulfilled, the task done. There is nothing further for this world.'

"This was the third knowledge I attained in the third watch of the night. Ignorance was destroyed; knowledge arose; darkness was destroyed; light arose—as happens in one who is heedful, ardent, & resolute. This, brahman, was my third breakthrough, like the baby chick from the eggshell."

When this was said, the Verañjā brahman said, "Master Gotama is the eldest. Master Gotama is the best. Magnificent, Master Gotama! Magnificent! Just as if he were to place upright what was overturned, to reveal what was hidden, to show the way to one who was lost, or to carry a lamp into the dark so that those with eyes could see forms, in the same way, has Master Gotama—through many lines of reasoning—made the Dhamma clear. I go to Master Gotama for refuge, to the Dhamma, & to the Saṅgha of monks. May Master Gotama remember me as a lay follower who has gone to him for refuge from this day forward, for life. And may Master Gotama, together with the Saṅgha of monks, acquiesce to my [offer of a] Rains residence in Verañjā."

The Blessed One acquiesced through silence.

Then the Verañjā brahman, understanding the Blessed One's acquiescence, rose from his seat, bowed down to the Blessed One, circumambulated him—keeping him to his right—and left.

Now at that time Verañjā was in the midst of a famine, a time of scarcity, the crops white with blight and turned to straw. It wasn't easy to maintain oneself by gleanings & patronage. And at that time some horse dealers from the Northern Route, together with five hundred horses, had entered into the Rains residence in Verañjā. In the horse corrals, they prepared measure after measure of bran for the monks. Early in the morning, the monks—having adjusted their under robes and carrying their bowls & outer robes—went into Verañjā for

alms. Not receiving any alms, they went to the horse corrals for alms and, taking measure after measure of bran back to the monastery, ate it, after pounding it again & again in a mortar. Ven. Ānanda, having crushed a measure of bran on a stone, took it to the Blessed One, and the Blessed One ate it.

The Blessed One heard the sound of the mortars. Now sometimes, when knowing, Tathāgatas ask. Sometimes, when knowing, they don't ask. Knowing the right time they ask. Knowing the right time they don't ask. They ask what is connected with benefit, not what is unconnected with benefit. The bridge to what is unconnected with benefit has been cut by Tathāgatas. In two ways do Awakened Ones, Blessed Ones, cross-question the monks: (Thinking,) "I will teach the Dhamma" or "I will legislate a training rule for my disciples." So the Blessed One said to Ven. Ānanda, "Ānanda, is that the sound of a mortar?"

Ven. Ānanda explained the matter to the Blessed One.

"Excellent, Ānanda, excellent is the victory won by you men of integrity. People who come after will disdain meals of rice & wheat with meat."

Then Ven. Mahā Moggallāna went to the Blessed One and, on arrival, having bowed down to him, sat to one side. As he was sitting there, he said to the Blessed One, "Lord, Verañjā is now in the midst of a famine, a time of scarcity, the crops white with blight and turned to straw. It isn't easy to maintain oneself by gleanings & patronage. Now, the underside of this great Earth is moist & fertile, with a flavor like pure honey. It would be good, lord, if I were to invert the Earth and the monks will eat what nourishes the water plants."

"But, Moggallāna, what about the creatures that live in dependence on the Earth? What will they do?"

"Lord, I'll conjure one hand to be like the great Earth and I'll transport the creatures living in dependence on the Earth there. Then, with the other hand, I'll invert the Earth."

"Enough, Moggallāna. Don't advocate inverting the Earth. Living beings will get discombobulated."

"Then it would be good, lord, if the entire Saṅgha of monks went to the Northern Continent for alms."

"But, Moggallāna, what about the monks without supranormal power? What will they do?"

“I’ll make it so that the entire Saṅgha of monks will go.”⁹¹

“Enough, Moggallāna. Don’t advocate having the entire Saṅgha of monks go to the Northern Continent for alms.”

Now at that time, as Ven. Sāriputta was alone in seclusion, this line of thinking arose in his awareness: “Of which of the Awakened Ones, the Blessed Ones, was the holy life not long-lasting? Of which of the Awakened Ones, the Blessed Ones, *was* the holy life long-lasting?” Then in the late afternoon, Ven. Sāriputta, arising from his seclusion, went to the Blessed One and, on arrival, having bowed down to him, sat to one side. As he was sitting there, he said to the Blessed One, “Just now, lord, as I was alone in seclusion, this line of thinking arose in my awareness: ‘Of which of the Awakened Ones, the Blessed Ones, was the holy life not long-lasting? Of which of the Awakened Ones, the Blessed Ones, *was* the holy life long-lasting?’”

“Sāriputta, the holy life of the Blessed Vipassin, the Blessed Sikhin, & the Blessed Vessabhū was not long-lasting. The holy life of the Blessed Kakusandha, the Blessed Konāgamana, & the Blessed Kassapa *was* long-lasting.”

“What was the reason, lord, what was the cause, why the holy life of the Blessed Vipassin, the Blessed Sikhin, & the Blessed Vessabhū was not long-lasting? What was the reason, what was the cause, why the holy life of the Blessed Kakusandha, the Blessed Konāgamana, & the Blessed Kassapa *was* long-lasting?”

“Sāriputta, the Blessed Vipassin, the Blessed Sikhin, & the Blessed Vessabhū were disinclined to teach the Dhamma in detail to their disciples. Few were their dialogues, narratives of mixed prose & verse, explanations, verses, spontaneous exclamations, quotations, birth stories, amazing events, question & answer sessions. They didn’t legislate a training rule for their disciples; they didn’t expound a Pāṭimokkha. After the disappearance of those Awakened Ones, Blessed Ones, and after the disappearance of those who awakened after them, their later disciples—of various names, various clans, various births, gone forth from various families—quickly brought about the disappearance of that holy life. Just as various flowers set out on a tray but not tied together with string would get scattered, dispersed, & disbanded by the wind—why is that? Because they were not tied together with string. In the same way, after the disappearance of those Awakened Ones, Blessed Ones, and after the disappearance of those who awakened after them, their later disciples—of

various names, various clans, various births, gone forth from various families—quickly brought about the disappearance of that holy life.

“But those Awakened Ones, Blessed Ones, were not disinclined to exhort their disciples after having encompassed the awareness of their disciples with their own awareness. Once, Sāriputta, Vessabhū the Blessed One, worthy & rightly self-awakened, in a certain awe-inspiring forest grove, exhorted and instructed a Saṅgha of one thousand monks: ‘Think this. Don’t think that. Pay attention to this. Don’t pay attention to that. Abandon this. Enter into and dwell in this.’ And so the minds of that Saṅgha of one thousand monks—thus exhorted, thus instructed by Vessabhū the Blessed One, worthy & rightly self-awakened—were, from lack of clinging, released from effluents. And that was in the awe-inspiring [time] of that awe-inspiring forest grove: If anyone not without passion entered into it, for the most part his hair would stand on end.

“That was the reason, Sāriputta, that was the cause, why the holy life of the Blessed Vipassin, the Blessed Sikhin, & the Blessed Vessabhū was not long-lasting.”

“But what, lord, was the reason, what was the cause, why the holy life of the Blessed Kakusandha, the Blessed Konāgamana, & the Blessed Kassapa *was* long-lasting?”

“Sāriputta, the Blessed Kakusandha, the Blessed Konāgamana, & the Blessed Kassapa were not disinclined to teach the Dhamma in detail to their disciples. Many were their dialogues, narratives of mixed prose & verse, explanations, verses, spontaneous exclamations, quotations, birth stories, amazing events, question & answer sessions. They legislated a training rule for their disciples; they expounded a Pāṭimokkha. After the disappearance of those Awakened Ones, Blessed Ones, and after the disappearance of those who awakened after them, their later disciples—of various names, various clans, various births, gone forth from various families—kept that holy life going for a long, long time. Just as various flowers set out on a tray and tied together with string would not get scattered, dispersed, or disbanded by the wind—why is that? Because they were tied together with string. In the same way, after the disappearance of those Awakened Ones, Blessed Ones, and after the disappearance of those who awakened after them, their later disciples—of various names, various clans, various births, gone forth from various families—kept that holy life going for a long, long time.

“That was the reason, Sāriputta, that was the cause, why the holy life of the Blessed Kakusandha, the Blessed Konāgamana, & the Blessed Kassapa was long-lasting.”

Then Ven. Sāriputta, getting up from his seat and arranging his upper robe over his shoulder, raised his hands palm-to-palm over his heart toward the Blessed One and said, “This is the time, O Blessed One! This is the time, O One Well-Gone, for the Blessed One to legislate a training rule for his disciples and to expound a Pāṭimokkha, so that this holy life will be enduring & long-lasting!”

“Wait, Sāriputta. Wait. The Tathāgata will know the time for that. The Teacher does not lay down a training rule for his disciples, he does not expound a Pāṭimokkha, as long as there are no cases where the conditions that offer a foothold for the effluents have arisen in the Saṅgha. But when there *are* cases where the conditions that offer a foothold for the effluents have arisen in the Saṅgha, then the Teacher lays down a training rule for his disciples and expounds a Pāṭimokkha so as to counteract those very conditions.

“There are no cases where the conditions that offer a foothold for the effluents have arisen in the Saṅgha as long as the Saṅgha has not become of long-standing. But when the Saṅgha has become of long-standing, then there are cases where the conditions that offer a foothold for the effluents arise in the Saṅgha, and the Teacher then lays down a training rule for his disciples and expounds a Pāṭimokkha so as to counteract those very conditions.

“There are no cases where the conditions that offer a foothold for the effluents have arisen in the Saṅgha as long as the Saṅgha has not become great in size. But when the Saṅgha has become great in size, then there are cases where the conditions that offer a foothold for the effluents arise in the Saṅgha, and the Teacher then lays down a training rule for his disciples and expounds a Pāṭimokkha so as to counteract those very conditions.

“There are no cases where the conditions that offer a foothold for the effluents have arisen in the Saṅgha as long as the Saṅgha has no great material gains. But when the Saṅgha has great material gains, then there are cases where the conditions that offer a foothold for the effluents arise in the Saṅgha, and the Teacher then lays down a training rule for his disciples and expounds a Pāṭimokkha so as to counteract those very conditions.”⁹²

“Free from infection, Sāriputta, is this Saṅgha of monks. Free from drawbacks, without defect, pure, bright, it stands in the heartwood. Of these five hundred monks, Sāriputta, the most backward is a stream-winner, never again destined for the lower realms, certain, headed for self-awakening.”

Then the Blessed One addressed Ven. Ānanda, “It is the custom of Tathāgatas, Ānanda, not to leave on a tour of the countryside without going to see those who invited them to dwell for the Rains. Come, Ānanda, we’ll go to see the Verañjā brahman.”

“As you say, lord,” Ven. Ānanda responded to the Blessed One.

“Then, adjusting his lower robe and taking his bowl & robe, the Blessed One, together with Ven. Ānanda as his companion, went to the Verañjā brahman’s home. On arrival, he sat down on a seat laid out. Then the Verañjā brahman 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, “We were invited by you to spend the Rains. We come to see you. We want to leave for a tour of the countryside.”

“It’s true, lord, that you were invited by me to spend the Rains. Nevertheless, what should have been given wasn’t given, but that wasn’t because it didn’t exist or that we didn’t want to give. But what could be done? Householders are very busy, with many things to do. May Master Gotama acquiesce to my meal tomorrow, together with the Saṅgha of monks.”

The Blessed One acquiesced with silence. Then—having instructed, urged, roused, & encouraged the Verañjā brahman with a talk on Dhamma—he got up from his seat and left.

Then the Verañjā brahman, as the night was ending—after having exquisite staple & non-staple food prepared in his own home—announced the time to the Blessed One: “It’s time, lord. The meal is ready.”

Then, early in the morning, the Blessed One—having adjusted his under robe and carrying his bowl & outer robe—went together with the Saṅgha of monks to the Verañjā brahman’s home. On arrival, he sat down on a seat laid out. The Verañjā brahman, with his own hands, served & satisfied the Saṅgha of monks, with the Buddha at its head, with exquisite staple & non-staple food. Then, when the Blessed One had finished his meal and had rinsed his bowl & hands, the Verañjā brahman presented the Blessed One with a triple robe, and presented each monk with a single pair of cloths. Then the Blessed One—

having instructed, urged, roused, & encouraged the Verañjā brahman with a talk on Dhamma—got up from his seat and left.

Then the Blessed One, having stayed in Verañjā as long as he liked, returning by Soreyya, Saṅkassa, & Kaṇṇakujja, went to Payāgapatiṭṭhāna. On arrival, having crossed the River Ganges at Payāgapatiṭṭhāna, he arrived at Vārāṇasī. Then, having stayed in Vārāṇasī as long as he pleased, he went on a tour toward Vesālī. Traveling by stages, he arrived at Vesālī. There he stayed near Vesālī at the Gabled Hall in the Great Forest.

Now at that time not far from Vesālī was Kalanda Village. There, a young man named Sudinna, a native of Kalanda, was the son of a moneylender. Then Sudinna, together with many friends, went to Vesālī on some business. And on that occasion the Blessed One was sitting, teaching the Dhamma, surrounded by a large assembly. Sudinna saw the Blessed One sitting, teaching the Dhamma, surrounded by a large assembly, and on seeing him, he thought, “What if I were to listen to the Dhamma?” So he approached the assembly and, on arrival, sat to one side. As he was sitting there, this thought occurred to him: “As I understand the Dhamma taught by the Blessed One, it’s not easy, living at home, to practice the holy life totally perfect, totally pure, a polished shell. What if I, having shaved off my hair & beard and putting on the ochre robe, were to go forth from home into homelessness?”

Then the assembly—having been instructed, urged, roused, & encouraged by the Blessed One’s talk on Dhamma—rose from their seats and, bowing down to him, left, keeping him on their right.

Then Sudinna, not long after the assembly had left, approached the Blessed One and, on arrival, said to him, “As I understand the Dhamma taught by the Blessed One, it’s not easy, living at home, to practice the holy life totally perfect, totally pure, a polished shell. Lord, I want—having shaved off my hair & beard and putting on the ochre robe—to go forth from home into homelessness. May I receive the Going-forth in the Blessed One’s presence? May I receive the Acceptance?”

“Do you have your parents’ permission, Sudinna, to go forth from home into homelessness?”

“No, lord, I don’t.”

“Sudinna, Tathāgatas do not give the Going-forth to anyone who doesn’t have his parents’ permission.”

“Lord, I will do what needs to be done so that my parents will give their permission for me to go forth from home into homelessness.”

Then Sudinna, having settled his business in Vesālī, went to his parents in Kalanda Village and, on arrival, said to them, “Mom, Dad, as I understand the Dhamma taught by the Blessed One, it’s not easy, living at home, to practice the holy life totally perfect, totally pure, a polished shell. I want—having shaved off my hair & beard and putting on the ochre robe—to go forth from home into homelessness. Please give me your permission to go forth from home into homelessness.”

When this was said, Sudinna’s parents said to him, “Sudinna, dear, you’re our only son, dear & beloved, raised in comfort, brought up in comfort. You know nothing of suffering. Even with your death we would not want to be separated from you, so how could we—while you’re alive—give our permission for you to go forth from home into homelessness?”

A second time... A third time, Sudinna said to his parents, “Mom, Dad, as I understand the Dhamma taught by the Blessed One, it’s not easy, living at home, to practice the holy life totally perfect, totally pure, a polished shell. I want—having shaved off my hair & beard and putting on the ochre robe—to go forth from home into homelessness. Please give me your permission to go forth from home into homelessness.”

A third time, Sudinna’s parents said to him, “Sudinna, dear, you’re our only son, dear & beloved, raised in comfort, brought up in comfort. You know nothing of suffering. Even with your death we would not want to be separated from you, so how could we—while you’re alive—give our permission for you to go forth from home into homelessness?”

Then Sudinna, not getting his parents’ permission to go forth from home into homelessness, lay down right there on the bare floor, (saying,) “Here will be my death or my Going-forth.” And he went without food for one day... two days... three days, four... five... six days. He went without food for seven days.

His parents said to him, “Sudinna, dear, you’re our only son, dear & beloved, raised in comfort, brought up in comfort. You know nothing of suffering. Even with your death we would not want to be separated from you, so how could we—while you’re alive—give our permission for you to go forth from home into homelessness? Get up, dear. Eat, drink, & enjoy yourself. While eating, drinking, & looking after yourself, you may enjoy yourself by

indulging in sensual pleasures & making merit. We don't give our permission for you to go forth from home into homelessness."

When this was said, Sudinna remained silent.

A second time... A third time, Sudinna's parents said to him, "Sudinna, dear, you're our only son, dear & beloved, raised in comfort, brought up in comfort. You know nothing of suffering. Even with your death we would not want to be separated from you, so how could we—while you're alive—give our permission for you to go forth from home into homelessness? Get up, dear. Eat, drink, & enjoy yourself. While eating, drinking, & looking after yourself, you may enjoy yourself by indulging in sensual pleasures & making merit. We don't give our permission for you to go forth from home into homelessness."

A third time, Sudinna remained silent.

Then Sudinna's friends went to him and, on arrival, said to him, "Friend Sudinna, you are your parents' only son.... Get up, friend Sudinna. Eat, drink, & enjoy yourself.... Your parents don't give their permission for you to go forth from home into homelessness."

When this was said, Sudinna remained silent.

A second time... A third time, his friends said to him, "Friend Sudinna, you are your parents' only son.... Get up, friend Sudinna. Eat, drink, & enjoy yourself.... Your parents don't give their permission for you to go forth from home into homelessness."

A third time, Sudinna remained silent.

So Sudinna's friends went to his parents and, on arrival, said to them, "Mom, Dad, Sudinna is lying there on the bare floor, (having said,) 'Here will be my death or my Going-forth.' If you don't give him your permission to go forth from home into homelessness, right there will be his death. But if you do give him your permission... then even when he has gone forth, you will see him. And if he does not enjoy going forth from home into homelessness, where else will he go? He'll return right here. So please give him permission to go forth from home into homelessness."

"Then, dears, we give our permission for Sudinna to go forth from home into homelessness."

Then Sudinna's friends went to him and said, "Get up, friend Sudinna. Your parents give their permission for you to go forth from home into homelessness."

Then Sudinna, (thinking,) “My parents give their permission for me to go forth from home into homelessness,” joyful, elated, rubbing his limbs with his hands, got up. Having regained strength, he went to the Blessed One and, on arrival, having bowed down to him, sat to one side. As he was sitting there, he said to the Blessed One, “I have received my parents’ permission, lord, to go forth from home into homelessness. May the Blessed One give me the Going-forth!”

Then Sudinna the clansman obtained the Going-forth in the Blessed One’s presence, he obtained the Acceptance. And not long afterwards, Ven. Sudinna undertook this ascetic observance: He was a wilderness dweller, one who went for alms, one who wore cast-off cloth, and one who bypassed no donors. He lived in dependence on a certain Vajjian village.

Now, on that occasion Vajji was in the midst of famine, a time of scarcity, the crops white with blight and turned to straw. It wasn’t easy to maintain oneself by gleanings & patronage. The thought occurred to Ven. Sudinna, “Vajji is now in the midst of a famine, a time of scarcity, the crops white with blight and turned to straw. It isn’t easy to maintain oneself by gleanings & patronage. Now, many are my relatives in Vesālī who are prosperous, with great treasures, great resources, with vast amounts of gold & silver, vast numbers of possessions & requisites, vast resources in grain. What if I were to live in dependence on my relatives? My relatives, in dependence on me, would give gifts and make merit. The monks would receive gains, and I wouldn’t be exhausted in going for alms.”

So, putting his lodgings in order and, carrying his bowl & robes, Ven. Sudinna set out wandering toward Vesālī. Wandering by stages, he eventually arrived at Vesālī. There he stayed near Vesālī at the Gabled Hall in the Great Forest. His relatives heard, “Suddhinna the native of Kalanda, they say, has arrived in Vesālī.” They brought him 60 pots of food-offerings. Then, after sharing those 60 pots of food-offerings with the monks, Ven. Sudinna early in the morning—having adjusted his under robe and carrying his bowl & outer robe—went into Kalanda Village for alms. As he went for alms from house to house in Kalanda Village without bypassing any donor, he came to his own father’s house.

Just then a slave woman belonging to one of his relatives was about to throw away some day-old porridge. So Ven. Sudinna said to her, “Sister, if that’s to be thrown away, pour it here into my bowl.” While she was pouring the day-old

porridge into this bowl, she recognized his hands, feet, & voice. So she went to his mother and said, “May it please you to know, my lady, that master-son Sudinna has arrived.”

“Hey, if what you say is true, I give you your freedom!”

Now at that time Ven. Sudinna was sitting by the foot of a wall, eating the day-old porridge. His father, coming from work, saw him sitting by the foot of the wall, eating the day-old porridge, so he went to him and said, “Sudinna, my dear, isn’t there... What? You’re eating day-old porridge? Don’t you have your own home to go to?”

“We went to your house, householder, which is where we got this day-old porridge.”

Then Ven. Sudinna’s father, taking Ven. Sudinna by the arm, said to him, “Come, dear Sudinna. Let’s go home.”

So Ven. Sudinna went to his father’s home and, on arrival, sat down on a seat laid out. Then his father said to him, “Eat, dear Sudinna.”

“Enough, householder. My meal for today is finished.”

“In that case, dear Sudinna, acquiesce to the meal for tomorrow.”

So Ven. Sudinna acquiesced in silence and—getting up from his seat—left.

Then, as the night was ending, Ven. Sudinna’s mother, after having had the floor smeared with fresh cow dung, had two heaps made—one of gold, one of silver—so large that a man standing on the near side couldn’t see a man standing on the far side, and a man standing on the far side couldn’t see a man standing on the near. Hiding them behind screens, she set out a seat between them, surrounded by a curtain. Addressing Ven. Sudinna’s former wife, she said to her, “Come, daughter-in-law. Adorn yourself in the ornaments that our son, Sudinna, used to find dear & loveable.”

“As you say, lady,” Ven. Sudinna’s former wife responded to his mother.

Then, early in the morning, Ven. Sudinna—having adjusted his under robe and carrying his bowl & outer robe—went to his father’s house and, on arrival, sat down on the seat laid out. Then his father, revealing the heaps, said to him, “This, my dear Sudinna, is your mother’s inheritance, the dowry for the woman. The other is your father’s; the other, your grandfather’s.⁹³ Come, my dear Sudinna. Revert to the lower life. Enjoy wealth and make merit!”

“I’m unable to do that, Dad. I can’t. Delighted I lead the holy life.”

A second time... A third time, Ven. Sudinna's father said to him, "This, my dear Sudinna, is your mother's inheritance, the dowry for the woman. The other is your father's; the other, your grandfather's. Come, my dear Sudinna. Revert to the lower life. Enjoy wealth and make merit!"

"Householder, I will tell you what to do with that, if you won't take offense."

"Speak, dear Sudinna."

"In that case, householder, having had huge bags of hemp cloth made and having filled them with this gold & silver, have them loaded on carts and hauled away to be dumped midstream in the River Ganges. Why is that? So that any fear, terror, horripilation, or lack of protection coming from this (wealth) won't happen to you."

When this was said, Ven. Sudinna's father was displeased, (thinking,) "How can my son Sudinna speak in that way?"

Then Ven. Sudinna's father addressed Ven. Sudinna's former wife, "In that case, daughter-in-law, dear & beloved, perhaps my son Sudinna will do as you say."

Then, clasping Ven. Sudinna's feet, his former wife said to him, "What are they like, dear master-son: those nymphs for whose sake you lead the holy life?"

"Sister, we don't lead the holy life for the sake of nymphs."

"Today he calls me 'sister'!" And she fell down right there in a faint.

Then Ven. Sudinna said to his father, "Householder, if there's food to be given, then give it. Don't harass us."

"Eat, then, my dear Sudinna."

So, with their own hands, Ven. Sudinna's mother & father served and satisfied him with exquisite staple & non-staple foods. When he had finished his meal and had rinsed his bowl & hands, his mother said to him, "Sudinna, dear, this family is prosperous, with great treasures, great resources, with vast amounts of gold & silver, vast numbers of possessions & requisites, vast resources in grain. Come, my dear Sudinna. Revert to the lower life. Enjoy wealth and make merit!"

"I'm unable to do that, Mom. I can't. Delighted I lead the holy life."

A second time... A third time, Ven. Sudinna's mother said to him, "Sudinna, dear, this family is prosperous, with great treasures, great resources, with vast amounts of gold & silver, vast numbers of possessions & requisites,

vast resources in grain. In that case, give at least your seed. Don't let the Licchavis confiscate our heirless property!"

"That, Mom, I can do."

"Where are you living now, Sudinna dear?"

"In the Great Forest, Mom."

Then Ven. Sudinna got up from his seat and left.

Then Ven. Sudinna's mother said to his former wife, "In that case, daughter-in-law, tell me when you have your period and your menstrual flow begins."

"As you say, lady," Ven. Sudinna's former wife responded to his mother.

Then, not long afterwards, she had her period and her menstrual flow began. So she said to Ven. Sudinna's mother, "I'm having my period, lady. My menstrual flow has begun."

"In that case, daughter-in-law, adorn yourself in the ornaments that our son, Sudinna, used to find dear & loveable."

Then Ven. Sudinna's mother, with his former wife in tow, went to Ven. Sudinna in the Great Forest. On arrival, she said to him, "Sudinna, dear, this family is prosperous, with great treasures, great resources, with vast amounts of gold & silver, vast numbers of possessions & requisites, vast resources in grain. Come, my dear Sudinna. Revert to the lower life. Enjoy wealth and make merit!"

"I'm unable to do that, Mom. I can't. Delighted I lead the holy life."

A second time... A third time, Ven. Sudinna's mother said to him, "Sudinna, dear, this family is prosperous, with great treasures, great resources, with vast amounts of gold & silver, vast numbers of possessions & requisites, vast resources in grain. In that case, give at least your seed. Don't let the Licchavis confiscate our heirless property!"

"That, Mom, I can do."

So, taking his former wife by the arm and plunging into the Great Forest—the training rule not having been legislated, and not seeing the drawbacks—he had sexual intercourse with her three times. From that, she became pregnant.

The Earth Devas cried out: "How free from infection was the Saṅgha of monks, how free from drawbacks! Yet infection has been brought into being, drawbacks have been brought into being, by Sudinna, the native of Kalanda!" On hearing the Earth Devas' cry, the Devas of the Four Great Kings took up

the cry... the Devas of the Thirty-three... the Devas of the Hours... the Contented Devas... the Devas Delighting in Creation... the Devas Wielding Power over the Creations of Others... the Devas of Brahmā's Retinue took up the cry: "How free from infection was the Saṅgha of monks, how free from drawbacks! But infection has been brought into being, drawbacks have been brought into being, by Sudinna, the native of Kalanda!"

Then Ven. Sudinna's former wife, with the ripening of the fetus, gave birth to a son. Ven. Sudinna's companions gave the child the name "Seed," gave Ven. Sudinna's former wife the name, "Seed-mother," and gave Ven. Sudinna the name, "Seed-father." They both [son & mother], at a later time, going forth from home into homelessness, realized arahantship.

Then Ven. Sudinna became anxious & remorseful: "What a loss for me, and not a gain! How ill gotten by me, and not well gotten!—that having gone forth into this well expounded Dhamma & Vinaya, I wasn't able to live the holy life completely & purely!" And from that anxiety & remorse, Ven. Sudinna became thin, wretched, unattractive, & pale, his body covered with veins; melancholic, depressed, miserable, unhappy, remorseful, & brooding.

His friends said to him, "Before, friend Sudinna, you were attractive, your faculties bright, your complexion pure & clear. But now you are thin, wretched, unattractive, & pale, your body covered with veins; melancholic, depressed, miserable, unhappy, remorseful, & brooding. Could it be that you're leading the holy life dissatisfied?"

"It's not the case, friends, that I'm leading the holy life dissatisfied. It's that there's an evil deed I have done. I have indulged in sexual intercourse with my former wife. Because of that, I am anxious & remorseful: 'What a loss for me, and not a gain! How ill gotten by me, and not well gotten!—that having gone forth into this well expounded Dhamma & Vinaya, I wasn't able to live the holy life completely & purely!'

"Then there's good reason for you to be anxious, good reason to be remorseful, in that you—having gone forth into this well expounded Dhamma & Vinaya—haven't been able to live the holy life completely & purely! Friend, hasn't the Blessed One taught the Dhamma in many ways for the sake of dispassion and not for passion; for unfettering and not for fettering; for freedom from clinging and not for clinging? Yet here, while he has taught the Dhamma for dispassion, you set your heart on passion; while he has taught the

Dhamma for unfettering, you set your heart on being fettered; while he has taught the Dhamma for freedom from clinging, you set your heart on clinging.

“Friend, hasn’t the Blessed One taught the Dhamma in many ways for the fading of passion, the subduing of intoxication, the elimination of thirst, the uprooting of attachment, the severing of the round, the ending of craving, dispassion, cessation, unbinding? Hasn’t he in many ways advocated abandoning sensual pleasures, comprehending sensual perceptions, subduing sensual thirst, destroying sensual thoughts, calming sensual fevers?

“Friend, this neither inspires faith in the faithless nor increases the faithful. Rather, it inspires lack of faith in the faithless and wavering in some of the faithful.”

Then the monks, having rebuked Ven. Sudinna in many ways, informed the Blessed One of this matter. So the Blessed One—having, from this cause, from this incident, called a meeting of the Saṅgha of monks—questioned Ven. Sudinna: “So is it true, Sudinna, that you indulged in sexual intercourse with your former wife?”

“It’s true, O Blessed One.”

Then the Awakened One, the Blessed One, rebuked him: “Worthless man, it is unseemly, out of line, unsuitable, and unworthy of a contemplative; improper and not to be done. How could you, worthless man, having gone forth into this well expounded Dhamma & Vinaya, not be able to live the holy life completely & purely?

“Worthless man, haven’t I taught the Dhamma in many ways for the sake of dispassion and not for passion; for unfettering and not for fettering; for freedom from clinging and not for clinging? Yet here, while I have taught the Dhamma for dispassion, you set your heart on passion; while I have taught the Dhamma for unfettering, you set your heart on being fettered; while I have taught the Dhamma for freedom from clinging, you set your heart on clinging.

“Worthless man, haven’t I taught the Dhamma in many ways for the fading of passion, the subduing of intoxication, the elimination of thirst, the uprooting of attachment, the severing of the round, the ending of craving, dispassion, cessation, unbinding? Haven’t I in many ways advocated abandoning sensual pleasures, comprehending sensual perceptions, subduing sensual thirst, destroying sensual thoughts, calming sensual fevers?

“Worthless man, it would be better that your penis be stuck into the mouth of a fanged snake, terrifyingly poisonous, than into a woman’s vagina. It would be better that your penis be stuck into the mouth of a black viper than into a woman’s vagina. It would be better that your penis be stuck into a pit of burning embers, blazing & glowing, than into a woman’s vagina. Why is that? For *that* reason you would undergo death or death-like suffering, but you would not on that account, at the breakup of the body, after death, fall into a plane of deprivation, a bad destination, a lower realm, hell. But for *this* reason you would, at the breakup of the body, after death, fall into a plane of deprivation, a bad destination, a lower realm, hell.

“In doing that, worthless man, you enter into what is not true Dhamma, the act of the village, the act of the vile, a gross offense, what has to end in washing up, secrecy, the coupling of a couple.

“Worthless man, you are the first-doer, the forerunner, of many unskillful acts.

“Worthless man, this neither inspires faith in the faithless nor increases the faithful. Rather, it inspires lack of faith in the faithless and wavering in some of the faithful.”

Then the Blessed One, having in many ways rebuked Ven. Sudinna, having spoken in dispraise of being burdensome, demanding, arrogant, discontented, entangled, & indolent; in many ways having spoken in praise of being unburdensome, undemanding, modest, content, scrupulous, austere, gracious, self-effacing, & energetic; having given a Dhamma talk on what is seemly and becoming for monks, addressed the monks:

“In that case, monks, I will legislate a training rule for the monks with ten aims in mind: the excellence of the Saṅgha, the comfort of the Saṅgha, the curbing of the impudent, the comfort of well-behaved monks, the restraint of effluents related to the present life, the prevention of effluents related to the next life, the arousing of faith in the faithless, the increase of the faithful, the establishment of the true Dhamma, and the fostering of discipline.

“And this is how, monks, you should recite this training rule: *‘Should any monk engage in sexual intercourse, he is defeated and no longer in affiliation.’*”

And that is how this training rule was [first] legislated by the Blessed One.

— [*Pr 1*](#)

The ideals that the Buddha cited in his rebuke of Ven. Sudinna—such as contentment, modesty, austerity, and energy—were repeated each time he legislated a rule for the Pāṭimokkha. They are important to keep in mind, for as we will see, the Buddha often legislated these rules in response to complaints from the laity or from the monks or nuns. This has given rise to the impression that his rules were determined by public opinion. This impression is mistaken because, as we will also see, there were instances where his rules went against the majority view of public opinion, and—in a few cases—even met with resistance from the monks and nuns. If we search for a constant theme in the legislation of the rules, we have to look to this list of ideals—some of which, the Buddha noted, derive from the traditions of the noble ones dating far back to ancient times.

“These four traditions of the noble ones—original, long-standing, traditional, ancient, unadulterated, unadulterated from the beginning—are not open to suspicion, will never be open to suspicion, and are unfaulted by knowledgeable contemplatives & brahmans. Which four?

“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 doesn’t, 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 doesn’t, 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.

[Similarly with almsfood & lodging.]

“And further, the monk finds pleasure & delight in developing (skillful qualities), finds pleasure & delight in abandoning (unskillful qualities). He doesn’t, 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.”

“These are the four traditions of the noble ones—original, long-standing, traditional, ancient, unadulterated, unadulterated from the beginning—which

are not open to suspicion, will never be open to suspicion, and are unfaulted by knowledgeable contemplatives & brahmans.” — [AN 4:28](#)

Here are a few examples of how the Buddha legislated rules sometimes in response to complaints, sometimes on his own initiative.

Now at that time the Buddha, the Blessed One, was dwelling near Rājagaha on Vulture Peak Mountain. And at that time the wanderers of other persuasions, gathering on the fourteenth or fifteenth (day), and on the eighth (day) of the fortnight, spoke Dhamma. The people went to them to hear the Dhamma. They gained affection for the wanderers of other persuasions, gained confidence in them, and the wanderers of other persuasions gained a following.

Then, as the King of Magadha, Seniya Bimbisāra, was alone in seclusion, this train of thought arose in his awareness: “At this time the wanderers of other persuasions, gathering on the fourteenth or fifteenth (day), and on the eighth (day) of the fortnight, speak Dhamma. The people go to them to hear the Dhamma, and they gain affection for the wanderers of other persuasions, gain confidence in them, and the wanderers of other persuasions gain a following. What if the masters were also to gather on the fourteenth or fifteenth (day), and on the eighth (day) of the fortnight?”

So he went to the Blessed One and, on arrival, having bowed down to him, sat to one side. As he was sitting there, he said to the Blessed One, “Just now, lord, as I was alone in seclusion, this train of thought arose in my awareness: ‘At this time the wanderers of other persuasions, gathering on the fourteenth or fifteenth (day), and on the eighth (day) of the fortnight, speak Dhamma. The people go to them to hear the Dhamma, and they gain affection for the wanderers of other persuasions, gain confidence in them, and the wanderers of other persuasions gain a following. What if the masters were to also to gather on the fourteenth or fifteenth (day), and on the eighth (day) of the fortnight?’”

Then the Blessed One instructed, urged, roused, & encouraged the King of Magadha, Seniya Bimbisāra, with a Dhamma talk. Having been instructed, urged, roused, & encouraged by the Blessed One with a Dhamma talk, he got up from his seat and, having bowed down to the Blessed One, circumambulated him, keeping him to his right, and left.

Then the Blessed One, having given a Dhamma talk with regard to this cause, to this incident, addressed the monks: “Monks, I allow you to gather on the fourteenth or fifteenth (day), and on the eighth (day) of the fortnight.”

Now at that time the monks, (thinking,) “It has been allowed by the Blessed One to gather on the fourteenth or fifteenth (day), and on the eighth (day) of the fortnight,” gathering on the fourteenth or fifteenth (day), and on the eighth (day) of the fortnight, sat in silence. The people came to them to hear the Dhamma. They criticized & complained & spread it about: “How can these Sakyan-son monks, gathering on the fourteenth or fifteenth (day), and on the eighth (day) of the fortnight, sit in silence like dumb pigs? Shouldn’t Dhamma be spoken when they gather?”

The monks heard the people criticizing & complaining & spreading it about. So the monks reported the matter to the Blessed One. The Blessed One, having given a Dhamma talk with regard to this cause, to this incident, addressed the monks: “Monks, I allow you, having gathered on the fourteenth or fifteenth (day), and on the eighth (day) of the fortnight, to speak Dhamma.”

Then, as the Blessed One was alone in seclusion, this train of thought arose in his awareness: “What if I were to allow the monks a recitation of the Pāṭimokkha of the rules I have laid down for them? That will be their Uposatha transaction.”

When it was evening, the Blessed One rose from seclusion and—having given a Dhamma talk with regard to this cause, this incident—addressed the monks: “Monks, just now, as I was alone in seclusion, this train of thought arose in my awareness: ‘What if I were to allow the monks a recitation of the Pāṭimokkha of the rules I have laid down for them? That will be their Uposatha transaction.’”

“Monks, I allow you to recite the Pāṭimokkha.” — [*Mv 2:1–3.2*](#)

And at that time, the Rains residence had not been legislated by the Blessed One for the monks. So at that time, the monks would go on walking tours in the hot season, the cold season, & the rainy season.

People criticized & complained & spread it about, “How can the Sakyan-son contemplatives go on walking tours in the hot season, the cold season, & the rainy season—crushing green grass, harming one-facultied life, and bringing about the destruction of many small creatures? Even these wanderers of other religions with poorly expounded Dhammas settle down and stay put for the Rains residence. Even the birds, having made nests in the tops of trees, settle down and stay put for the Rains residence.

“But these Sakyan-son contemplatives go on walking tours in the hot season, the cold season, & the rainy season—crushing green grass, harming one-facultied life, and bringing about the destruction of many small creatures.”

The monks heard the people criticizing & complaining & spreading it about. Then the monks reported the matter to the Blessed One.

The Blessed One, having given a Dhamma talk with regard to this cause, this incident, addressed the monks: “Monks, I allow you to enter for the Rains.”

— [*Mv 3:1*](#)

When the Buddha legislated the Pāṭimokkha rule against eating after noon, not all the monks were happy with it.

Then, in the evening, Ven. Udāyin left seclusion and went to the Blessed One. On arrival, having bowed down to him, he sat to one side. As he was sitting there he said to the Blessed One: “Just now, lord, as I was alone in seclusion, this train of thought arose in my awareness: ‘So many painful things has the Blessed One taken away from us! So many pleasant things has he brought us! So many unskillful qualities has the Blessed One taken away from us! So many skillful qualities has he brought us!’ For in the past, lord, we used to eat in the morning, in the evening, and in the day at the wrong time (the afternoon). Then there was the time when the Blessed One addressed the monks, saying, ‘Monks, please discontinue that daytime meal at the wrong time.’ At the time I was upset, at the time I was sad, (thinking,) ‘The exquisite staple & non-staple foods that faithful householders give us during the day at the wrong time: even that the Blessed One has us abandon; even that the One Well-Gone has us relinquish!’ But, out of consideration for our love & respect for the Blessed One, out of consideration for shame & fear of wrongdoing, we abandoned that daytime meal at the wrong time.

“So we ate both in the evening & in the morning. Then there was the time when the Blessed One addressed the monks, saying, ‘Monks, please discontinue that evening meal at the wrong time.’ At the time I was upset, at the time I was sad, (thinking,) ‘The more exquisitely prepared of our two meals: even that the Blessed One has us abandon; even that the One Well-Gone has us relinquish!’ In the past, lord, a man—obtaining some soup during the day—would say to his wife, ‘Put this aside and we will all eat it together in the evening.’ (Almost) all food preparation is done in the evening, and almost none during the day. But, out of consideration for our love & respect for the Blessed

One, out of consideration for shame & fear of wrongdoing, we abandoned that evening meal at the wrong time.

“In the past, lord, monks wandering for alms in the pitch black of the night have walked into a waste-water pool, fallen into a cesspit, stumbled over a thorn patch, or stumbled over a sleeping cow. They have encountered young hooligans on the way to or from a crime. They have been propositioned by women. Once I went for alms in the pitch black of night. A woman washing a pot saw me by a lightning flash and, on seeing me, screamed out: ‘I’m done for! A demon is after me!’ When this was said, I said to her, ‘I’m no demon, sister. I’m a monk waiting for alms.’ ‘Then you’re a monk whose daddy’s dead and whose mommy’s dead. Better for you, monk, that your belly were slit open with a sharp butcher’s knife than this prowling for alms for your belly’s sake in the pitch black of the night!’” On recollecting that, lord, the thought occurred to me: ‘So many painful things has the Blessed One taken away from us! So many pleasant things has he brought us! So many unskillful qualities has the Blessed One taken away from us! So many skillful qualities has he brought us!’”

“In the same way, Udāyin, there are some worthless men who, when I tell them, ‘Abandon this,’ say: ‘What? Over this little, trifling thing? He’s too much of a stickler, this contemplative.’ They don’t abandon it. They’re rude to me and to the monks keen on training. For them that’s a strong snare, a thick snare, a heavy snare, an unrotting snare, and a thick yoke....

“Now there are some clansmen who, when I tell them, ‘Abandon this,’ say: ‘What? The Blessed One has us abandon, the One Well-Gone has us relinquish this little, trifling thing?’ But they abandon it and are not rude to me or to the monks keen on training. Having abandoned it, they live unconcerned, unruffled, their wants satisfied, with their mind like a wild deer. For them that’s a weak snare, a feeble snare, a rotting snare, an insubstantial snare.” — [*MN 66*](#)

I have heard that on one occasion the Blessed One was wandering on a tour of Kāsi with a large Saṅgha of monks. There he addressed the monks: “I abstain from the nighttime meal. As I am abstaining from the nighttime meal, I sense next-to-no illness, next-to-no affliction, lightness, strength, & and comfortable abiding. Come, now. You, too, abstain from the nighttime meal. As you are abstaining from the nighttime meal, you, too, will sense next-to-no illness, next-to-no affliction, lightness, strength, & and comfortable abiding.”

“As you say, lord,” the monks responded to him.

Then, as he was wandering by stages in Kāsi, the Blessed One eventually arrived at a Kāsi town called Kīṭāgiri. And there he stayed in the Kāsi town, Kīṭāgiri.

Now at that time the monks led by Assaji & Punabbasu⁹⁴ were residing in Kīṭāgiri. Then a large number of monks went to them and, on arrival, said to them, “The Blessed One and the Saṅgha of monks abstain from the nighttime meal. As they are abstaining from the nighttime meal, they sense next-to-no illness, next-to-no affliction, lightness, strength, & and comfortable abiding. Come now, friends. You, too, abstain from the nighttime meal. As you are abstaining from the nighttime meal, you, too, will sense next-to-no illness, next-to-no affliction, lightness, strength, & and comfortable abiding.”

When this was said, the monks led by Assaji & Punabbasu said to those monks, “Friends, we eat in the evening, in the morning, & in the wrong-time during the day. As we are eating in the evening, and in the morning, & in the wrong time during the day, we sense next-to-no illness, next-to-no affliction, lightness, strength, & and comfortable abiding. Why should we, abandoning what is immediately visible, chase after something subject to time? We will eat in the evening, in the morning, & in the wrong time during the day.”

When they were unable to convince the monks led by Assaji & Punabbasu, those monks went to the Blessed One [and told him what had happened].

Then the Blessed One told a certain monk, “Come, monk. In my name, call the monks led by Assaji & Punabbasu, saying, ‘The Teacher calls you, friends.’”

“As you say, lord,” the monk answered and went to the monks led by Assaji & Punabbasu. On arrival, he said, “The Teacher calls you, friends.”

“As you say, friend,” the monks led by Assaji & Punabbasu replied. Then they went to the Blessed One and, on arrival, having bowed down to him, sat to one side. As they were sitting there, the Blessed One said to him, “Is it true, monks, that a large number of monks went to you... and you said, ‘...Why should we, abandoning what is immediately visible, chase after something subject to time? We will eat in the evening, in the morning, & in the wrong time during the day.’”

“Yes, lord.”

“Monks, have you ever understood me to teach the Dhamma in this way: ‘Whatever a person experiences—pleasant, painful, or neither-pleasant-nor-painful—his unskillful qualities decrease and his skillful qualities grow?’”

“No, lord.”

“And haven’t you understood me to teach the Dhamma in this way: ‘For someone feeling a pleasant feeling of *this* sort, unskillful qualities grow and skillful qualities decrease. But there is the case where, for someone feeling a pleasant feeling of *that* sort, unskillful qualities decrease and skillful qualities grow. For someone feeling a painful feeling of this sort, unskillful qualities grow and skillful qualities decrease. But there is the case where, for someone feeling a painful feeling of that sort, unskillful qualities decrease and skillful qualities grow. For someone feeling a neither-pleasant-nor-painful feeling of this sort, unskillful qualities grow and skillful qualities decrease. But there is the case where, for someone feeling a neither-pleasant-nor-painful feeling of that sort, unskillful qualities decrease and skillful qualities grow.’”

“Yes, lord.”

“Good, monks. And if it were not known by me—not seen, not observed, not realized, not touched through discernment—that ‘For someone feeling a pleasant feeling of this sort, unskillful qualities grow and skillful qualities decrease,’ then would it be fitting for me, not knowing that, to say, ‘Abandon that sort of pleasant feeling?’”

“No, lord.”

“But because it is known by me—seen, observed, realized, touched through discernment—that ‘For someone feeling a pleasant feeling of this sort, unskillful qualities grow and skillful qualities decrease,’ I therefore say, ‘Abandon that sort of pleasant feeling.’

“If it were not known by me—not seen, not observed, not realized, not touched through discernment—that ‘For someone feeling a pleasant feeling of this sort, unskillful qualities decrease and skillful qualities grow,’ then would it be fitting for me, not knowing that, to say, ‘Enter and remain in that sort of pleasant feeling?’”

“No, lord.”

“But because it is known by me—seen, observed, realized, touched through discernment—that ‘For someone feeling a pleasant feeling of this sort, unskillful qualities decrease and skillful qualities grow,’ I therefore say, ‘Enter and remain in that sort of pleasant feeling.’

[Similarly for painful feelings and neither-pleasant-nor-painful feelings.]

“Monks, I don’t say of all monks that they have a task to do with heedfulness; nor do I say of all monks that they have no task to do with heedfulness.

“Monks who are arahants, whose mental effluents are ended, who have reached fulfillment, done the task, laid down the burden, attained the true goal, totally destroyed the fetter of becoming, and who are released through right gnosis: I don’t say of them that they have a task to do with heedfulness. Why is that? They have done their task with heedfulness. They are incapable of being heedless. But as for monks in higher training, who have not yet reached their hearts’ goal, who still aspire for the unexcelled freedom from bondage: I say of them that they have a task to do with heedfulness. Why is that? (I think:) ‘Perhaps these venerable ones, when making use of suitable resting places, associating with admirable friends, balancing their (mental) faculties, will reach & remain in the supreme goal of the holy life for which clansmen rightly go forth from home into homelessness, knowing & realizing it for themselves in the here-&-now.’ Envisioning this fruit of heedfulness for these monks, I say that they have a task to do with heedfulness.

“Monks, I do not say that the attainment of gnosis is all at once. Rather, the attainment of gnosis is after gradual training, gradual action, gradual practice. And how is there the attainment of gnosis after gradual training, gradual action, gradual practice? There is the case where, when conviction has arisen, one visits (a teacher). Having visited, one grows close. Having grown close, one lends ear. Having lent ear, one hears the Dhamma. Having heard the Dhamma, one remembers it. Remembering, one penetrates the meaning of the teachings. Penetrating the meaning, one comes to an agreement through pondering the teachings. There being an agreement through pondering the teachings, desire arises. When desire has arisen, one is willing. When one is willing, one contemplates. Having contemplated, one makes an exertion. Having made an exertion, one realizes with the body the ultimate truth and, having penetrated it with discernment, sees it.

“Now, monks, there hasn’t been that conviction, there hasn’t been that visiting, there hasn’t been that growing close... that lending ear... that hearing of the Dhamma... that remembering... that penetration of the meaning of the teachings... that agreement through pondering the teachings... that desire... that willingness... that contemplation... that exertion. You have lost the way,

monks. You have gone the wrong way, monks. How far have you strayed, foolish men, from this Dhamma & Discipline!

“Monks, there is a four-phrased statement that, when it is recited, an observant man will in no long time learn the meaning through discernment. I will recite it, and you learn it from me.”

“But, lord, who are we to be learners of the Dhamma?”

“Monks, even with a teacher devoted to material things, an heir of material things, who lives attached to material things, this sort of haggling (by his students) wouldn’t be proper: ‘If we get this, we’ll do it; if we don’t, we won’t.’ So how could it be with regard to the Tathāgata, who dwells entirely detached from material things?

“For a disciple who has conviction in the Teacher’s message & lives to penetrate it, what accords with the Dhamma is this: ‘The Blessed One is the Teacher, I am a disciple. He is the one who knows, not I.’ For a disciple who has conviction in the Teacher’s message & lives to penetrate it, the Teacher’s message is healing & nourishing. For a disciple who has conviction in the Teacher’s message & lives to penetrate it, what accords with the Dhamma is this: ‘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.’ For a disciple who has conviction in the Teacher’s message & lives to penetrate it, one of two fruits can be expected: either gnosis here & now, or—if there be any remnant of clinging-sustenance—non-return.”

That is what the Blessed One said. Gratified, the monks delighted in the Blessed One’s words. — [*MN 70*](#)

Although, as we have seen, the Buddha would sometimes lay down rules in response to criticism from the laity, there were also times when he would lay down rules forbidding behavior that many lay people liked and admired. Here are two examples of this principle. The first example illustrates an additional point as well: Even though the Buddha would sometimes display his psychic powers as a way of inspiring his listeners, he couldn’t always trust disciples with psychic powers to share his discretion as to when such powers should and shouldn’t be displayed. So he had to forbid them from displaying their powers to the laity in all situations.

Now at that time a costly block of sandalwood, from sandalwood heartwood, accrued to the Rājagaha moneylender. The thought occurred to him, “What if I were to have an alms bowl carved from this block of sandalwood? The chips will be for my own enjoyment, and I’ll give the bowl as a gift.” So the moneylender, having had a bowl carved from the block of sandalwood, having looped a string around it, having hung it from the top of a bamboo pole, having had the bamboo pole fastened on top of a series of bamboo poles, one on top of another, announced: “Any contemplative or brahman who is an arahant with supranormal powers: Fetch down the bowl and it is given to you.”

Then Pūraṇa Kassapa went to the Rājagaha moneylender and, on arrival, said to him, “Because I am a worthy one with supranormal powers, give me the bowl.”

“If, lord, you are a worthy one with supranormal powers, fetch down the bowl and it is given to you.”

Then Makkhali Gosāla ... Ajita Kesakambalin ... Pakudha Kaccāyana ... Sañjaya Velatṭhaputta ... Nigaṇṭha Nātaputta went to the Rājagaha moneylender and, on arrival, said to him, “Because I am an arahant with supranormal powers, give me the bowl.”

“If, lord, you are an arahant with supranormal powers, fetch down the bowl and it is given to you.”

Now at that time, early in the morning, Ven. Mahā Moggallāna & Ven. Piṇḍola Bhāradvāja—having adjusted their under robes and each taking his robe & bowl—had gone into Rājagaha for alms. Ven. Piṇḍola Bhāradvāja was an arahant with supranormal powers, and Ven. Mahā Moggallāna was an arahant with supranormal powers. Then Ven. Piṇḍola Bhāradvāja said to Ven. Mahā Moggallāna: “Go, friend Moggallāna, and fetch down the bowl. That bowl is yours.” Then Ven. Mahā Moggallāna said to Ven. Piṇḍola Bhāradvāja: “Go, friend Bhāradvāja, and fetch down the bowl. That bowl is yours.”

So Ven. Piṇḍola Bhāradvāja, rising up into the sky, took the bowl and circled three times around Rājagaha. Now at that time the Rājagaha moneylender was standing in his house compound with his wife & children, paying homage with his hands palm-to-palm over his heart, (saying,) “May Master Bhāradvāja land right here in our house compound.” So Ven. Piṇḍola Bhāradvāja landed in the moneylender’s house compound. Then the moneylender, having taken the bowl from Ven. Piṇḍola Bhāradvāja’s hand,

having filled it with costly non-staple foods, presented it to Ven. Piṇḍola Bhāradvāja. Ven. Piṇḍola Bhāradvāja, taking the bowl, returned to the monastery.

People, hearing that “Master Piṇḍola Bhāradvāja, they say, has fetched down the moneylender’s bowl,” followed right after him, making a shrill noise, a great noise. The Blessed One, hearing the shrill noise, the great noise, asked Ven. Ānanda, “Ānanda, what is that shrill noise, that great noise?”

“Ven. Piṇḍola Bhāradvāja has fetched down the Rājagaha moneylender’s bowl, lord. People, hearing that ‘Master Piṇḍola Bhāradvāja, they say, has fetched down the moneylender’s bowl,’ are following right after him, making a shrill noise, a great noise. That is the shrill noise, the great noise, that the Blessed One (hears).”

Then the Blessed One, with regard to this cause, to this incident, had the Saṅgha of monks assembled and questioned Ven. Piṇḍola Bhāradvāja: “Is it true, as they say, Bhāradvāja, that you fetched down the moneylender’s bowl?”

“It’s true, lord.”

The Awakened One, the Blessed One, rebuked him: “It’s not appropriate, Bhāradvāja, not fitting for a contemplative, improper, and not to be done. How can you display a superior human state, a wonder of supranormal power, to lay people for the sake of a miserable wooden bowl? Just as a woman might expose her sexual organ for the sake of a miserable wooden coin, so too have you displayed a superior human state, a wonder of supranormal power, to lay people for the sake of a miserable wooden bowl....

“Monks, A superior human state, a wonder of supranormal power, should not be displayed to householders. Whoever should display it: an offense of wrongdoing. Break this wooden bowl into pieces, monks, and having reduced it to splinters, give them mixed in ointment to the monks. And a wooden bowl is not to be used. Whoever should use one: an offense of wrongdoing.” — Cv 5:8

At that time, the group led by Assaji & Punabbasu were residents in Kīṭāgiri. Shameless & evil monks, they engaged in bad habits like these: ... They ate from the same dish with wives of good families, daughters of good families, girls of good families, daughters-in-law of good families, female slaves of good families; drank from the same beaker, sat down on the same seat, shared the same bench, shared the same mat, shared the same blanket, shared the same

mat & blanket.... They ate at the wrong time, drank strong liquor, wore garlands, scents, & cosmetics; they danced, they sang, they played instruments.... They ran in front of elephants... horses... chariots. They ran forwards & backwards. They whistled, they clapped their hands, wrestled, boxed. Having spread out their outer robes as a stage, they said to a dancing girl, “Dance here, sister.” They applauded her—and engaged in many other bad habits.

“Now at that time a certain monk, having finished his Rains residence among the people of Kāsi and on his way to Sāvattthī to see the Blessed One, arrived at Kīṭāgiri. Early in the morning—having adjusted his under robe and taking his bowl & outer robe—he entered Kīṭāgiri for alms: gracious in the way he approached and departed, looked forward and behind, drew in and stretched out (his arm); his eyes downcast, his every movement consummate. People seeing him said, “Who is this weakest of weaklings, this dullest of dullards, this most snobbish of snobs? Who, if this one approached, would even give him alms? Our masters, the group led by Assaji & Punabbasu, are compliant, genial, pleasing in conversation. They are the first to smile, saying, ‘Come, you are welcome.’ *They* are not snobbish. They are approachable. They are the first to speak. *They* are the ones to whom alms should be given.”

At the request of one of the laymen of Kīṭāgiri, the monk informed the Buddha of the situation there, and he instituted an act of banishment against the followers of Assaji and Punabbasu, on the grounds that they were “corrupting families” with their ingratiating behavior:

“The Blessed One... addressed Ven. Sāriputta & Moggallāna, “Go to Kīṭāgiri and, having gone there, impose a banishment transaction on the monks who are followers of Assaji & Punabbasu in Kīṭāgiri. They are your fellow students.”

“But, lord, how can we impose a banishment transaction on the monks who are followers of Assaji & Punabbasu in Kīṭāgiri? They are violent & rough.”

“In that case, go with many monks.”

“As you say, lord.” — [*Sg 13*](#)

After the banishment transaction was imposed on the followers of Assaji and Punabbasu—requiring them to leave their residence—they did not comply. Instead, they cursed and reviled the monks who had imposed the transaction. So the Buddha had the monks impose a further

saṅghādisesa offense on them to give them one more chance to mend their ways. The Canon does not record whether the affair was ever resolved.

The Buddha continued legislating rules, major and minor, for many years. Some of them were included in the Pāṭimokkha, many were not. Those not included there were gathered in other sections of the Vinaya, called the Khandhakas. As the rules grew in number, some of the monks found them overwhelming. In response to the honest complaint of one such monk, the Buddha affirmed that all the rules had a consistent set of principles underlying them.

On one occasion the Blessed One was staying near Vesālī in the Great Forest. Then a certain Vajjian monk went to him and, on arrival, bowed down to him and sat to one side. As he was sitting there, he said to the Blessed One, “Lord, this recitation of more than 150 training rules comes every fortnight. I cannot train in reference to them.”

“Monk, can you train in reference to the three trainings: the training in heightened virtue, the training in heightened mind, the training in heightened discernment?”

“Yes, lord, I can train in reference to the three trainings: the training in heightened virtue, the training in heightened mind, the training in heightened discernment.”

“Then train in reference to those three trainings: the training in heightened virtue, the training in heightened mind, the training in heightened discernment. As you train in heightened virtue, heightened mind, & heightened discernment, your passion, aversion, & delusion... will be abandoned. You—with the abandoning of passion, the abandoning of aversion, the abandoning of delusion—will not do anything unskillful or engage in any evil.”

Later on, that monk trained in reference to heightened virtue, heightened mind, & heightened discernment. His passion, aversion, & delusion... were abandoned. He—with the abandoning of passion, the abandoning of aversion, the abandoning of delusion—did not do anything unskillful or engage in any evil. — [AN 3:85](#)

Two of the rules regarding robe cloth, not included in the Pāṭimokkha, were legislated in a way that reveals a great deal about the Buddha as a person. The first incident below is another example of a rule laid down, not in response to any event, but from the Buddha's own inspiration.

Then the Blessed One, having stayed at Rājagaha as long as he liked, set out on a wandering tour toward the Southern Mountains. He saw the fields of Magadha, divided into rectangles, divided into rows, divided by dikes, divided by intersections. On seeing them, he addressed Ven. Ānanda, "Ānanda, do you see the fields of Magadha, divided into rectangles, divided into rows, divided by dikes, divided by intersections?"

"Yes, lord."

"Try to design robes in this pattern for the monks."

"I will try, Blessed One."

Then the Blessed One, having stayed in the Southern Mountains for as long as he liked, returned to Rājagaha.

Then Ven. Ānanda, having procured robes for several monks, went to the Blessed One and, on arrival, said to him, "Lord, may the Blessed One look at the robes I have designed."

Then the Blessed One, having given a Dhamma talk with regard to this cause, to this incident, addressed the monks: "Monks, Ānanda is wise. Ānanda has great discernment, in that he understands in detail the meaning of a brief statement made by me. He can make what is called a dike-piece, a half-dike piece, a field plot, a half-field plot, a central section, sections next to the central section, a throat piece, a calf piece, and arm sections.⁹⁵ They will be cut, made rough by the knife, suitable for a contemplative, not envied by enemies. Monks, I allow a cut-up outer robe, a cut-up upper robe, a cut-up lower robe." —

[*Mv 8:12*](#)

[The Buddha addresses the monks:] "As I was traveling on the road from Rājagaha to Vesālī, I saw many monks coming along loaded down with robe-cloth, having made a mattress of robe-cloth on their heads and a mattress of robe-cloth on their backs/shoulders and a mattress of robe-cloth on their hips. Seeing them, I thought, 'All too quickly have these worthless men backslid into abundance in terms of robe-cloth. What if I were to tie off a boundary, to set a limit on robe-cloth for the monks?'

“Now at that time, during the cold winter middle-eight nights [the four nights on either side of the full moon in February, the coldest time of the year in northern India] when snow was falling, I sat in the open air wearing one robe and was not cold. Toward the end of the first watch I became cold. I put on a second robe and was not cold. Toward the end of the middle watch I became cold. I put on a third robe and was not cold. Toward the end of the final watch, as dawn rose and the night smiled, I became cold. I put on a fourth robe and was not cold. The thought occurred to me, ‘Those in this Dhamma & Vinaya who are sons of respectable families—sensitive to cold and afraid of the cold—even they are able to get by with three robes. Suppose I were to tie off a boundary, to set a limit on robe-cloth for the monks and were to allow three robes.’ Monks, I allow you three robes: a double-layer outer robe, a single-thickness upper robe, and a single-thickness lower robe [thus, four layers of cloth].” — [*Mv 8:13*](#)

In addition to legislating rules for the Saṅgha, the Buddha continued training the monks in the Dhamma, sometimes using gentleness, sometimes strictness, and sometimes humor, as the case required.

Then Ven. Upāli went to the Blessed One and, on arrival, having bowed down to him, sat to one side. As he was sitting there he said to the Blessed One, “Lord, I want to spend time in isolated wilderness & forest lodgings.”

“Upāli, it’s not easy to endure isolated wilderness & forest lodgings. It’s not easy to maintain seclusion, not easy to enjoy being alone. The forests plunder, as it were, the mind of a monk who has not gained concentration. Whoever would say, ‘I, without having gained concentration, will spend time in isolated wilderness & forest lodgings,’ of him it can be expected that he will sink to the bottom or float away.

“Imagine, Upāli, a great freshwater lake. Then there would come a great bull elephant, seven or seven and a half cubits tall. The thought would occur to him, ‘What if I were to plunge into this freshwater lake, to playfully squirt water into my ears and along my back, and then—having playfully squirted water into my ears and along my back, having bathed & drunk & come back out—to go off as I please?’ So, having plunged into the freshwater lake, he would playfully squirt water into his ears and along his back, and then—having playfully squirted water into his ears and along his back, having bathed & drunk & come back out

—he would go off as he pleased. Why is that? Because his large body finds a footing in the depth.

“Then a rabbit or a cat would come along. The thought would occur to it, ‘What’s the difference between me and a bull elephant? What if I were to plunge into this freshwater lake, to playfully squirt water into my ears and along my back, and then—having playfully squirted water into my ears and along my back, having bathed & drunk & come back out—to go off as I please?’ So, without reflecting, he jumps rashly into the freshwater lake, and of him it can be expected that he will either sink to the bottom or float away. Why is that? Because his small body doesn’t find a footing in the depth.

“In the same way, whoever would say, ‘I, without having gained concentration, will spend time in isolated wilderness & forest lodgings,’ of him it can be expected that he will sink to the bottom or float away.”⁹⁶ — [AN 10:99](#)

I have heard that on one occasion the Blessed One was dwelling near Rājagaha, on Vulture Peak Mountain. And on that occasion Ven. Sōṇa was dwelling near Rājagaha in the Cool Forest. Then, as Ven. Sōṇa 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 effluents through lack of clinging/sustenance. Now, my family has enough wealth that it would be possible to enjoy wealth & make merit. What if I were to disavow the training, return to the lower life, enjoy wealth, & make merit?”

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

“Yes, lord.”

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

“Yes, lord.”

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

“No, lord.”

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

“No, lord.”

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

“Yes, lord.”

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

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

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, directly knowing & realizing it for himself in the here-&-now. He knew: “Birth is ended, the holy life fulfilled, the task done. There is nothing further for the sake of this world.” And thus Ven. Soṇa became another one of the arahants. — [AN 6:55](#)

“Monks, this is a lowly means of livelihood, alms gathering. It’s a form of abuse in the world [to say], ‘You go around as an alms gatherer with a bowl in your hand!’ Yet reasonable young men of good families have taken it up for a compelling reason. They have not been forced into it by kings or robbers, nor through debt, through fear, nor through the loss of their livelihood, but

through the thought: ‘We are beset by birth, aging, & death, by sorrows, lamentations, pains, distresses, & despairs, beset by stress, overcome with stress. O, that the end of this entire mass of suffering & stress might be known!’ But this young man of good family, having gone forth in this way, might be greedy for sensual pleasures, strong in his passions, malevolent in mind, corrupt in his resolves, his mindfulness muddled, unalert, uncentered, his mind scattered, & his faculties uncontrolled. Just as a firebrand from a funeral pyre—burning at both ends, covered with excrement in the middle—is used as fuel neither in a village nor in the wilderness: I tell you that this is a simile for this person. He has missed out on the householder’s enjoyments and does not fulfill the purpose of the contemplative life.”

He’s missed out
on the householder’s enjoyment
& the purpose of the contemplative life
—unfortunate man!
Ruining it, he throws it away,
perishes
like a firebrand used at a funeral.
Better to eat an iron ball
—glowing, aflame—
than that, unprincipled &
unrestrained,
he should eat the alms of the country. — [*Iti 91*](#)

I have heard that on one occasion the Blessed One was staying near Vārāṇasī in the Isipatana game reserve. Then, early in the morning, the Blessed One—having adjusted his under robe and carrying his bowl & outer robe—went into Vārāṇasī for alms. As he was walking for alms near the fig-tree at the cattle yoke, he saw a certain monk whose delight was in what is empty, whose delight was in exterior things, his mindfulness muddled, his alertness lacking, his concentration lacking, his mind gone astray, his faculties uncontrolled. On seeing him, the Blessed One said to him: “Monk, monk, don’t let yourself putrefy! On one who lets himself putrefy & stink with the stench of carrion, there’s no way that flies won’t swarm & attack!”

Then the monk—admonished with this, the Blessed One’s admonishment—came to his senses.

So the Blessed One, having gone for alms in Vārāṇasī, after the meal, returning from his almsround, addressed the monks [and told them what had happened].

When this was said, a certain monk said to the Blessed One, “What, lord, is putrefaction? What is the stench of carrion? What are flies?”

“Greed, monk, is putrefaction. Ill will is the stench of carrion. Evil, unskillful thoughts are flies. On one who lets himself putrefy & stink with the stench of carrion, there’s no way that flies won’t swarm & attack.

“On one whose eyes & ears
are unguarded,
whose senses
are unrestrained,
flies swarm:
resolves dependent on passion.
The monk who is putrid,
who stinks of the stench of carrion,
is far from unbinding.
His share is vexation.
Whether he stays
in village or wilderness,
having gained for himself no
tranquility,
he’s surrounded by flies.
But those who are consummate
in virtue,
who delight
in discernment & calm,
pacified, they sleep in ease.
No flies settle on them.” — [*AN 3:129*](#)

There were cases in which monks misrepresented the Buddha’s teachings, and two in which they did so even to his face. Because knowledge of his teachings depended on word of mouth, the Buddha had to be especially hard on these monks in front of the Saṅgha, so as to make clear in no uncertain terms that the offending monks were, in fact, slandering him.

Now at that time this evil viewpoint [*ditṭhigata*] had arisen in the monk Ariṭṭha Formerly-of-the-Vulture-Killers: “As I understand the Dhamma taught by the Blessed One, those acts the Blessed One says are obstructive,⁹⁷ when indulged in, are not genuine obstructions.” A large number of monks heard, “They say that this evil viewpoint has arisen in the monk Ariṭṭha Formerly-of-the-Vulture-Killers: ‘As I understand the Dhamma taught by the Blessed One, those acts the Blessed One says are obstructive, when indulged in, are not genuine obstructions.’” So they went to the monk Ariṭṭha Formerly-of-the-Vulture-Killers and, on arrival, said to him, “Is it true, friend Ariṭṭha, that this evil viewpoint has arisen in you—‘As I understand the Dhamma taught by the Blessed One, those acts the Blessed One says are obstructive, when indulged in, are not genuine obstructions’?”

“Yes, indeed, friends. I understand the Dhamma taught by the Blessed One, and those acts the Blessed One says are obstructive, when indulged in are not genuine obstructions.”

Then those monks, desiring to pry the monk Ariṭṭha Formerly-of-the-Vulture-Killers away from that evil viewpoint, quizzed him back & forth and rebuked him, saying, “Don’t say that, friend Ariṭṭha. Don’t slander the Blessed One, for it is not good to slander the Blessed One. The Blessed One would not say anything like that. In many ways, friend, the Blessed One has described obstructive acts, and when indulged in they are genuine obstructions. The Blessed One has said that sensual pleasures are of little satisfaction, much stress, much despair, & greater drawbacks. The Blessed One has compared sensual pleasures to a chain of bones: of much stress, much despair, & greater drawbacks. The Blessed One has compared sensual pleasures to a lump of flesh... a grass torch... a pit of glowing embers... a dream... borrowed goods... the fruits of a tree... a butcher’s ax and chopping block... swords and spears... a snake’s head: of much stress, much despair, & greater drawbacks.”⁹⁸ And yet even though he was quizzed back & forth and rebuked by those monks, the monk Ariṭṭha Formerly-of-the-Vulture-Killers, through stubbornness and attachment to that very same evil viewpoint, continued to insist, “Yes, indeed, friends. I understand the Dhamma taught by the Blessed One, and those acts the Blessed One says are obstructive, when indulged in are not genuine obstructions.”

So when the monks were unable to pry the monk Ariṭṭha Formerly-of-the-Vulture-Killers away from that evil viewpoint, 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 what had happened].

So the Blessed One told a certain monk, “Come, monk. In my name, call the monk Ariṭṭha Formerly-of-the-Vulture-Killers, saying, ‘The Teacher calls you, friend Ariṭṭha.’”

“As you say, lord,” the monk responded and went to the monk Ariṭṭha Formerly-of-the-Vulture-Killers. On arrival, he said, “The Teacher calls you, friend Ariṭṭha.”

“As you say, my friend,” the monk Ariṭṭha Formerly-of-the-Vulture-Killers responded. Then he went to the Blessed One and, on arrival, having bowed down to him, sat to one side. As he was sitting there, the Blessed One said to him, “Is it true, Ariṭṭha, that this evil viewpoint has arisen in you—‘As I understand the Dhamma taught by the Blessed One, those acts the Blessed One says are obstructive, when indulged in, are not genuine obstructions?’”

“Yes, indeed, lord. I understand the Dhamma taught by the Blessed One, and those acts the Blessed One says are obstructive, when indulged in are not genuine obstructions.”

“Worthless man, from whom have you understood that Dhamma taught by me in such a way? Worthless man, haven’t I in many ways described obstructive acts? And when indulged in they are genuine obstructions. I have said that sensual pleasures are of little satisfaction, much stress, much despair, & greater drawbacks. I have compared sensual pleasures to a chain of bones... a snake’s head: of much stress, much despair, & greater drawbacks. But you, worthless man, through your own wrong grasp (of the Dhamma), have slandered us as well as injuring yourself and accumulating much demerit for yourself, for that will lead to your long-term harm & suffering.”⁹⁹

Then the Blessed One said to the monks, “What do you think, monks? Is this monk Ariṭṭha Formerly-of-the-Vulture-Killers even warm¹⁰⁰ in this Dhamma & Vinaya?”

“How could he be, lord? No, lord.”

When this was said, the monk Ariṭṭha Formerly-of-the-Vulture-Killers sat silent, abashed, his shoulders drooping, his head down, brooding, at a loss for words.

Then the Blessed One, seeing that the monk Ariṭṭha Formerly-of-the-Vulture-Killers was sitting silent, abashed, his shoulders drooping, his head

down, brooding, at a loss for words, said to him, “Worthless man, you will be recognized for your own evil viewpoint. I will cross-examine the monks on this matter.”

Then the Blessed One addressed the monks, “Monks, do you, too, understand the Dhamma as taught by me in the same way that the monk Aritṭha Formerly-of-the-Vulture-Killers does when, through his own wrong grasp, he both slanders us as well as injuring himself and accumulating much demerit for himself?”

“No, lord, for in many ways the Blessed One has described obstructive acts to us, and when indulged in they are genuine obstructions. The Blessed One has said that sensual pleasures are of little satisfaction, much stress, much despair, & greater drawbacks. The Blessed One has compared sensual pleasures to a chain of bones... a snake’s head: of much stress, much despair, & greater drawbacks.”

“It’s good, monks, that you understand the Dhamma taught by me in this way.... But this monk Aritṭha Formerly-of-the-Vulture-Killers, through his own wrong grasp (of the Dhamma), has both slandered us as well as injuring himself and accumulating much demerit for himself, and that will lead to this worthless man’s long-term harm & suffering. For a person to indulge in sensual pleasures without sensual passion, without sensual perception, without sensual thinking: That isn’t possible.”¹⁰¹ — [MN 22](#)

Given the Buddha’s background as a member of the noble warrior caste, it’s not surprising that he would use martial analogies to exhort his monks in the practice.

Greater in battle
than the man who would conquer
a thousand-thousand men,
is he who would conquer
just one—
 himself.

Better to conquer yourself
 than others.
When you’ve trained yourself,
living in constant self-control,

neither a deva nor gandhabba,
nor a Māra banded with Brahmās,¹⁰²
could turn that triumph
back into defeat. — *Dhp 103–105*

“Monks, there are these five types of warriors who can be found existing in the world. Which five?

“There is the case of a warrior who, on seeing a cloud of dust [stirred up by the enemy army], falters, faints, doesn’t steel himself, can’t engage in the battle....

“Then there is the warrior who can handle the cloud of dust, but on seeing the top of the enemy’s banner, he falters, faints, doesn’t steel himself, can’t engage in the battle....

“Then there is the warrior who can handle the cloud of dust & the top of the enemy’s banner, but on hearing the tumult [of the approaching forces], he falters, faints, doesn’t steel himself, can’t engage in the battle....

“Then there is the warrior who can handle the cloud of dust, the top of the enemy’s banner, & the tumult, but when in hand-to-hand combat he is struck and falls wounded....

“Then there is the warrior who can handle the cloud of dust, the top of the enemy’s banner, the tumult, & the hand-to-hand combat. On winning the battle, victorious in battle, he comes out at the very head of the battle....

“These are the five types of warriors who can be found existing in the world.

“In the same way, monks, there are these five warrior-like individuals who can be found existing among the monks. Which five?

“There is the case of the monk who, on seeing a cloud of dust, falters, faints, doesn’t steel himself, can’t continue in the holy life. Declaring his weakness in the training, he leaves the training and returns to the lower life. What is the cloud of dust for him? There is the case of the monk who hears, ‘In that village or town over there is a woman or girl who is shapely, good-looking, charming, endowed with the foremost lotus-like complexion.’ On hearing this, he falters, faints, doesn’t steel himself, can’t continue in the holy life. Declaring his weakness in the training, he leaves the training and returns to the lower life. That, for him, is the cloud of dust....

“Then there is the case of the monk who can handle the cloud of dust, but on seeing the top of the enemy’s banner, he falters, faints, doesn’t steel himself, can’t continue in the holy life. Declaring his weakness in the training, he leaves the training and returns to the lower life. What is the top of the banner for him? There is the case of the monk who not only hears that ‘In that village or town over there is a woman or girl who is shapely, good-looking, charming, endowed with the foremost lotus-like complexion.’ He sees for himself that in that village or town over there is a woman or girl who is shapely, good-looking, charming, endowed with the foremost lotus-like complexion. On seeing her, he falters, faints, doesn’t steel himself, can’t continue in the holy life. Declaring his weakness in the training, he leaves the training and returns to the lower life. That, for him, is the top of the banner....

“Then there is the case of the monk who can handle the cloud of dust & the top of the enemy’s banner, but on hearing the tumult [of the approaching forces], he falters, faints, doesn’t steel himself, can’t continue in the holy life. Declaring his weakness in the training, he leaves the training and returns to the lower life. What is the tumult for him? There is the case of the monk who has gone to the wilderness, to the foot of a tree, or to an empty building. A woman approaches him and giggles at him, calls out to him, laughs aloud, & teases him. On being giggled at, called out to, laughed at, & teased by the woman, he falters, faints, doesn’t steel himself, can’t continue in the holy life. Declaring his weakness in the training, he leaves the training and returns to the lower life. That, for him, is the tumult....

“Then there is the case of the monk who can handle the cloud of dust, the top of the enemy’s banner, & the tumult, but when in hand-to-hand combat he is struck and falls wounded. What is the hand-to-hand combat for him? There is the case of the monk who has gone to the wilderness, to the foot of a tree, or to an empty building. A woman approaches him and sits down right next to him, lies down right next to him, throws herself all over him. When she sits down right next to him, lies down right next to him, and throws herself all over him, he—without renouncing the training, without declaring his weakness—engages in sexual intercourse. This, for him, is hand-to-hand combat....

“Then there is the case of the monk who can handle the cloud of dust, the top of the enemy’s banner, the tumult, & hand-to-hand combat. On winning the battle, victorious in battle, he comes out at the very head of the battle. What is victory in the battle for him? There is the case of the monk who has gone to

the wilderness, to the foot of a tree, or to an empty dwelling. A woman approaches him and sits down right next to him, lies down right next to him, throws herself all over him. When she sits down right next to him, lies down right next to him, and throws herself all over him, he extricates himself, frees himself, and goes off where he will.” — [AN 5:75](#)

“Endowed with four qualities, monks, a warrior is worthy of a king, an asset to a king, and counts as a very limb of his king. Which four?

“There is the case where a warrior is skilled in his stance, able to shoot far, able to fire shots in rapid succession, and able to pierce great objects. A warrior endowed with these four dhammas is worthy of a king, an asset to a king, and counts as a very limb of his king.

“In the same way, a monk endowed with four qualities is deserving of gifts, deserving of hospitality, deserving of offerings, deserving of respect, an unexcelled field of merit for the world. Which four?

“There is the case where a monk is skilled in his stance, able to shoot far, able to fire shots in rapid succession, and able to pierce great objects. A monk endowed with these four dhammas is deserving of gifts, deserving of hospitality, deserving of offerings, deserving of respect, an unexcelled field of merit for the world.

“And how is a monk skilled in his stance? There is the case where a monk is virtuous. He dwells restrained in accordance with the Pāṭimokkha, consummate in his behavior & sphere of activity. He trains himself, having undertaken the training rules, seeing danger in the slightest faults. This is how a monk is skilled in his stance.

“And how is a monk one who is able to shoot far? There is the case where a monk sees any form whatsoever that is past, future, or present; internal or external; blatant or subtle; common or sublime; far or near—every form—as it has come to be, with right discernment as: ‘This is not mine. This is not my self. This is not what I am.’

[Similarly with feeling, perception, fabrications, & consciousness.]

“This is how a monk is one who is able to shoot far.

“And how is a monk one who is able to fire shots in rapid succession? There is the case where a monk discerns, as it has come to be, that ‘*This is stress*’ ... ‘*This is the origination of stress*’ ... ‘*This is the cessation of stress*’ ... ‘*This is the*

path of practice leading to the cessation of stress.’ This is how a monk is one who is able to fire shots in rapid succession.

“And how is a monk one who is able to pierce great objects? There is the case where a monk pierces right through the great mass of ignorance. This is how a monk is one who is able to pierce great objects right through.

“Endowed with these four qualities, a monk is deserving of gifts, deserving of hospitality, deserving of offerings, deserving of respect, an unexcelled field of merit for the world.” — [AN 4:181](#)

“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 and remains in the first jhāna: rapture & pleasure born of seclusion, accompanied by directed thought & evaluation. He regards whatever phenomena there that are connected with form, feeling, perception, fabrications, & consciousness, as inconstant, stressful, a disease, a cancer, an arrow, painful, an affliction, alien, a disintegration, an emptiness, not-self. 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 pacification of all fabrications; the relinquishing of all acquisitions; the ending of craving; dispassion; cessation; unbinding.’

“Staying right there, he reaches the ending of effluents. Or, if not, then—through this very Dhamma-passion, this Dhamma-delight, and from the total wasting away of the five lower fetters [self-identity views, uncertainty, grasping at habits & practices, sensual passion, and irritation]—he is due to arise spontaneously [in the Pure Abodes], there to be totally unbound, never again to return from that world. [Similarly with the remaining jhānas and the formless attainments up through the dimension of nothingness.]” — [AN 9:36](#)

The Theragāthā tells us that the Buddha’s cousin, Ānanda, took on the constant position of the Buddha’s personal attendant during the last twenty-five years of the Buddha’s life. However, in the early years a number of other monks also served in that position on a temporary basis as part of their training—with varying degrees of success.

I have heard that on one occasion the Blessed One was journeying along a road in the Kosalan country with Ven. Nāgasamāla as his junior companion. Ven. Nāgasamāla, while going along the road, saw a fork in the path. On seeing it, he said to the Blessed One, “That, lord Blessed One,¹⁰³ is the route. We go that way.” When this was said, the Blessed One said, “This, Nāgasamāla, is the route. We go this way.”

A second time... A third time, Ven. Nāgasamāla said to the Blessed One, “That, Lord Blessed One, is the route. We go that way.” And for a third time, the Blessed One said, “This, Nāgasamāla, is the route. We go this way.”

Then Ven. Nāgasamāla, placing the Blessed One’s bowl & robes right there on the ground, left, saying, “This, Lord Blessed One, is the bowl & robes.”

Then as Ven. Nāgasamāla was going along that route, thieves—jumping out in the middle of the road—pummeled him with their fists & feet, broke his bowl, and ripped his outer robe to shreds.

So Ven. Nāgasamāla—with his bowl broken, his outer robe ripped to shreds—went to the Blessed One and, on arrival, bowed down to him and sat to one side. As he was sitting there he said to the Blessed One, “Just now, lord, as I was going along that route, thieves jumped out in the middle of the road, pummeled me with their fists & feet, broke my bowl, and ripped my outer robe to shreds.”

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

When traveling together,
mixed together
with a person who doesn’t know,
an attainer-of-wisdom,
on realizing that the person is evil,
abandons him—
as a milk-feeding¹⁰⁴ heron,
a bog. — *Ud 8:7*

I have heard that on one occasion the Blessed One, on a wandering tour among the Kosalans with a large Saṅgha of monks, arrived at a Kosalan brahman village named Icchānaṅgala. There he stayed in the Icchānaṅgala forest grove.

The brahman householders of Icchānaṅgala heard it said, “Gotama the contemplative... has arrived at Icchānaṅgala and is staying in the Icchānaṅgala forest grove. And of that Master Gotama this fine reputation has spread: ‘He is indeed a Blessed One, worthy & rightly self-awakened.... It is good to see such a worthy one.’”

So the brahman householders of Icchānaṅgala, when the night was gone, taking many staple & non-staple foods, went to the gate house of the Icchānaṅgala forest grove. On arrival, they stood there making a loud racket, a great racket.

Now at that time Ven. Nāgita was the Blessed One’s attendant. So the Blessed One addressed Ven. Nāgita: “Nāgita, what is that loud racket, that great racket, like fishermen with a catch of fish?”

“Lord, those are the brahman householders of Icchānaṅgala standing at the gate house to the Icchānaṅgala forest grove, having brought many staple & non-staple foods for the sake of the Blessed One & the Saṅgha of monks.”

“May I have nothing to do with honor, Nāgita, and honor nothing to do with me. Whoever cannot obtain at will—without difficulty, without trouble—as I do, the pleasure of renunciation, the pleasure of seclusion, the pleasure of peace, the pleasure of self-awakening, let him consent to this slimy-excrement pleasure, this drowsiness pleasure, this pleasure of gains, offerings, & fame.”

“Lord, let the Blessed One acquiesce (to their offerings) now! Let the One Well-Gone acquiesce now! Now is the time for the Blessed One’s acquiescence, lord! Now is the time for the Blessed One’s acquiescence, lord! Wherever the Blessed One will go now, the brahmans of the towns & countryside will be so inclined. Just as when the rain-devas send rain in fat drops, the waters flow with the incline, in the same way, wherever the Blessed One will go now, the brahmans of the towns & countryside will be so inclined. Why is that? Because such is the Blessed One’s virtue & discernment.”

“May I have nothing to do with honor, Nāgita, and honor nothing to do with me. Whoever cannot obtain at will—without difficulty, without trouble—as I do, the pleasure of renunciation, the pleasure of seclusion, the pleasure of peace, the pleasure of self-awakening, let him consent to this slimy-excrement pleasure, this drowsiness pleasure, this pleasure of gains, offerings, & fame.

“Even some devas, Nāgita, cannot obtain at will—without difficulty, without trouble—as I do, the pleasure of renunciation, the pleasure of seclusion, the pleasure of peace, the pleasure of self-awakening. When you all live together,

assemble together, and live committed to dwelling with a group, the thought occurs to me: ‘Surely these venerable ones cannot obtain at will—without difficulty, without trouble—as I do, the pleasure of renunciation, the pleasure of seclusion, the pleasure of peace, the pleasure of self-awakening, which is why they live together, assemble together, and live committed to dwelling with a group.’

[1] “There is the case, Nāgita, where I see monks laughing out loud, sporting around, tickling one another with their fingers. The thought occurs to me, ‘Surely these venerable ones cannot obtain at will—without difficulty, without trouble—as I do, the pleasure of renunciation, the pleasure of seclusion, the pleasure of peace, the pleasure of self-awakening, which is why they are laughing out loud, sporting around, tickling one another with their fingers.’

[2] “Then there is the case where I see monks—having eaten as much as they want, filling their bellies—live committed to the pleasure of lying down, the pleasure of sensory contacts, the pleasure of drowsiness. The thought occurs to me, ‘Surely these venerable ones cannot obtain at will—without difficulty, without trouble—as I do, the pleasure of renunciation, the pleasure of seclusion, the pleasure of peace, the pleasure of self-awakening, which is why they—having eaten as much as they want, filling their bellies—live committed to the pleasure of lying down, the pleasure of sensory contacts, the pleasure of drowsiness.

[3] “Then there is the case where I see a monk sitting in concentration in a village (monastery) 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.

[4] “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, (his mind) unified.’ And so I am pleased with that monk’s wilderness-dwelling.

[5] “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.

[6] “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.

[7] “Then there is the case where I see a village-dwelling monk who receives robes, almsfood, 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.

[8] “Then there is the case where I see a wilderness monk who receives robes, almsfood, 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 8:103](#)

Establishing the Nuns' Order

Now at that time, the Buddha, the Blessed One, was dwelling near Kapilavatthu in the Banyan Park.

Then Mahāpajāpatī Gotamī went to the Blessed One and, on arrival, having bowed to him, stood to one side. As she was standing there, she said to him: “It would be good, lord, if women might obtain the Going-forth from home into homelessness in the Dhamma & Vinaya made known by the Tathāgata.”

“Enough, Gotamī. Don’t advocate women’s Going-forth from home into homelessness in the Dhamma & Vinaya made known by the Tathāgata.”

A second time... A third time, she said to him: “It would be good, lord, if women might obtain the Going-forth from home into homelessness in the Dhamma & Vinaya made known by the Tathāgata.”

“Enough, Gotamī. Don’t advocate women’s Going-forth from home into homelessness in the Dhamma & Vinaya made known by the Tathāgata.”¹⁰⁵

So Mahāpajāpatī Gotamī, (thinking,) “The Blessed One does not allow women’s Going-forth from home into homelessness in the Dhamma & Vinaya made known by the Tathāgata”—sad and unhappy, crying, her face in tears—bowed down to the Blessed One, circumambulated him, keeping him to her right, and then left.

The Blessed One, having stayed as long as he liked in Kapilavatthu, set out for Vesālī. After wandering in stages, he arrived at Vesālī. There he stayed near Vesālī at the Gabled Hall in the Great Forest.

Then Mahāpajāpatī Gotamī, having had her hair cut off and donning ochre robes, set out for Vesālī together with a large number of Sakyan women. After wandering in stages, she arrived at Vesālī and went to the Gabled Hall in the Great Forest.

Then she stood there at the outer gate: her feet swollen, her limbs covered with dust, sad and unhappy, crying, her face in tears. Ven. Ānanda saw her standing there... and so asked her, “Why, Gotamī, why are you standing here... your face in tears?”

“Because, venerable sir, the Blessed One doesn’t allow women’s Going-forth from home into homelessness in the Dhamma & Vinaya made known by the Tathāgata.”

“In that case, Gotamī, stay right here for a moment while I ask the Blessed One to allow women’s Going-forth from home into homelessness in the Dhamma & Vinaya made known by the Tathāgata.”

Then Ven. Ānanda went to the Blessed One and, on arrival, having bowed down to him, sat to one side. As he was sitting there, he said to the Blessed One: “Lord, Mahāpajāpatī Gotamī is standing outside the porch... her face in tears, because the Blessed One does not allow women’s Going-forth from home into homelessness in the Dhamma & Vinaya made known by the Tathāgata. It would be good if women might obtain the Going-forth from home into homelessness in the Dhamma & Vinaya made known by the Tathāgata.”

“Enough, Ānanda. Don’t advocate women’s Going-forth from home into homelessness in the Dhamma & Vinaya made known by the Tathāgata.”

A second time... A third time, Ven. Ānanda said, “It would be good, lord, if women might obtain the Going-forth from home into homelessness in the Dhamma & Vinaya made known by the Tathāgata.”

“Enough, Ānanda. Don’t advocate women’s Going-forth from home into homelessness in the Dhamma & Vinaya made known by the Tathāgata.”

Then the thought occurred to Ven. Ānanda, “The Blessed One does not allow women’s Going-forth from home into homelessness in the Dhamma & Vinaya made known by the Tathāgata. What if I were to find some other way to ask the Blessed One to allow women’s Going-forth from home into homelessness in the Dhamma & Vinaya made known by the Tathāgata?”

So he said to the Blessed One, “Lord, would a woman—having gone forth from home into homelessness in the Dhamma & Vinaya made known by the Tathāgata—be able to realize the fruit of stream-entry, once-returning, non-returning, or arahantship?”

“Yes, Ānanda....”

“Lord, if a woman, having gone forth from home into homelessness in the Dhamma & Vinaya made known by the Tathāgata would be able to realize the fruit of stream-entry, once-returning, non-returning, or arahantship: Mahāpajāpatī Gotamī has been of great service to the Blessed One. She was the Blessed One’s aunt, foster mother, nurse, giver of milk. When the Blessed One’s

mother passed away, she gave him milk. So it would be good if women might obtain the Going-forth from home into homelessness in the Dhamma & Vinaya made known by the Tathāgata.”

THE EIGHT VOWS OF RESPECT

“Ānanda, if Mahāpajāpatī Gotamī accepts eight vows of respect [*garudhamma*], that will be her full Acceptance:

[1] “A nun who has been fully accepted even for a century must bow down, rise up from her seat, salute with hands palm-to-palm over her heart, and perform forms of respect due to superiors to a monk even if he has been fully accepted on that very day. This vow is to be honored, respected, revered, venerated, never to be transgressed as long as she lives.

[2] “A nun must not spend the Rains in a residence where there is no monk (nearby). This vow, too, is to be honored, respected, revered, venerated, never to be transgressed as long as she lives.

[3] “Every half-month a nun should expect two things from the Bhikkhu Saṅgha: (permission to) ask for the date of the Uposatha and (permission to) approach for an exhortation. This vow, too, is to be honored, respected, revered, venerated, never to be transgressed as long as she lives.

[4] “At the end of the Rains residence, a nun should invite (accusations from) both Saṅghas [the Bhikkhu and Bhikkhunī Saṅghas] on any of three grounds: what they have seen, what they have heard, what they have suspected. This vow, too, is to be honored, respected, revered, venerated, never to be transgressed as long as she lives.

[5] “A nun who has broken any of the vows of respect must undergo penance for half a month under both Saṅghas. This vow, too, is to be honored, respected, revered, venerated, never to be transgressed as long as she lives.

[6] “Only after a female trainee has trained in the six precepts for two years can she request Acceptance from both Saṅghas.... This vow, too, is to be honored, respected, revered, venerated, never to be transgressed as long as she lives.

[7] “A monk must not in any way be insulted or reviled by a nun. This vow is to be honored, respected, revered, venerated, never to be transgressed as long as she lives.

[8] “From this day forward, the admonition of a monk by a nun is forbidden, but the admonition of a nun by a monk is not forbidden. This vow, too, is to be honored, respected, revered, venerated, never to be transgressed as long as she lives.

“If Mahāpajāpatī Gotamī accepts these eight vows of respect, that will be her full Acceptance.”

Then Ven. Ānanda, having learned the eight vows of respect in the Blessed One’s presence, went to Mahāpajāpatī Gotamī and, on arrival, said to her, “Gotamī, if you accept these eight vows of respect, that will be your full Acceptance.... [Ven. Ānanda then listed the vows.]

[Mahāpajāpatī Gotamī:] “Ven. Ānanda, just as if a young woman—or man—fond of ornamentation, having bathed his or her head, having been given a garland of lotuses or jasmine or scented creepers, having accepted it in both hands, were to place it on her head, in the same way, I accept the eight vows of respect, never to transgress them as long as I live.”

Then Ven. Ānanda returned to the Blessed One and, having bowed down, sat to one side. As he was sitting there he said, “Lord, Mahāpajāpatī Gotamī has accepted the eight vows of respect. The Blessed One’s maternal aunt is fully accepted.”

“But, Ānanda, if women had not obtained the Going-forth from home into homelessness in the Dhamma & Vinaya made known by the Tathāgata, the holy life would have lasted long. The True Dhamma would have lasted one thousand years. But now that they have obtained the Going-forth, this holy life will not last long. The True Dhamma will last only five hundred years. ¹⁰⁶

“Just as a clan in which there are many women and few men is easily plundered by robbers & thieves, in the same way, in whatever Dhamma & Vinaya women get to go forth from home into homelessness, the holy life does not last long.

“Just as, when the white blight ¹⁰⁷ falls on a field of ripening wheat, that field of wheat does not last long, in the same way, in whatever Dhamma & Vinaya women obtain the Going-forth, the holy life does not last long.

“Just as, when the red rust disease falls on a field of sugar cane, that field of sugar cane does not last long, in the same way, in whatever Dhamma & Vinaya women obtain the Going-forth, the holy life does not last long.

“Just as a man might make an embankment in advance around a great reservoir to keep the waters from overflowing, in the same way, I have set forth in advance the eight vows of respect for nuns that they are not to transgress as long as they live.”

Then Mahāpajāpatī Gotamī went to the Blessed One and, on arrival, having bowed down to him, stood to one side. As she was standing there, she said to him, “How should I proceed with regard to these Sakyan women?”

Then the Blessed One instructed, urged, roused, & encouraged her with a Dhamma talk. Then, having been instructed, urged, roused, & encouraged by the Blessed One with a Dhamma talk, Mahāpajāpatī Gotamī, bowing down to the Blessed One, circumambulated him, keeping him to her right, and left.

Then the Blessed One, having given a Dhamma talk for that reason, on that occasion, addressed the monks: “I allow that nuns be given the Acceptance by monks.”

Then the nuns said to Mahāpajāpatī Gotamī, “The venerable lady is not accepted, whereas we are accepted, because it was legislated by the Blessed One: ‘Nuns should be given the Acceptance by monks.’”¹⁰⁸

Then Mahāpajāpatī Gotamī went to Ven. Ānanda and, on arrival, having bowed down to him, stood to one side. As she was standing there, she said to him, “Ven. Ānanda, these nuns said to me: ‘The venerable lady is not accepted, whereas we are accepted, because it was legislated by the Blessed One that: “Nuns should be given the Acceptance by monks.”’”

Then Ven. Ānanda went to the Blessed One and, on arrival, having bowed down to him, sat to one side. As he was sitting there, he said to the Blessed One, “Lord, Mahāpajāpatī Gotamī said that, ‘Ven. Ānanda, these nuns said to me: “The venerable lady is not accepted, whereas we are accepted, because it was legislated by the Blessed One: ‘Nuns should be given the Acceptance by monks.’”’”

“Ānanda, from the very moment that Mahāpajāpatī Gotamī accepted the eight vows of respect, she was accepted.”

Just as was the case with the Saṅgha of monks, the nuns did not all accept the Buddha’s ordinances docilely. For instance, Mahāpajāpatī Gotamī soon tried to have the first vow of respect rescinded.

Then Mahāpajāpatī Gotamī went to Ven. Ānanda and, on arrival, having bowed down to him, stood to one side. As she was standing there, she said to him, “Ven. Ānanda, I ask one favor of the Blessed One. It would be good if the Blessed One would allow the monks and nuns (to do these) according to seniority: bowing down, rising up to greet, greeting with hands raised palm-to-palm over the heart, and performing forms of respect due to superiors.”

Then Ven. Ānanda went to the Blessed One and, on arrival, having bowed down to him, sat to one side. As he was sitting there, Ven. Ānanda said to the Blessed One, “Mahāpajāpatī Gotamī has said, ‘Ven. Ānanda, I ask one favor of the Blessed One. It would be good if the Blessed One would allow for the monks and nuns (to do these) according to seniority: bowing down, rising up to greet, greeting with hands raised palm-to-palm over the heart, and performing forms of respect due to superiors.’”

“That is impossible, Ānanda. It cannot happen that the Tathāgata would allow bowing down, rising up to greet, greeting with hands raised palm-to-palm over the heart, and performing forms of respect due to superiors to a woman. Ānanda, even these wanderers of other sects with poorly expounded Dhammas don’t bow down to a woman, stand up to greet, salute with hands placed palm-to-palm over the heart, or perform forms of respect due to superiors to a woman. So for what reason would the Tathāgata allow bowing down to a woman, standing up to greet, saluting with hands placed palm-to-palm over the heart, or performing forms of respect due to superiors to a woman?”

Then the Blessed One, having given a Dhamma talk with regard to this cause, to this incident, addressed the monks: “Bowing down, rising up to greet, greeting with hands raised palm-to-palm over the heart, or performing other forms of respect due to superiors are not to be done to a woman. Whoever should do so: an offense of wrongdoing.”

Then Mahāpajāpatī Gotamī went to the Blessed One and, on arrival, having bowed to him, stood to one side. As she was standing there, she said to the Blessed One, “Lord, with regard to those of the nuns’ training rules that are in common with those of the monks: How should we proceed with regard to them?”

“With regard to those of the nuns’ training rules that are in common with those of the monks: However the monks train in line with them, that’s how you

should train in line with them.”

“But lord, with regard to those of the nuns’ training rules that are not in common with those of the monks: How should we proceed with regard to them?”

“With regard to those of the nuns’ training rules that are not in common with those of the monks: You should train in line with them as they have been legislated.”

Then Mahāpajāpatī Gotamī went to the Blessed One and, on arrival, having bowed to him, stood to one side. As she was standing there, she said to the Blessed One, “It would be good, lord, if the Blessed One would teach me the Dhamma in brief such that, having heard the Dhamma from the Blessed One, I might dwell alone, secluded, heedful, ardent, & resolute.”

“Gotamī, the qualities of which you may know, ‘These qualities lead to passion, not to dispassion; to being fettered, not to being unfettered; to accumulating, not to shedding; to self-aggrandizement, not to modesty; to discontent, not to contentment; to entanglement, not to seclusion; to laziness, not to aroused persistence; to being burdensome, not to being unburdensome’: You may categorically hold, ‘This is not the Dhamma, this is not the Vinaya, this is not the Teacher’s instruction.’

“As for the qualities of which you may know, ‘These qualities lead to dispassion, not to passion; to being unfettered, not to being fettered; to shedding, not to accumulating; to modesty, not to self-aggrandizement; to contentment, not to discontent; to seclusion, not to entanglement; to aroused persistence, not to laziness; to being unburdensome, not to being burdensome’: You may categorically hold, ‘This is the Dhamma, this is the Vinaya, this is the Teacher’s instruction.’”

Now at that time, the monks were not reciting the Pāṭimokkha to the nuns. The monks reported the matter to the Blessed One....

“Monks, I allow the Pāṭimokkha to be recited to the nuns.”

Then the thought occurred to the monks, “By whom should the Pāṭimokkha be recited to the nuns?” They reported the matter to the Blessed One....

“Monks, I allow the Pāṭimokkha to be recited to the nuns by the monks.”

Now at that time the monks, having gone to the nuns' quarters, recited the Pāṭimokkha to the nuns. People were offended & annoyed & spread it about: "Those are the mistresses of these; these are the lovers of those. Now they're going to enjoy themselves with them!" ...

The monks reported the matter to the Blessed One....

"The Pāṭimokkha is not to be recited to nuns by monks. Whoever should recite it: an offense of wrongdoing. I allow that the Pāṭimokkha be recited to nuns by nuns"

The nuns didn't know how to recite the Pāṭimokkha. The monks reported the matter to the Blessed One....

"I allow monks to tell nuns how to recite the Pāṭimokkha."

Now at that time, the nuns were not confessing their offenses. The monks reported the matter to the Blessed One....

"Monks, an offence should not not be confessed by a nun. Whoever should not confess it: an offense of wrongdoing."

The nuns didn't know how to confess an offense. The monks reported the matter to the Blessed One....

"I allow monks to tell nuns how an offense is to be confessed."

Then the thought occurred to the monks: "By whom should the nuns' confessions be acknowledged?" They reported the matter to the Blessed One....

"Monks, I allow the nuns' confessions to be acknowledged by the monks."

Now at that time nuns, on seeing a monk along a main road, on a side road, or at a crossroads, having placed their bowls on the ground, having arranged their upper robes over one shoulder, kneeling down with hands raised palm-to-palm over the heart, confessed their offenses.

People were offended & annoyed & spread it about, "Those are the mistresses of these; these are the lovers of those. Having scorned them last night, they are now asking their forgiveness..."

The monks reported the matter to the Blessed One....

"Nuns' offenses are not to be acknowledged by monks. Whoever should acknowledge it: an offense of wrongdoing. Monks, I allow that nuns' offenses be acknowledged by nuns."

The nuns didn't know how to acknowledge an offense. The monks reported the matter to the Blessed One....

“I allow monks to tell nuns how an offense is to be acknowledged.” —Cv 10:1–6.2

There were both monks and nuns who were unhappy with the third vow of respect, requiring the nuns to listen to an exhortation from a monk every fortnight. The long-term benefits of this vow are obvious: It would help to ensure that the Dhamma taught and practiced by the nuns wouldn’t, over time, deviate from that taught and practiced by the monks. However, the exhortation instituted by the vow yielded immediate benefits as well.

Then Mahāpajāpatī Gotamī, together with about five hundred other nuns, went to the Blessed One and, on arrival, having bowed down to him, stood to one side. As she was standing there she said to him, “Lord, may the Blessed One exhort the nuns. Lord, may the Blessed One instruct the nuns. Lord, may the Blessed One give the nuns a talk on Dhamma.”

Now at that time the elder monks were taking turns in exhorting the nuns, but Ven. Nandaka didn’t want to exhort the nuns when his turn came. So the Blessed One addressed Ven. Ānanda: “Ānanda, whose turn is it to exhort the nuns today?”

“Lord, everyone has taken his turn in exhorting the nuns except for Ven. Nandaka, here, who doesn’t want to exhort the nuns when his turn comes.”

Then the Blessed One addressed Ven. Nandaka: “Exhort the nuns, Nandaka! Instruct the nuns, Nandaka! Give the nuns a talk on Dhamma, you brahman!”

“As you say, lord,” Ven. Nandaka responded to the Blessed One. Then, early in the morning—having adjusted his under robe and carrying his bowl & outer robe—he went into Sāvattthī for alms. After his meal, on returning from his almsround, he went with a companion to Rājaka Park. The nuns saw him coming from afar and, on seeing him, arranged a seat and set out water for his feet. Ven. Nandaka sat down on the arranged seat and washed his feet. The nuns, having bowed down to him, sat to one side.

As they were sitting there, Ven. Nandaka said to them: “This will be a question-response talk, sisters. Where you understand, you should say, ‘We understand.’ Where you don’t, you should say, ‘We don’t understand.’ Where you are doubtful or perplexed, you should question me in response: ‘How is this, venerable sir? What is the meaning of this?’”

“Venerable sir, we are gratified & delighted that you invite us in this way.”

“So then, sisters, what do you think? Is the eye constant or inconstant?”

“Inconstant, venerable sir.” “And is that which is inconstant easeful or stressful?” “Stressful, venerable sir.” “And is it fitting to regard what is inconstant, stressful, subject to change as: ‘This is mine. This is my self. This is what I am’?”

“No, venerable sir.”

[Similarly with the ear, nose, tongue, & body.]

“What do you think, sisters? Is the intellect constant or inconstant?”

“Inconstant, venerable sir.” “And is that which is inconstant easeful or stressful?” “Stressful, venerable sir.” “And is it fitting to regard what is inconstant, stressful, subject to change as: ‘This is mine. This is my self. This is what I am’?”

“No, venerable sir. Why is that? Because we have already seen it well as it has come to be, with right discernment, that these six internal media are inconstant.”

“Good, good, sisters. That’s how it is for a disciple of the noble ones who has seen it as it has come to be with right discernment.

“Now what do you think, sisters? Are forms constant or inconstant?”

“Inconstant, venerable sir.” “And is that which is inconstant easeful or stressful?” “Stressful, venerable sir.” “And is it fitting to regard what is inconstant, stressful, subject to change as: ‘This is mine. This is my self. This is what I am’?”

“No, venerable sir.”

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

“What do you think, sisters? Are ideas constant or inconstant?” “Inconstant, venerable sir.” “And is that which is inconstant easeful or stressful?” “Stressful, venerable sir.” “And is it fitting to regard what is inconstant, stressful, subject to change as: ‘This is mine. This is my self. This is what I am’?”

“No, venerable sir. Why is that? Because we have already seen it well as it has come to be, with right discernment, that these six external media are also inconstant.”

“Good, good, sisters. That’s how it is for a disciple of the noble ones who has seen it as it has come to be with right discernment.

“Now what do you think, sisters? Is eye-consciousness constant or inconstant?” “Inconstant, venerable sir.” “And is that which is inconstant easeful or stressful?” “Stressful, venerable sir.” “And is it fitting to regard what is inconstant, stressful, subject to change as: ‘This is mine. This is my self. This is what I am’?”

“No, venerable sir.”

[Similarly with ear-consciousness, nose-consciousness, tongue-consciousness, & body-consciousness.]

“What do you think, sisters? Is intellect-consciousness constant or inconstant?” “Inconstant, venerable sir.” “And is that which is inconstant easeful or stressful?” “Stressful, venerable sir.” “And is it fitting to regard what is inconstant, stressful, subject to change as: ‘This is mine. This is my self. This is what I am’?”

“No, venerable sir. Why is that? Because we have already seen it well as it has come to be, with right discernment, that these six consciousness-groups, too, are inconstant.”

“Good, good, sisters. That’s how it is for a disciple of the noble ones who has seen it as it has come to be with right discernment.

“Just as when the oil in a burning oil lamp is inconstant & subject to change, its wick is inconstant & subject to change, its flame is inconstant & subject to change, its light is inconstant & subject to change. If someone were to say, ‘The oil in that burning oil lamp is inconstant & subject to change, its wick is inconstant & subject to change, its flame is inconstant & subject to change, but as for its light, that is constant, everlasting, eternal, & not subject to change’: Would he be speaking rightly?”

“No, venerable sir. Why is that? Because the oil in that burning oil lamp is inconstant & subject to change, its wick is inconstant & subject to change, its flame is inconstant & subject to change, so how much more should its light be inconstant & subject to change.”

“In the same way, sisters, if someone were to say, ‘My six internal media are inconstant, but what I experience based on the six internal media—pleasure, pain, or neither pleasure nor pain—that is constant, everlasting, eternal, & not subject to change’: Would he be speaking rightly?”

“No, venerable sir. Why is that? Because each feeling arises dependent on its corresponding condition. With the cessation of its corresponding condition, it

ceases.”

“Good, good, sisters. That’s how it is for a disciple of the noble ones who has seen it as it has come to be with right discernment.

“Just as when the root of a great, standing tree—possessed of heartwood—is inconstant & subject to change, its trunk is inconstant & subject to change, its branches & foliage are inconstant & subject to change, its shadow is inconstant & subject to change. If someone were to say, ‘The root of that great, standing tree—possessed of heartwood—is inconstant & subject to change, its trunk is inconstant & subject to change, its branches & foliage are inconstant & subject to change, but as for its shadow, that is constant, everlasting, eternal, & not subject to change’: Would he be speaking rightly?”

“No, venerable sir. Why is that? Because the root of that great, standing tree—possessed of heartwood—is inconstant & subject to change, its trunk is inconstant & subject to change, its branches & foliage are inconstant & subject to change, so how much more should its shadow be inconstant & subject to change.”

“In the same way, sisters, if someone were to say, ‘My six external media are inconstant, but what I experience based on the six external media—pleasure, pain, or neither pleasure nor pain—that is constant, everlasting, eternal, & not subject to change’: Would he be speaking rightly?”

“No, venerable sir. Why is that? Because each feeling arises dependent on its corresponding condition. With the cessation of its corresponding condition, it ceases.”

“Good, good, sisters. That’s how it is for a disciple of the noble ones who has seen it as it has come to be with right discernment.

“Just as if a dexterous butcher or butcher’s apprentice, having killed a cow, were to carve it up with a sharp carving knife so that—without damaging the substance of the inner flesh, without damaging the substance of the outer hide—he would cut, sever, & detach only the skin muscles, connective tissues, & attachments in between. Having cut, severed, & detached the outer skin, and then covering the cow again with that very skin, if he were to say that the cow was joined to the skin just as it had been: Would he be speaking rightly?”

“No, venerable sir. Why is that? Because if the dexterous butcher or butcher’s apprentice, having killed a cow, were to... cut, sever, & detach only the skin muscles, connective tissues, & attachments in between; and... having

covered the cow again with that very skin, then no matter how much he might say that the cow was joined to the skin just as it had been, the cow would still be disjoined from the skin.”

“This simile, sisters, I have given to convey a message. The message is this: The substance of the inner flesh stands for the six internal media; the substance of the outer hide, for the six external media. The skin muscles, connective tissues, & attachments in between stand for passion & delight. And the sharp knife stands for noble discernment—the noble discernment that cuts, severs, & detaches the defilements, fetters, & bonds in between.

“Sisters, there are these seven factors for awakening through whose development & pursuit a monk enters and remains in the effluent-free awareness-release & discernment-release, having directly known & realized them for himself right in the here-&-now. Which seven? There is the case where a monk develops *mindfulness* as a factor for awakening dependent on seclusion, dependent on dispassion, dependent on cessation, resulting in relinquishment. He develops *analysis of qualities... persistence... rapture... calm... concentration... equanimity* as a factor for awakening dependent on seclusion, dependent on dispassion, dependent on cessation, resulting in relinquishment. These are the seven factors for awakening through whose development & pursuit a monk enters and remains in the effluent-free awareness-release & discernment-release, having directly known & realized them for himself right in the here-&-now.”

Then, having exhorted the nuns with this exhortation, Ven. Nandaka dismissed them, saying, “Go, sisters. The time has come.” The nuns, delighting in and approving of Ven. Nandaka’s exhortation, got up from their seats, bowed down to him, circumambulated him—keeping him to the right—and went to the Blessed One. On arrival, having bowed down to the Blessed One, they stood to one side. As they were standing there, the Blessed One said to them, “Go, nuns. The time has come.” So the nuns, having bowed down to the Blessed One, circumambulated him—keeping him to the right—and left.

Then, not long after the nuns had left, the Blessed One addressed the monks: “Monks, just as on the Uposatha day of the fourteenth, people at large are not doubtful or perplexed as to whether the moon is lacking or full, for it is clearly lacking; in the same way, even though the nuns are gratified with Nandaka’s Dhamma-teaching, their resolves have not yet been fulfilled.” So he

addressed Ven. Nandaka: “In that case, Nandaka, exhort the nuns again tomorrow with the exact same exhortation.”

“As you say, lord,” Ven. Nandaka replied. Then, after the night had passed, early in the morning—having adjusted his under robe and carrying his bowl & outer robe—he went into Rājagaha for alms... [as before, up to:]

Then, not long after the nuns had left, the Blessed One addressed the monks: “Monks, just as on the Uposatha day of the fifteenth, people at large are not doubtful or perplexed as to whether the moon is lacking or full, for it is clearly full; in the same way, the nuns are gratified with Nandaka’s Dhamma-teaching, and their resolves have been fulfilled. Of these five hundred nuns, the most backward is a stream-winner, not destined for the planes of deprivation, headed to self-awakening for sure.”

That is what the Blessed One said. Gratified, the monks delighted in the Blessed One’s words. — [*MN 146*](#)

Mahāpajāpatī Gotamī:

Awakened! Hero! Homage to you,
highest of all beings—
you who’ve released me
and many other people
from suffering!

I’ve

comprehended all stress,
dried up craving, the cause,
developed the eightfold path,
and touched cessation.

Before I was mother, son,
father, brother,
grandmother.

Not knowing things as they were,
I wandered on
without respite.

But now that I’ve seen the Blessed One,
this is my last body-heap.

Birth & wandering-on
are totally ended.

There is now
no further-becoming.

I see the disciples gathered,
their persistence aroused,
resolute, constant
in strong exertion:

This is the worship of the Buddhas. [109](#)

Truly for the benefit of the many
did Māyā [110](#) give birth to Gotama,
thrusting away the mass of pain
of those mired in illness & death. — [Thig 6:6](#)

Dwelling near Sāvattthī

During the Buddha's lifetime, Sāvattthī, the capital of Kosala, was one of the largest cities—if not the largest city—in the Ganges plain. More discourses are set near there, either in Jeta's Forest or in the Eastern Monastery, than at any other place mentioned in the Canon. This would seem to confirm the Commentary's assertion that the Buddha made Sāvattthī his home base for many years. He first went there at the invitation of a wealthy householder, Sudatta, who, because of his prodigious alms (*piṇḍa*) to the destitute (*anātha*) was known as Anāthapiṇḍika. Anāthapiṇḍika purchased Prince Jeta's Forest, just to the south of the city, and donated it to the Saṅgha. He was later cited as the Buddha's foremost male lay donor.

The gift of Jeta's Forest to the Buddha is hard to date. On the one hand, an early encounter between the Buddha and King Pasenadi, the king reigning over Kosala, refers to the Buddha as young. On the other, the account of the events leading up to the founding of the monastery includes references to the Group-of-Six monks, a renegade band who most likely were not members of the Saṅgha in its very early years.

Whatever the chronology, the narrative of Anāthapiṇḍika's first meeting with the Buddha up through the donation of Jeta's Forest provides a vignette of how the monastic Saṅgha developed as monasteries became more and more widespread.

While at Sāvattthī, the Buddha acquired two other prominent lay disciples: his foremost female lay donor, Lady Visākhā, and King Pasenadi. The teachings he gave to these three disciples, along with one of the king's favorite queens, Mallikā, provide a sample portrait of how he taught his lay disciples who did not join the monastic Saṅghas. He also continued training the monks and teaching devas.

In this way, Sāvattthī provides the stage for a multi-faceted glimpse into the middle period of the Buddha's life, in his role as teacher to devas and human beings at large and, simultaneously, founder of and rule-giver for the Saṅgha.

At that time, Anāthapiṇḍika the householder was the brother-in-law of the Rājagaha moneylender. Then he traveled to Rājagaha on some business. And at that time, the moneylender had invited the Saṅgha, headed by the Buddha, for the next day's meal. The moneylender was ordering his slaves & workers: "In that case, I say, getting up in time, cook rice-gruel & main dishes; fix some sauces & condiments."

The thought occurred to Anāthapiṇḍika the householder. "Before, when I would come, this householder would drop all of his business and exchange greetings with just me. Now, he's seemingly scatterbrained, ordering his slaves & workers: 'In that case, I say, getting up in time, cook rice-gruel & main dishes; fix some sauces & condiments.' Is he holding a wedding for a son, holding a wedding for a daughter, holding a great sacrifice, or has he invited the King of Magadha, Seniya Bimbisāra, along with the army, for tomorrow's meal?"

Then the moneylender, having ordered his slaves & workers, went to Anāthapiṇḍika the householder and, on arrival, having exchanged greetings, sat to one side. As he was sitting there, Anāthapiṇḍika the householder said to him, "Before, when I would come, you would drop all of your business and exchange greetings with just me. Now, you're seemingly scatterbrained, ordering your servants & workers: 'In that case, I say, getting up in time, cook rice-gruel & main dishes; fix some sauces & condiments.' Are you holding a wedding for a son, holding a wedding for a daughter, holding a great sacrifice, or have you invited the King of Magadha, Seniya Bimbisāra, along with the army, for tomorrow's meal?"

"Householder, I'm not holding a wedding for a son, or holding a wedding for a daughter, and I haven't invited the King of Magadha, Seniya Bimbisāra, along with the army, for tomorrow's meal. But I am holding a great sacrifice—I've invited the Saṅgha, headed by the Buddha, for tomorrow's meal."

"You say, 'Buddha'?"

"I say, 'Buddha.'"

"You say, 'Buddha'?"

"I say, 'Buddha.'"

"You say, 'Buddha'?"

"I say, 'Buddha.'"

“Even this sound—‘Buddha’—is hard to come by in the world. Could I go at this time to see the Blessed One, worthy & rightly self-awakened?”

“This is not the proper time to go to see the Blessed One, worthy & rightly self-awakened. Tomorrow, at the proper time, go to see the Blessed One, worthy & rightly self-awakened.”

Then Anāthapiṇḍika the householder, (thinking,) “Tomorrow, at the proper time, I’ll go to see the Blessed One, worthy & rightly self-awakened,” with his mindfulness immersed in the Awakened One, lay down to sleep. Three times he got up during the night, thinking it was light.

Then he went to the Sītavana [Cool Forest] Gate. Non-human beings opened the gate. When Anāthapiṇḍika the householder had left the city, the light vanished and darkness appeared. Fear, terror, & horripilation arose, and because of that he wanted to turn back. Then Sivaka the yakkha, invisible, proclaimed:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Then Anāthapiṇḍika, (thinking,) "The Blessed One is calling me by name!"—thrilled and exultant—put his head down right there at the Blessed One's feet and said to him, "Lord, I hope the Blessed One has slept 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."

Then the Blessed One gave Anāthapiṇḍika the householder a graduated talk: a talk on giving, a talk on virtue, a talk on heaven; he proclaimed the drawbacks of, degradation in, & defilement in sensuality, and the rewards of renunciation. Then—when he knew that Anāthapiṇḍika the householder was

of ready mind, malleable mind, unhindered mind, exultant mind, confident mind—he proclaimed to him the distinctive teaching of the Buddhas: stress, origination, cessation, path. Just as a clean piece of cloth, free from grime, would properly take dye, in the same way, the dustless, stainless Dhamma eye arose for Anāthapiṇḍika the householder as he was sitting right there: *“Whatever is subject to origination is all subject to cessation.”*

Then, having seen the Dhamma... said to the Blessed One, “Magnificent, lord! Magnificent! ... May the Blessed One remember me as a lay follower who has gone for refuge from this day forward, for life. Lord, may the Blessed One acquiesce to my meal tomorrow, together with the Saṅgha of monks.”

The Blessed One acquiesced with silence. Then Anāthapiṇḍika the householder, understanding the Blessed One’s acquiescence, got up from his seat, bowed down to the Blessed One, circumambulated him, keeping him to his right, and left.

The Rājagaha moneylender heard that “Anāthapiṇḍika the householder, they say, has invited the Saṅgha, headed by the Buddha, for tomorrow’s meal.” So he said to Anāthapiṇḍika the householder, “Householder, they say that you have invited the Saṅgha, headed by the Buddha, for tomorrow’s meal. But you’re a guest. I’ll give you the funds for you to arrange the meal for the Saṅgha, headed by the Buddha.”

“Enough, householder. I have the funds to arrange the meal for the Saṅgha, headed by the Buddha.”

The Rājagaha urban council heard... the King of Magadha, Seniya Bimbisāra, heard that “Anāthapiṇḍika the householder, they say, has invited the Saṅgha, headed by the Buddha, for tomorrow’s meal.” So he said to Anāthapiṇḍika the householder, “Householder, they say that you have invited the Saṅgha, headed by the Buddha, for tomorrow’s meal. But you’re a guest. I’ll give you the funds for you to arrange the meal for the Saṅgha, headed by the Buddha.”

“Enough, your majesty. I have the funds to arrange the meal for the Saṅgha, headed by the Buddha.”

Then Anāthapiṇḍika the householder, at the end of the night—having had exquisite staple & non-staple food prepared in the moneylender’s residence—announced the time to the Blessed One: “It’s time, lord. The meal is ready.”

Then, early in the morning, the Blessed One—having adjusted his under robe and carrying his bowl & outer robe—went together with the Saṅgha of monks to the moneylender’s residence. On arrival, he sat down on the seat laid out, along with the Saṅgha of monks. Anāthapiṇḍika the householder, with his own hands, served & satisfied the Saṅgha of monks, headed by the Buddha, with exquisite staple & non-staple food.

Then, when the Blessed One had finished his meal and had rinsed his bowl & hands, Anāthapiṇḍika the householder sat to one side. As he was sitting there, he said to the Blessed One, “Lord, may the Blessed One, along with the Saṅgha of monks, acquiesce to my (invitation) to spend the Rains residence in Sāvattḥī.”

“Householder, the Tathāgata delights in an empty dwelling.”

“I know, O Blessed One. I know, O One Well-Gone.”

Then the Blessed One, having instructed, urged, roused, & encouraged Anāthapiṇḍika the householder with Dhamma talk, got up from his seat and left.

At that time, Anāthapiṇḍika the householder had many friends & companions, and was pleasing in his speech. Having finished his business in Rājagaha, he left for Sāvattḥī and, while going along the road, directed the people: “Masters, build monasteries. Erect dwellings. Arrange gifts. A Buddha has now arisen in the world. The Blessed One, invited by me, will be coming by this road.” So the people, directed by Anāthapiṇḍika the householder, built monasteries, erected dwellings, and arranged gifts.

Returning to Sāvattḥī, Anāthapiṇḍika the householder looked all around Sāvattḥī, (thinking,) “Where should the Blessed One stay that would be neither too far from the village nor too close, accessible, where interested people could come out, not crowded by day, with few noises or sounds of voices at night, with an air of isolation, private from human beings, and appropriate for seclusion?”

He saw Prince Jeta’s park—neither too far from the village nor too close... and appropriate for seclusion. On seeing it, he went to Prince Jeta and, on arrival, said to him, “Young master, give me the park to build a monastery.”

“The monastery won’t be given without carpeting it corner to corner (in gold), householder.”

“The monastery is taken, young master!”

“It’s not taken, householder!”

“Taken!”

“Not taken!”

They asked the chief justices about it. They said, “Because you set the price, young master, the monastery is taken.”

Then Anāthapiṇḍika the householder, having had gold brought by carts, carpeted it corner to corner. But the gold brought in one trip wasn’t enough to carpet the area around the (space for the) gatehouse. Then Anāthapiṇḍika the householder ordered his people, “I say, go and fetch some gold. I’ll carpet this space, too.”

The thought occurred to Prince Jeta, “This must be no small matter that this householder is spending so much gold.” So he said to Anāthapiṇḍika the householder, “Enough, householder. Don’t cover that space. Let me have that space as my gift.”

Anāthapiṇḍika the householder, (thinking,) “This Prince Jeta is well known—known to the people. It’ll be of great power, the confidence in the Dhamma & Vinaya of a person such as this, known to the people,” gave the space to Prince Jeta. Then Prince Jeta built a gatehouse in that space.

Then Anāthapiṇḍika the householder had the monastery built in Jeta’s forest. He had (monks’) dwellings, gatehouses, assembly halls, fire halls, food-storage sheds, restrooms, walking paths, walking meditation paths, wells, well enclosures, steam-rooms, sauna halls, water tanks, & pavilions built. — *Cv* 6:4

Then the Blessed One, having stayed at Rājagaha as long as he liked, set out on a wandering tour toward Vesālī, and traveling by stages, arrived at Vesālī. There at Vesālī, he stayed in the Gabled Pavilion in the Great Forest.

At that time, people were intent on doing building work and on supplying the monks who were supervising building work with robes, almsfood, lodgings, & medicines for curing the sick.

Then the thought occurred to a certain poor tailor, “This must be no small matter that these people are intent on doing building work. Why don’t I do some building work?”

So the poor tailor, having trampled on the clay himself, stacked up bricks and erected a wall. The crooked wall, unskillfully stacked by him, fell over.

A second time... A third time, the poor tailor, having trampled on the clay himself, stacked up bricks and erected a wall. The crooked wall, unskillfully stacked by him, fell over.

Then the poor tailor criticized & complained & spread it about, “These Sakyan-son contemplatives teach and exhort whoever gives them robes, almsfood, lodgings, & medicines for curing the sick. And they supervise building work for them. But I’m poor, so they don’t teach or exhort me, or supervise building work for me.”

The monks heard the poor tailor criticizing & complaining & spreading it about. So they reported the matter to the Blessed One.

Then the Blessed One, having given a Dhamma talk for that reason, on that occasion, addressed the monks: “I allow that building (responsibility) be given. The builder monk will make an effort, (thinking,) ‘How can the dwelling be finished quickly?’ and will repair things that are broken down & dilapidated....

... Then the Blessed One, having stayed at Vesālī as long as he liked, set out on a wandering tour toward Sāvattthī.

At that time, students of the Group-of-Six monks, ¹¹¹ going along ahead of the Saṅgha headed by the Buddha, preempted lodgings & sleeping spaces, (saying,) “This will be for our preceptors. This will be for our teachers. This will be for us.”

Then Ven. Sāriputta, following along behind the Saṅgha headed by the Buddha—unable to find a sleeping space, as the lodgings and sleeping places had been preempted—sat down at the root of a certain tree. Then the Blessed One, having gotten up as the night was ending, cleared his throat. Ven. Sāriputta cleared his throat. “Who’s there?”

“It’s me, Blessed One: Sāriputta.”

“Why are you sitting here, Sāriputta?”

Then Ven. Sāriputta explained the matter to the Blessed One. Then the Blessed One had the monks assembled for that reason, on that occasion, and questioned the monks: “Is it true, monks, that students of the Group-of-Six monks, going along ahead of the Saṅgha headed by the Buddha, preempted lodgings & sleeping spaces, (saying,) ‘This will be for our preceptors. This will be for our teachers. These will be for us?’”

“It’s true, Blessed One.”

The Buddha, the Blessed One, rebuked them, “Monks, how could these worthless men, going along ahead of the Saṅgha headed by the Buddha, preempt lodgings & sleeping spaces, (saying,) ‘These will be for our preceptors. These will be for our teachers. These will be for us’? Monks, this neither inspires faith in the faithless nor increases the faithful. Rather, it inspires lack of faith in the faithless and wavering in some of the faithful.” Having rebuked them and given a Dhamma talk, he addressed the monks: “Who, monks, is worthy of the best seat, the best water, the best food?”

Some of the monks said, “Whoever went forth from a noble-warrior family is worthy of the best seat, the best water, the best food.” Some of them said, “Whoever went forth from a brahman family... from a householder family... whoever is an expert on the discourses... whoever is an expert on the Vinaya... whoever is a Dhamma teacher... whoever has gained the first jhāna... the second jhāna... the third jhāna... the fourth jhāna... whoever is a stream-winner... a once-returner... a non-returner... an arahant... a master of the three knowledges... a master of the six cognitive skills is worthy of the best seat, the best water, the best food.”

Then the Blessed One said to the monks: “Once, monks, there was a great banyan tree on the slopes of the Himalayas. Three friends lived dependent on it: a partridge, a monkey, & an elephant. They were disrespectful, discourteous, & impolite toward one another. Then the thought occurred to the three friends: ‘Let’s find out which among us is the most senior by birth. We would then pay homage and respect to him, revere him, and honor him. We would then abide by his advice.’

“Then the partridge & the monkey asked the elephant: ‘What ancient thing do you remember?’

“‘When I was young, friends, I used to walk over this banyan tree with it between my thighs, and the topmost buds brushed against my belly. This, friends, is an ancient thing that I remember.’

“Then the partridge & the elephant asked the monkey: ‘What ancient thing do you remember?’

“‘When I was young, friends, I used to sit on the ground and chew off the topmost buds from this banyan tree. This, friends, is an ancient thing that I remember.’

“Then the monkey & the elephant asked the partridge, ‘What ancient thing do you remember?’

“Over there in that spot, friends, was once a great banyan tree. Having eaten one of its fruits, I relieved myself in this spot. From that, this banyan tree was born. Thus, friends, I am the most senior among us by birth.’

“So the monkey and elephant said to the partridge, ‘You, friend, are the most senior among us by birth. We will pay homage and respect to you, revere you, honor you, and abide by your advice.’

“Then the partridge had the monkey and elephant undertake the five precepts and he himself practiced, having undertaken the five precepts. They—having lived respectful, courteous, and polite toward one another—on the breakup of the body, after death, reappeared in a good destination, a heavenly world. This came to be known as the Partridge’s Holy Life.

“They—people skilled in the Dhamma,
who revere their elders—
are praised in the here-and-now,
and have a good destination hereafter.

“Now, if common animals can live respectful, courteous, and polite toward one another, shouldn’t it shine forth that you, having gone forth in such a well taught Dhamma & Vinaya, live respectful, courteous, and polite toward one another? Monks, this neither inspires faith in the faithless nor increases the faithful. Rather, it inspires lack of faith in the faithless and wavering in some of the faithful.”

Having rebuked them and given a Dhamma talk, the Blessed One addressed the monks: “I allow, in accordance with seniority, bowing down, rising up to greet, greeting with hands raised palm-to-palm over the heart, performing forms of respect due to superiors, the best seat, the best water, the best food. But what belongs to the Saṅgha should not be preempted in accordance with seniority. Whoever should do so: an offense of wrongdoing.” —Cv 6:5–6

Then the Blessed One, traveling by stages, arrived at Sāvattthī. There he stayed in Jeta’s Forest, Anāthapiṇḍika’s monastery. Then Anāthapiṇḍika the householder went to the Blessed One and, on arrival, bowed down to him and sat to one side. As he was sitting there, he said to the Blessed One, “Lord, may the Blessed One acquiesce to my meal tomorrow, together with the Saṅgha of monks.”

The Blessed One acquiesced with silence. Then Anāthapiṇḍika, understanding the Blessed One’s acquiescence, got up from his seat, bowed

down to the Blessed One, circumambulated him, keeping him to his right, and left.

Then Anāthapiṇḍika, at the end of the night... announced the time to the Blessed One: “It’s time, lord. The meal is ready.”

Then the Blessed One... went together with the Saṅgha of monks to Anāthapiṇḍika’s residence. On arrival, he sat down on the seat laid out, along with the Saṅgha of monks. Anāthapiṇḍika, with his own hands, served & satisfied the Saṅgha of monks, headed by the Buddha, with exquisite staple & non-staple food.

Then, when the Blessed One had finished his meal and had rinsed his bowl & hands, Anāthapiṇḍika sat to one side. As he was sitting there, he asked the Blessed One, “How should I proceed with regard to Jeta’s Forest?”

“In that case, householder, you should have it established for the Saṅgha of the four directions, both those who have come and those yet to come.”

Responding, “As you say, lord,” to the Blessed One, Anāthapiṇḍika had Jeta’s Forest established for the Saṅgha of the four directions, both those who have come and those yet to come. Then the Blessed One congratulated Anāthapiṇḍika with these verses:

They ward off from there
cold & heat & beasts & prey
& creeping things & mosquitoes
& showers in the cold season.
When the terrifying hot wind has arisen,
it’s warded off from there.
For the sake of shelter, for the sake of ease
to do jhāna and to see insightfully,
the gift of a dwelling is praised as foremost
by the Awakened Ones.

So a wise person, envisioning his own benefit,
should have delightful dwellings built
so that the learned may stay there.
He should,
with an awareness clear & bright,
give them—
who’ve become straightforward—

food & drink, clothing & accoutrements.

They will teach him the Dhamma

dispelling all stress

so that he—

knowing the Dhamma right there—

totally unbinds, effluent-free.

Then the Blessed One, having congratulated Anāthapiṇḍika the householder, got up from his seat and left. — *Cv* 6:9

The following two discourses exemplify Anāthapiṇḍika's virtues as a stream-winner.

Then Anāthapiṇḍika the householder went to the Blessed One and, on arrival, having bowed down to the Blessed One, sat to one side. As he was sitting there, the Blessed One said to him, “When, for a disciple of the noble ones, five forms of fear & animosity are stilled; when he is endowed with the four factors of stream-entry; and when, through discernment, he has rightly seen & rightly ferreted out the noble method, then if he wants he may state about himself: ‘Hell is ended for me; animal wombs are ended; the state of the hungry ghosts is ended; planes of deprivation, the bad destinations, the lower realms are ended! I am a stream-winner, never again destined for the lower realms, certain, headed for self-awakening!’

“Now, which five forms of danger & animosity are stilled?

“When a person takes life, then with the taking of life as a requisite condition, he produces fear & animosity in the here-&-now, produces fear & animosity in future lives, experiences mental concomitants of pain & despair; but when he refrains from taking life, he neither produces fear & animosity in the here-&-now nor does he produce fear & animosity in future lives, nor does he experience mental concomitants of pain & despair: For one who refrains from taking life, that fear & animosity is thus stilled.

“When a person steals... engages in illicit sex... tells lies...

“When a person drinks distilled & fermented drinks that cause heedlessness, then with the drinking of distilled & fermented drinks that cause heedlessness as a requisite condition, he produces fear & animosity in the here-&-now, produces fear & animosity in future lives, experiences mental concomitants of pain & despair; but when he refrains from drinking distilled &

fermented drinks that cause heedlessness, he neither produces fear & animosity in the here-&-now nor does he produce fear & animosity in future lives, nor does he experience mental concomitants of pain & despair: For one who refrains from drinking distilled & fermented drinks that cause heedlessness, that fear & animosity is thus stilled.

“These are the five forms of fear & animosity that are stilled.

“And which are the four factors of stream-entry with which he is endowed?

“There is the case where the disciple of the noble ones is endowed with verified confidence in the Awakened One: ‘Indeed, the Blessed One is worthy & rightly self-awakened, consummate in clear-knowing & conduct, well-gone, an expert with regard to the cosmos, unexcelled trainer of people fit to be tamed, teacher of devas & human beings, awakened, blessed.’

“He is endowed with verified confidence in the Dhamma: ‘The Dhamma is well taught by the Blessed One, to be seen here & now, timeless, inviting verification, pertinent, to be experienced by the observant for themselves.’

“He is endowed with verified confidence in the Saṅgha: ‘The Saṅgha of the Blessed One’s disciples who have practiced well... who have practiced straightforwardly... who have practiced methodically... who have practiced masterfully—in other words, the four pairs, the eight individuals—they are the Saṅgha of the Blessed One’s disciples: deserving of gifts, deserving of hospitality, deserving of offerings, deserving of respect, the incomparable field of merit for the world.’

“He is endowed with virtues that are appealing to the noble ones: untorn, unbroken, unspotted, unsplattered, liberating, praised by the observant, ungrasped at, leading to concentration.

“These are the four factors of stream-entry with which he is endowed.

“And which is the noble method that he has rightly seen & rightly ferreted out through discernment?

“There is the case where a disciple of the noble ones notices:

“*When this is, that is.*

“*From the arising of this comes the arising of that.*

“*When this isn’t, that isn’t.*

“*From the cessation of this comes the cessation of that.*

“In other words:

“From ignorance as a requisite condition come fabrications....

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

“Now from the remainderless fading & cessation of that very ignorance comes the cessation of fabrications.... From the cessation of birth, then aging & death, sorrow, lamentation, pain, distress, & despair all cease. Such is the cessation of this entire mass of stress & suffering.

“This is the noble method that he has rightly seen & rightly ferreted out through discernment.

“When, for a disciple of the noble ones, these five forms of fear & animosity are stilled; when he is endowed with these four factors of stream-entry; and when, through discernment, he has rightly seen & rightly ferreted out this noble method, then if he wants he may state about himself: ‘Hell is ended for me; animal wombs are ended; the state of the hungry ghosts is ended; planes of deprivation, the bad destinations, the lower realms are ended! I am a stream-winner, never again destined for the lower realms, certain, headed for self-awakening!’” — [AN 10:92](#)

I have heard that on one occasion the Blessed One was dwelling near Sāvattthī in Jeta’s Forest, Anāthapiṇḍika’s monastery. Then Anāthapiṇḍika the householder left Sāvattthī in the middle of the day to see the Blessed One, but the thought then occurred to him, “Now is not the right time to see the Blessed One, for he is in seclusion. And it is not the right time to see the mind-developing monks, for they are in seclusion. What if I were to visit the park of the wanderers of other persuasions?” So he headed to the park of the wanderers of other persuasions.

Now on that occasion the wanderers of other persuasions had come together in a gathering and were sitting, discussing many kinds of bestial topics, ¹¹² making a great noise and racket. They saw Anāthapiṇḍika coming from afar and, on seeing him, hushed one another: “Be quiet, good sirs. Don’t make any noise. Here comes Anāthapiṇḍika the householder, a disciple of the contemplative Gotama. He is one of those disciples of the contemplative Gotama, clad in white, who lives in Sāvattthī. These people are fond of quietude, trained in quietude, and speak in praise of quietude. Maybe, if he perceives our

group as quiet, he will consider it worth his while to come our way.” So the wanderers fell silent.

Then Anāthapiṇḍika 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 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 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 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, “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 me, 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 me, is not what I am, is not my self. Having seen this well with right discernment as it has come to be, I also discern the higher escape from it as it has come to be.”

When this was said, the wanderers fell silent, abashed, sitting with their shoulders drooping, their heads down, brooding, at a loss for words. Anāthapiṇḍika, perceiving that the wanderers were silent, abashed... at a loss for words, got up & went to the Blessed One. On arrival, having bowed down to the Blessed One, he sat to one side. As he was sitting there he told the Blessed One the entirety of his conversation with the wanderers.

(The Blessed One said:) “Well done, householder. Well done. That is how you should periodically and righteously refute those foolish men.” Then he instructed, urged, roused, & encouraged Anāthapiṇḍika with a Dhamma talk. When Anāthapiṇḍika had been instructed, urged, roused, & encouraged by the Blessed One with a Dhamma talk, he got up from his seat and, having bowed down to the Blessed One, circumambulated him, keeping him to his right, and left. Not long afterward, the Blessed One addressed the monks: “Monks, even a monk who has long penetrated the Dhamma in this Dhamma & Vinaya would do well, periodically and righteously, to refute the wanderers of other persuasions in just the way Anāthapiṇḍika the householder has done.” —

[AN 10:93](#)

KING PASENADI KOSALA & QUEEN MALLIKĀ

King Pasenadi Kosala eventually became the Buddha’s student, but the following passage shows that it was only through the sharp-wittedness of

one of his queens, Mallikā, that he first came to regard the Buddha in a favorable light.

I have heard that on one occasion the Blessed One was dwelling near Sāvattthī in Jeta's Forest, Anāthapiṇḍika's monastery. Now at that time a certain householder's dear & beloved little son, his only child, had died. Because of his death, the father had no desire to work or to eat. He kept going to the cemetery and crying out, "Where have you gone, my only little child? Where have you gone, my only little child?"

Then he went to the Blessed One and, on arrival, having bowed down to him, sat to one side. As he was sitting there the Blessed One said to him, "Householder, your faculties are not those of one who is steady in his own mind. There is an aberration in your faculties."

"Lord, how could there not be an aberration in my faculties? My dear & beloved little son, my only child, has died. Because of his death, I have no desire to work or to eat. I keep going to the cemetery and crying out, 'Where have you gone, my only little child? Where have you gone, my only little child?'"

"That's the way it is, householder. That's the way it is—for sorrow, lamentation, pain, distress, & despair are born from one who is dear, come springing from one who is dear."

"But lord, who would ever think that sorrow, lamentation, pain, distress, & despair are born from one who is dear, come springing from one who is dear? Happiness & joy are born from one who is dear, come springing from one who is dear." So the householder, not delighting in the Blessed One's words, rejecting the Blessed One's words, got up from his seat and left.

Now at that time a large number of gamblers were playing dice not far from the Blessed One. So the householder went to them and, on arrival, said to them, "Just now, venerable sirs, I went to Gotama the contemplative and, on arrival, having bowed down to him, sat to one side. As I was sitting there, Gotama the contemplative said to me, 'Householder, your faculties are not those of one who is steady in his own mind. There is an aberration in your faculties.'"

"When this was said, I said to him, 'Lord, how could there not be an aberration in my faculties? My dear & beloved little son, my only child, has died. Because of his death, I have no desire to work or to eat. I keep going to

the cemetery and crying out, "Where have you gone, my only little child? Where have you gone, my only little child?"

"That's the way it is, householder. That's the way it is—for sorrow, lamentation, pain, distress, & despair are born from one who is dear, come springing from one who is dear."

"But, lord, who would ever think that sorrow, lamentation, pain, distress, & despair are born from one who is dear, come springing from one who is dear? Happiness & joy are born from one who is dear, come springing from one who is dear.' So, not delighting in the words of Gotama the contemplative, rejecting them, I got up from my seat and left."

"That's the way it is, householder [said the gamblers]. That's the way it is. Happiness & joy are born from one who is dear, come springing from one who is dear."

So the householder left, thinking, "I agree with the gamblers."

Eventually, word of this conversation made its way into the king's inner chambers. Then King Pasenadi Kosala addressed Queen Mallikā, "Mallikā, your contemplative, Gotama, has said this: 'Sorrow, lamentation, pain, distress, & despair are born from one who is dear, come springing from one who is dear.'"

"If that was said by the Blessed One, great king, then that's the way it is."

"No matter what Gotama the contemplative says, Mallikā endorses it: 'If that was said by the Blessed One, great king, then that's the way it is.' Just as, no matter what his teacher says, a pupil endorses it: 'That's the way it is, teacher. That's the way it is.' In the same way, no matter what Gotama the contemplative says, Mallikā endorses it: 'If that was said by the Blessed One, great king, then that's the way it is.' Go away, Mallikā! Out of my sight!"

Then Queen Mallikā called for the brahman Nāḷijaṅgha: "Come, brahman. Go to the Blessed One and, on arrival, showing reverence with your head to his feet in my name, ask whether he is free from illness & affliction, is carefree, strong, & living in comfort, saying: 'Queen Mallikā, lord, shows reverence with her head to your feet and asks whether you are free from illness & affliction, are carefree, strong, & living in comfort.' And then say: 'Lord, did the Blessed One say that sorrow, lamentation, pain, distress, & despair are born from one who is dear, come springing from one who is dear?' Whatever the Blessed One says, remember it well and tell it to me. For Tathāgatas do not speak untruthfully."

“Yes, madam,” the brahman Nālijaṅgha responded to Queen Mallikā and went to the Blessed One. On arrival, he exchanged courteous greetings with the Blessed One. After an exchange of friendly greetings & courtesies, he sat to one side. As he was sitting there he said to the Blessed One: “Master Gotama, Queen Mallikā shows reverence with her head to your feet and asks whether you are free from illness & affliction, are carefree, strong, & living in comfort. And she says further: ‘Lord, did the Blessed One say that sorrow, lamentation, pain, distress, & despair are born from one who is dear, come springing from one who is dear?’”

“That’s the way it is, brahman. That’s the way it is. Sorrow, lamentation, pain, distress, & despair are born from one who is dear, come springing from one who is dear. And it’s through this sequence of events that it may be understood how sorrow, lamentation, pain, distress, & despair are born from one who is dear, come springing from one who is dear.

“Once in this same Sāvattihī there was a woman whose mother died. Owing to her mother’s death she went mad, out of her mind, and wandering from street to street, crossroads to crossroads, would say, ‘Have you seen my mother? Have you seen my mother?’ It’s through this sequence of events that it may be understood how sorrow, lamentation, pain, distress, & despair are born from one who is dear, come springing from one who is dear.

“Once in this same Sāvattihī there was a woman whose father died... whose brother died... whose sister died... whose son died... whose daughter died... whose husband died. Owing to his death she went mad, out of her mind, and wandering from street to street, crossroads to crossroads, would say, ‘Have you seen my husband? Have you seen my husband?’ It’s through this sequence of events that it may be understood how sorrow, lamentation, pain, distress, & despair are born from one who is dear, come springing from one who is dear.

“Once in this same Sāvattihī there was a man whose mother died... whose father died... whose brother died... whose sister died... whose son died... whose daughter died... whose wife died. Owing to her death he went mad, out of his mind, and wandering from street to street, crossroads to crossroads, would say, ‘Have you seen my wife? Have you seen my wife?’ It’s through this sequence of events that it may be understood how sorrow, lamentation, pain, distress, & despair are born from one who is dear, come springing from one who is dear.

“Once in this same Sāvattthī there was a wife who went to her relatives’ home. Her relatives, having separated her from her husband, wanted to give her to another against her will. So she said to her husband, ‘These relatives of mine, having separated us, want to give me to another against my will,’ whereupon he cut her in two and slashed himself open, thinking, ‘Dead we will be together.’ It’s through this sequence of events that it may be understood how sorrow, lamentation, pain, distress, & despair are born from one who is dear, come springing from one who is dear.”

Then the brahman Nālījaṅgha, delighting in & approving of the Blessed One’s words, got up from his seat and went to Queen Mallikā. On arrival, he told her all that had been said in his conversation with the Blessed One.

Then Queen Mallikā went to King Pasenadi Kosala and, on arrival, said to him, “What do you think, great king: Is Princess Vajirī dear to you?”

“Yes, Mallikā, Princess Vajirī is dear to me.”

“And what do you think: would sorrow, lamentation, pain, distress, & despair arise in you from any change & aberration in Princess Vajirī?”

“Mallikā, any change & aberration in Princess Vajirī would mean an aberration of my very life. How could sorrow, lamentation, pain, distress, & despair not arise in me?”

“Great king, it was in connection with this that the Blessed One—the One who knows, the One who sees, worthy, & rightly self-awakened—said, ‘Sorrow, lamentation, pain, distress, & despair are born from one who is dear, come springing from one who is dear.’

“Now what do you think, great king: Is the noble Queen Vāsabhā dear to you?... Is [your son] General Viḍḍabha dear to you?... Am I dear to you?”

“Yes, Mallikā, you are dear to me.”

“And what do you think: would sorrow, lamentation, pain, distress, & despair arise in you from any change & aberration in me?”

“Mallikā, any change & aberration in you would mean an aberration of my very life. How could sorrow, lamentation, pain, distress, & despair not arise in me?”

“Great king, it was in connection with this that the Blessed One—the One who knows, the One who sees, worthy, & rightly self-awakened—said, ‘Sorrow, lamentation, pain, distress, & despair are born from one who is dear, come springing from one who is dear.’

“Now what do you think, great king: Are [your subjects] the Kāsis & Kosalans dear to you?”

“Yes, Mallikā, the Kāsis & Kosalans are dear to me. It is through the might of the Kāsis & Kosalans that we use Kāsi sandalwood and wear garlands, scents, & ointments.”

“And what do you think: would sorrow, lamentation, pain, distress, & despair arise in you from any change & aberration in the Kāsis & Kosalans?”

“Mallikā, any change & aberration in the Kāsis & Kosalans would mean an aberration of my very life. How could sorrow, lamentation, pain, distress, & despair not arise in me?”

“Great king, it was in connection with this that the Blessed One—the One who knows, the One who sees, worthy, & rightly self-awakened—said, ‘Sorrow, lamentation, pain, distress, & despair are born from one who is dear, come springing from one who is dear.’”

“It’s amazing, Mallikā. It’s astounding: how deeply the Blessed One sees, having pierced through, as it were, with discernment. Come Mallikā: Give me the ablution water.” Then King Pasenadi Kosala, rising from his seat and arranging his upper robe over one shoulder, paid homage in the direction of the Blessed One with his hands palm-to-palm in front of his heart, and exclaimed three times:

“Homage to the Blessed One, worthy & rightly self-awakened!

“Homage to the Blessed One, worthy & rightly self-awakened!

“Homage to the Blessed One, worthy & rightly self-awakened!” — [MN 87](#)

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

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

“But Master Gotama, those contemplatives & brahmans each with his group, each with his community, each the teacher of his group, an honored

leader, well regarded by people at large—i.e., Pūraṇa Kassapa, Makkhali Gosāla, Ajita Kesakambalin, Pakudha Kaccāyana, Sañjaya Velatṭhaputta, and the Nigaṇṭha Nātaputta: even they, when I asked them whether they claimed to have awakened to the unexcelled right self-awakening, didn't make that claim. So who is Master Gotama to do so when he is still young & newly gone-forth?"

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

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

You shouldn't look down on
—for being young—
a noble warrior of consummate birth,
a high-born prince of great status.
A person shouldn't disparage him.
For it's possible
that this lord of human beings,
this noble warrior,
will gain the throne
and, angered at that disparagement,
come down harshly with his royal might.
So, guarding your life,
avoid him.

You shouldn't look down on
—for being young—
a serpent you meet
in village or wilderness.
A person shouldn't disparage it.
As that potent snake slithers along
with vibrant colors,
it may someday burn the fool,
whether woman or man.
So, guarding your life,
avoid it.

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

When a fire burns down a forest
—that flame with its blackened trail—
the shoots there
take birth once more
with the passage of days & nights.
But if a monk,
his virtue consummate,
burns you with his potency,^{[113](#)}
you won't acquire sons or cattle
nor will your heirs enjoy wealth.
They become barren,
heir-less,
like palmyra stumps.

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

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

When this was said, King Pasenadi Kosala said to the Blessed One:
“Magnificent, lord! Magnificent! ... May the Blessed One remember me as a lay

follower who has gone to him for refuge from this day forward, for life.” —

[SN 3:1](#)

I have heard that on one occasion the Blessed One was dwelling near Sāvattthī in Jeta’s Forest, Anāthapiṇḍika’s monastery. And on that occasion King Pasenadi Kosala had gone with Queen Mallikā to the upper palace. Then he said to her, “Mallikā, is there anyone dearer to you than yourself?”

“No, great king. There is no one dearer to me than myself. And what about you, great king? Is there anyone dearer to you than yourself?”

“No, Mallikā. There is no one dearer to me than myself.”

Then the king, descending from the palace, went to the Blessed One and, on arrival, having bowed down to him, sat to one side. As he was sitting there, he [reported his conversation with Queen Mallikā.]

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

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

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

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

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

Impassioned with sensual possessions,
greedy, dazed by sensual pleasures,
they don't awaken to the fact
that they've gone too far—
like fish into a trap set out.
Afterwards it's bitter for them:
Evil for them
the result. — [SN 3:7](#)

I have heard that on one occasion the Blessed One was dwelling near Sāvattthī at the Eastern Monastery, the palace of Migāra's mother. ¹¹⁴ And on that occasion the Blessed One, having emerged from his seclusion in the late afternoon, was sitting outside the doorway of the porch. Then King Pasenadi Kosala went to the Blessed One and, on arrival, having bowed down to him, sat to one side.

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

Then not long after the seven dreadlocked ascetics, seven Nigaṇṭhas, seven cloth-less ascetics, seven one-cloth ascetics, & seven wanderers had passed, King Pasenadi Kosala went to the Blessed One and, on arrival, having bowed down to him, sat to one side. As he was sitting there he said to the Blessed One, “Of those in the world who are arahants or on the path to arahantship, are these among them?” ¹¹⁵

“Great king, as a layman enjoying sensual pleasures; living confined with children; using Kāsi fabrics & sandalwood; wearing garlands, scents, & creams;

handling gold & silver, it's hard for you to know whether these are arahants or on the path to arahantship.

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

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

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

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

“Amazing, lord! Astounding!—how well that was put by the Blessed One! ... These men, lord, are my spies, my scouts, returning after going out through the countryside. They go out first, and then I go. Now, when they have scrubbed off the dirt & mud, are well bathed & well perfumed, have trimmed their hair and beards, and have put on white clothes, they will go about endowed and provided with the five strings of sensuality.”

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

One should not make an effort everywhere,
should not be another's hireling,
should not live dependent on another,
should not go about
as a trader in the Dhamma.¹¹⁶ — *Ud 6:2*

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

“Just now, lord, I was engaged in the sort of royal affairs typical of head-anointed noble-warrior kings intoxicated with the intoxication of sovereignty,

obsessed by greed for sensuality, who have attained stable control in their country, and who rule having conquered a great sphere of territory on earth.”

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

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

“I inform you, great king, I announce to you, great king: aging & death are rolling in on you. When aging & death are rolling in on you, what should be done?”

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

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

should be done but Dhamma-conduct, right conduct, skillful deeds, meritorious deeds?”

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

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

“Like massive boulders,
mountains pressing against the sky,
moving in from all sides,
crushing the four directions,
so aging & death
come rolling over living beings:
noble warriors, brahmans, merchants,
workers, outcastes, & scavengers.
They spare nothing.
They trample everything.
Here elephant troops can hold no ground,
nor can chariots or infantry,
nor can a battle of wits
or wealth win out.
So a wise person,
seeing his own good,
steadfast, secures confidence
in the Buddha, Dhamma, & Saṅgha.
One who practices the Dhamma
in body, speech, & awareness,
receives praise here on earth
and, after death, rejoices in heaven.” — [SN 3:25](#)

LADY VISĀKHĀ

I have heard that on one occasion the Blessed One was dwelling near Sāvattthī at the Eastern Monastery, the palace of Migāra’s mother. And on that occasion, Visākhā, Migāra’s mother, had some dealings with King Pasenadi Kosala that he did not settle as she had wished. So in the middle of the day she

went to the Blessed One and, on arrival, having bowed down to him, sat to one side. As she was sitting there the Blessed One said to her, “Well now, Visākhā, where are you coming from in the middle of the day?”

“Just now, lord, I had some dealings with King Pasenadi Kosala that he did not settle as I had wished.”

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

All subjection to others
is painful.
All independence
is bliss.
What is held in common
brings suffering,
for duties are hard
to overcome. — [*Ud 2:9*](#)

I have heard that on one occasion the Blessed One was dwelling near Sāvattthī at the Eastern Monastery, the palace of Migāra’s mother. And on that occasion a dear and beloved grandson of Visākhā, Migāra’s mother, had died. So Visākhā, Migāra’s mother—her clothes wet, her hair wet—went to the Blessed One in the middle of the day and, on arrival, having bowed down to him, sat to one side. As she was sitting there the Blessed One said to her: “Why have you come here, Visākhā—your clothes wet, your hair wet—in the middle of the day?”

When this was said, she said to the Blessed One, “My dear and beloved grandson has died. This is why I have come here—my clothes wet, my hair wet—in the middle of the day.”

“Visākhā, would you like to have as many children & grandchildren as there are people in Sāvattthī?”

“Yes, lord, I would like to have as many children & grandchildren as there are people in Sāvattthī.”

“But how many people in Sāvattthī die in the course of a day?”

“Sometimes ten people die in Sāvattthī in the course of a day, sometimes nine... eight... seven... six... five... four... three... two... Sometimes one person dies in Sāvattthī in the course of a day. Sāvattthī is never free from people dying.”

“So what do you think, Visākhā? Would you ever be free of wet clothes & wet hair?”

“No, lord. Enough of my having so many children & grandchildren.”

“Visākhā, those who have a hundred dear ones have a hundred sufferings. Those who have ninety dear ones have ninety sufferings. Those who have eighty... seventy... sixty... fifty... forty... thirty... twenty... ten... nine... eight... seven... six... five... four... three... two... Those who have one dear one have one suffering. Those who have no dear ones have no sufferings. They are free from sorrow, free from stain, free from lamentation, I tell you.”

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

The sorrows, lamentations,
the many kinds of suffering in the world,
exist dependent on something dear.

They don't exist
when there's nothing dear.

And thus blissful & sorrowless
are those for whom nothing
in the world is anywhere dear.

So one who aspires
to the stainless & sorrowless
shouldn't make anything
dear

in the world
anywhere. — [*Ud 8:8*](#)

DEVAS

As the teacher of devas and human beings, the Buddha while dwelling near Sāvattthī also had occasion to continue instructing devas.

I have heard that at one time the Blessed One was dwelling near Sāvattthī in Jeta's Forest, Anāthapiṇḍika's monastery. Then a certain deva, in the far extreme of the night, her extreme radiance lighting up the entirety of Jeta's Forest, went to the Blessed One. On arrival, having bowed down to him, she stood to one side. As she was standing there, she addressed him with a verse.

“Many devas & human beings
give thought to protection,
desiring well-being.
Tell, then, the highest protection.”

The Buddha:

“Not consorting with fools,
consorting with the wise,
paying homage to those worthy of homage:

 This is the highest protection.

Living in a civilized land,
having made merit in the past,
directing oneself rightly:

 This is the highest protection.

Broad knowledge, skill,
well mastered discipline,
well spoken words:

 This is the highest protection.

Support for one’s mother & father,
assistance to one’s wife & children,
consistency in one’s work:

 This is the highest protection.

Generosity, living in rectitude,
assistance to one’s relatives,
deeds that are blameless:

 This is the highest protection.

Avoiding, abstaining from evil;
refraining from intoxicants,
being heedful of mental qualities:

 This is the highest protection.

Respect, humility,
contentment, gratitude,
hearing the Dhamma on timely occasions:

 This is the highest protection.

Patience, composure,
seeing contemplatives,

discussing the Dhamma on timely occasions:

This is the highest protection.

Austerity, celibacy,
seeing the noble truths,
realizing unbinding:

This is the highest protection.

A mind that, when touched
by the ways of the world,^{[117](#)}
is unshaken, sorrowless, dustless, at rest:

This is the highest protection.

When acting in this way,
everywhere undefeated,
people go everywhere in well-being:

This is their highest protection.” — [Sn 2:4](#)

Then a certain devatā, in the far extreme of the night, her extreme radiance lighting up the entirety of Jeta’s Forest, went to the Blessed One. On arrival, having bowed down to him, she stood to one side. As she was standing there, she said to him, “Tell me, dear sir, how you crossed over the flood.”

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

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

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

The devatā:

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

That is what the devatā said. The Teacher approved. Realizing that “The Teacher has approved of me,” she bowed down to him, circumambulated him

—keeping him to her right—and then vanished right there. — [*SN 1:1*](#)

TRAINING THE SAṄGHA

While dwelling near Sāvatthī, the Buddha continued laying down rules for the monks and nuns. In fact, he legislated more rules while staying here than at any other location. And, of course, he continued training the monks in the Dhamma. The following five incidents that occurred near Sāvatthī and involved his relationship to the monks are particularly revealing of his powers and character.

Now at that time a certain monk was sick with dysentery. He lay fouled in his own urine & excrement. Then the Blessed One, on an inspection tour of the lodgings with Ven. Ānanda as his attendant, went to that monk's dwelling and, on arrival, saw the monk lying fouled in his own urine & excrement. On seeing him, he went to the monk and said, "What is your illness, monk?"

"I have dysentery, O Blessed One."

"But do you have an attendant?"

"No, O Blessed One."

"Then why don't the monks tend to you?"

"I don't do anything for the monks, lord, which is why they don't tend to me."

Then the Blessed One addressed Ven. Ānanda: "Go fetch some water, Ānanda. We will wash this monk."

Responding, "As you say, lord," to the Blessed One, Ven. Ānanda fetched some water. The Blessed One poured water on the monk; Ven. Ānanda washed him off. Then the Blessed One took the monk by the head and Ven. Ānanda took him by the feet. Lifting him up, they placed him on a bed.

Then the Blessed One, with regard to this cause, to this incident, had the monks assembled and asked them: "Is there a sick monk in that dwelling over there?"

"Yes, O Blessed One, there is."

"And what is his illness?"

"He has dysentery, O Blessed One."

"But does he have an attendant?"

“No, O Blessed One.”

“Then why don’t the monks tend to him?”

“He doesn’t do anything for the monks, lord, which is why they don’t tend to him.”

“Monks, you have no mother, you have no father, who might tend to you. If you don’t tend to one another, who then will tend to you? Whoever would tend to me, should tend to the sick.” — [*Mv 8:26*](#)

Then a certain monk went to the Blessed One and, on arrival, having bowed down to him, sat to one side. As he was sitting there he said to the Blessed One, “Lord, in such and such a dwelling a certain monk—newly ordained, not well known—is diseased, in pain, severely ill. It would be good if the Blessed One would visit the monk, out of sympathy for him.”

Then the Blessed One, on hearing the word “newly ordained,” on hearing the word “diseased,” and realizing that the monk was not well known, went to him. The monk saw the Blessed One coming from afar and, on seeing him, stirred in his bed. Then the Blessed One said to him, “Enough, monk. Don’t stir in your bed. There are these seats made ready. I will sit down there.”

The Blessed One sat down on a seat laid out. Seated, he said to the monk, “I hope you are getting better, monk. I hope you are comfortable. I hope that your pains are lessening and not increasing. I hope that there are signs of their lessening and not of their increasing.”

“I am not getting better, lord. I am not comfortable. My extreme pains are increasing, not lessening. There are signs of their increasing and not of their lessening.”

“Then I hope you have no anxiety, monk. I hope you have no anguish.”

“Yes, lord, I do have not a small amount of anxiety, not a small amount of anguish.”

“I hope you can’t fault yourself with regard to your virtue.”

“No, lord, I can’t fault myself with regard to my virtue.”

“Then what are you anxious about? What is your anguish?”

“I understand that the Blessed One has not taught the Dhamma with purity of virtue as its goal.”

“If you understand that I have not taught the Dhamma with purity of virtue as its goal, then for what goal do you understand that I have taught the

Dhamma?”

“I understand that the Blessed One has taught the Dhamma with total unbinding through lack of clinging as its goal.”

“Good, good, monk. It’s good that you understand that I have taught the Dhamma with total unbinding through lack of clinging as its goal, for I *have* taught the Dhamma with total unbinding through lack of clinging as its goal.

“What do you think, monk? Is the eye constant or inconstant?”

“Inconstant, lord.”

“And is that which is inconstant easeful or stressful?”

“Stressful, lord.”

“And is it fitting to regard what is inconstant, stressful, subject to change as: ‘This is mine. This is my self. This is what I am?’”

“No, lord.”

[Similarly with the ear, nose, tongue, body, & intellect.]

“Seeing thus, the instructed disciple of the noble ones grows disenchanted with the eye, disenchanted with the ear, disenchanted with the nose, disenchanted with the tongue, disenchanted with the body, disenchanted with the intellect. Disenchanted, he becomes dispassionate. Through dispassion, he is released. With release, there is the knowledge, ‘Released.’ He discerns that ‘Birth is ended, the holy life fulfilled, the task done. There is nothing further for this world.’”

That is what the Blessed One said. Gratified, the monk delighted in the Blessed One’s words. And while this explanation was being given, the mind of that monk, through lack of clinging/sustenance, was released from effluents. —

[SN 35:75](#)

On one occasion the Blessed One was staying near Sāvattthī in Jeta’s Forest, Anāthapiṇḍika’s monastery. And at that time Ven. Sāriputta & Ven. Mahā Moggallāna were staying near Rājagaha in a single dwelling in the Squirrels’ Sanctuary. Then Ven. Sāriputta, arising from his seclusion in the late afternoon, went to Ven. Mahā Moggallāna. On arrival, he exchanged courteous greetings with him. After an exchange of friendly greetings & courtesies, he sat to one side. As he was sitting there, he said to Ven. Mahā Moggallāna, “Bright are your faculties, friend Moggallāna; pure your complexion, and clear. Could it be that Ven. Mahā Moggallāna has spent today in a peaceful abiding?”

“It was in a gross abiding, my friend, that I spent today. But I had some Dhamma talk.”

“With whom did Ven. Moggallāna have some Dhamma talk?”

“With the Blessed One, my friend.”

“But far away is the Blessed One now, in Jeta’s Forest, Anāthapiṇḍika’s monastery. Did Ven. Mahā Moggallāna go to the Blessed One through supranormal power, or did the Blessed One come to Ven. Mahā Moggallāna through supranormal power?”

“I didn’t go to the Blessed One through supranormal power, my friend, nor did the Blessed One come to me through supranormal power. Simply that the Blessed One purified his divine eye & divine ear as far as me, and I purified my divine eye & divine ear as far as the Blessed One.”

“And what kind of Dhamma talk did Ven. Mahā Moggallāna have with the Blessed One?”

“Just now, my friend, I said to the Blessed One, ‘One of aroused persistence, one of aroused persistence,’ it is said, lord. To what extent is a person one of aroused persistence?’ When this was said, the Blessed One said, ‘There is the case, Moggallāna, where a monk, (thinking,) “Gladly would I let the flesh & blood in my body dry up, leaving just the skin, tendons, & bones, but if I have not attained what can be reached through human firmness, human persistence, human striving, there will be no relaxing my persistence”: That is how one is a person of aroused persistence.’ That is the Dhamma talk I had with the Blessed One, my friend.”

“Friend, like a few small pieces of gravel placed next to the Himalayas, the king of mountains, are we when placed next to Ven. Mahā Moggallāna, for Ven. Mahā Moggallāna is of such great power, great might, that if he wished he could live for an eon.” [118](#)

“Friend, like a few small grains of salt placed next to a large salt barrel are we when placed next to Ven. Sāriputta, for in many ways has Ven. Sāriputta been lauded, praised, & extolled by the Blessed One:

‘As for Sāriputta:

Any monk who has gone beyond,
at best can only equal him
in discernment, virtue, & calm.”

In this way did each of these two great beings [*nāga*] approve of what was well stated and well expressed by the other. — [SN 21:3](#)

At that time the Blessed One was dwelling near Sāvattthī at Jeta’s Forest, Anāthapiṇḍika’s monastery. Then he addressed the monks, “Monks, I wish to go into seclusion for three months. I am not to be approached by anyone at all except for the one who brings almsfood.”

“As you say, lord,” the monks responded to him. And no one approached the Blessed One except for the one who brought almsfood. And at that time, the Saṅgha in Sāvattthī made a pact: “Friends, the Blessed One wishes to go into seclusion for three months. He is not to be approached by anyone at all except for the one who brings almsfood. Whoever approaches him should be made to confess a *pācittiya* offense.”

Then Ven. Upasena Vaṅgantaputta, together with his following, went to the Blessed One and, on arrival, having bowed down to him, sat to one side. Now, it is the custom of Awakened Ones, Blessed Ones, to greet incoming monks. So the Blessed One said to Ven. Upasena, “I hope that you are all getting along, Upasena. I hope that you are all comfortable. I hope that you have come on this journey with little fatigue.”

“We are getting along, O Blessed One. We are comfortable. We have come on this journey with little fatigue.”

Now at that time one of Ven. Upasena’s students was sitting not far from the Blessed One. So the Blessed One asked him, “Are your robes of cast-off cloth pleasing to you, monk?”

“No, lord, my robes of cast-off cloth are not pleasing to me.”

“Then how is it that you are one who wears cast-off cloth?”

“My preceptor is one who wears cast-off cloth, lord, so I am one who wears cast-off cloth, too.”

So the Blessed One said to Ven. Upasena, “Your following is inspiring, Upasena. How do you discipline them?”

“Lord, if someone asks me for Acceptance, I tell him: ‘I, friend, am one who lives in the wilderness, goes for alms, & wears cast-off cloth. If you, too, will be one who lives in the wilderness, goes for alms, & wears cast-off cloth, I will give you Acceptance.’ If he promises me, I give him Acceptance. If he doesn’t promise me, I don’t give him Acceptance.”

“If someone asks me for dependence, I tell him: ‘I, friend, am one who lives in the wilderness, goes for alms, & wears cast-off cloth. If you, too, will be one who lives in the wilderness, goes for alms, & wears cast-off cloth, I will give you dependence.’ If he promises me, I give him dependence. If he doesn’t promise me, I don’t give him dependence. That, lord, is how I discipline my following.”

“Excellent, Upasena! Excellent! It’s excellent how you train your following. But do you know of the pact of the Saṅgha in Sāvatthī?”

“No, lord, I don’t.”

“The Saṅgha in Sāvatthī has made a pact: ‘Friends, the Blessed One wishes to go into seclusion for three months. He is not to be approached by anyone at all except for the one who brings almsfood. Whoever approaches him should be made to confess a pācittiya offense.’”

“Lord, let the Saṅgha in Sāvatthī be known for its own pact. We will not legislate what has not been legislated, nor will we rescind what has been legislated, but we will proceed having undertaken the training rules as they have been legislated.”

“Excellent, Upasena! Excellent! What has not been legislated [as a rule] should not be legislated, and what has been legislated should not be rescinded, but one should proceed having undertaken the training rules as they have been legislated. [119](#)

“I allow, Upasena, that monks who live in the wilderness, who go for alms, and who wear cast-off cloth to approach me as they like.”

Now at that time, a large number of monks were standing at the gate, (thinking,) “We will make Ven. Upasena Vaṅgantaputta confess a pācittiya offense.”

Then Ven. Upasena and his following got up from their seats, bowed down to the Blessed One, circumambulated him, and left. Then the monks said to Ven. Upasena, “Do you know, friend Upasena, of the pact of the Saṅgha in Sāvatthī?”

[Then Ven. Upasena told them of his conversation with the Blessed One.]

So the monks said, “It’s true what Ven. Upasena has said: ‘What has not been legislated should not be legislated, and what has been legislated should not be rescinded, but one should proceed having undertaken the training rules as they have been legislated.’” — [NP 15](#)

I have heard that on one occasion the Blessed One was dwelling near Sāvattthī at the Eastern Monastery, the palace of Migāra’s mother. And on that occasion, the Blessed One—it being the observance day—was sitting surrounded by the Saṅgha of monks. Then Ven. Ānanda—when the night was far advanced, at the end of the first watch—got up from his seat, arranged his robe over one shoulder, stood facing the Blessed One, paying homage with his hands placed palm-to-palm over his heart, and said to him, “Lord, the night is far advanced. The first watch has ended. The Saṅgha of monks has been sitting here long. May the Blessed One recite the Pāṭimokkha to them.” When this was said, the Blessed One remained silent.

Then a second time, when the night was far advanced, at the end of the middle watch, Ven. Ānanda got up from his seat, arranged his robe over one shoulder, stood facing the Blessed One, paying homage with his hands placed palm-to-palm over his heart, and said to him, “Lord, the night is far advanced. The second watch has ended. The Saṅgha of monks has been sitting here long. May the Blessed One recite the Pāṭimokkha to them.” When this was said, the Blessed One remained silent.

Then a third time, when the night was far advanced, at the end of the last watch, as dawn was approaching and the face of the night was beaming, Ven. Ānanda got up from his seat, arranged his robe over one shoulder, stood facing the Blessed One, paying homage with his hands placed palm-to-palm over his heart, and said to him, “Lord, the night is far advanced. The last watch has ended. Dawn is approaching and the face of the night is beaming. The Saṅgha of monks has been sitting here long. May the Blessed One recite the Pāṭimokkha to the Saṅgha of monks.”

“Ānanda, the gathering isn’t pure.”

Then the thought occurred to Ven. Mahā Moggallāna: “In reference to which individual did the Blessed One just now say, ‘Ānanda, the gathering isn’t pure’?” So he directed his mind, encompassing with his awareness the awareness of the entire Saṅgha of monks. He saw that individual—unprincipled, evil, unclean & suspect in his undertakings, hidden in his actions, not a contemplative though claiming to be one, not leading the holy life though claiming to do so, inwardly rotten, oozing with desire, filthy by nature—sitting in the midst of the Saṅgha of monks. On seeing him, he got up, went over to that individual and, on reaching him said, “Get up, friend. You have been seen by the Blessed One. You have no affiliation with the Saṅgha of

monks.” Then the individual remained silent. A second time... A third time, Ven. Mahā Moggallāna said, “Get up, friend. You have been seen by the Blessed One. You have no affiliation with the Saṅgha of monks.” And for a third time the individual remained silent.

Then Ven. Mahā Moggallāna, grabbing that individual by the arm, having expelled him through the outside door of the porch and locking the bolt, went to the Blessed One and on arrival said, “I have expelled that individual, lord. The gathering is now pure. Let the Blessed One recite the Pāṭimokkha to the Saṅgha of monks.”

“Isn’t it amazing, Moggallāna. Isn’t it astounding, how that worthless man waited until he was grabbed by the arm.” Then the Blessed One addressed the monks: “From now on I will no longer perform the observance or recite the Pāṭimokkha. From now on, you alone, monks, will perform the observance and recite the Pāṭimokkha. It is impossible, it cannot happen, that a Tathāgata would perform the observance or recite the Pāṭimokkha with an impure gathering.

“Monks, there are eight amazing & astounding qualities of the ocean because of which, as they see them again & again, the asuras take great joy in the ocean.... In the same way, monks, there are eight amazing & astounding qualities of this Dhamma & Vinaya because of which, as they see them again & again, the monks take great joy in this Dhamma & Vinaya. Which eight?

“[1] Just as the ocean has a gradual shelf, a gradual slope, a gradual inclination, with a sudden drop-off only after a long stretch¹²⁰ ; in the same way, this Dhamma & Vinaya has a gradual training, a gradual performance, a gradual practice, with a penetration to gnosis only after a long stretch. The fact that this Dhamma & Vinaya has a gradual training, a gradual performance, a gradual practice, with a penetration to gnosis only after a long stretch: This is the first amazing & astounding quality of this Dhamma & Vinaya because of which, as they see it again & again, the monks take great joy in this Dhamma & Vinaya.

“[2] And furthermore, just as the ocean is stable and does not overstep its tideline; in the same way, my disciples do not—even for the sake of their lives—overstep the training rules I have legislated for them.... This is the second amazing & astounding quality of this Dhamma & Vinaya because of which, as they see it again & again, the monks take great joy in this Dhamma & Vinaya.

“[3] And furthermore, just as the ocean does not tolerate a dead body, any dead body in the ocean getting quickly washed to the shore and thrown up on dry land... in the same way, if an individual is unprincipled, evil, unclean & suspect in his undertakings, hidden in his actions—not a contemplative though claiming to be one, not leading the holy life though claiming to do so, inwardly rotten, oozing with desire, filthy by nature—the Saṅgha has no affiliation with him. Having quickly gathered together, they suspend him from the Saṅgha. Even though he may be sitting in the midst of the Saṅgha of monks, he is far from the Saṅgha, and the Saṅgha far from him.... This is the third amazing & astounding quality of this Dhamma & Vinaya because of which, as they see it again & again, the monks take great joy in this Dhamma & Vinaya.

“[4] And furthermore, just as whatever great rivers there are—such as the Ganges, the Yamunā, the Aciravatī, the Sarabhū, the Mahī—on reaching the ocean, give up their former names and are classed simply as ‘ocean’; in the same way, when members of the four castes—noble warriors, brahmans, merchants, & workers—go forth from home to the homeless life in this Dhamma & Vinaya declared by the Tathāgata, they give up their former names and clans and are classed simply as ‘contemplatives, sons of the Sakyan.’... This is the fourth amazing & astounding quality of this Dhamma & Vinaya because of which, as they see it again & again, the monks take great joy in this Dhamma & Vinaya.

“[5] And furthermore, just as the rivers of the world pour into the ocean, and rains fall from the sky, but no swelling or diminishing in the ocean for that reason can be discerned; in the same way, although many monks are totally unbound into the property of unbinding with no fuel remaining, no swelling or diminishing in the property of unbinding for that reason can be discerned.... This is the fifth amazing & astounding quality of this Dhamma & Vinaya because of which, as they see it again & again, the monks take great joy in this Dhamma & Vinaya.

“[6] And furthermore, just as the ocean has a single taste—that of salt—in the same way, this Dhamma & Vinaya has a single taste: that of release.... This is the sixth amazing & astounding quality of this Dhamma & Vinaya because of which, as they see it again & again, the monks take great joy in this Dhamma & Vinaya.

“[7] And furthermore, just as the ocean has these many treasures of various kinds—pearls, sapphires, lapis lazuli, shells, quartz, coral, silver, gold, rubies, &

cat's eyes—in the same way, this Dhamma & Vinaya has these many treasures of various kinds: the four establishing of mindfulness, the four right exertions, the four bases of power, the five faculties, the five strengths, the seven factors for awakening, the noble eightfold path.... This is the seventh amazing & astounding quality of this Dhamma & Vinaya because of which, as they see it again & again, the monks take great joy in this Dhamma & Vinaya.

“[8] And furthermore, just as the ocean is the abode of such mighty beings as these: whales, whale-eaters, & whale-eater-eaters; asuras, nāgas, & gandhabbas, and there are in the ocean beings one hundred leagues long, two hundred... three hundred... four hundred... five hundred leagues long; in the same way, this Dhamma & Vinaya is the abode of such mighty beings as these: stream-winners & those practicing to realize the fruit of stream-entry; once-returners & those practicing to realize the fruit of once-returning; non-returners & those practicing to realize the fruit of non-returning; arahants & those practicing for arahantship.... This is the eighth amazing & astounding quality of this Dhamma & Vinaya because of which, as they see it again & again, the monks take great joy in this Dhamma & Vinaya.

“These are the eight amazing & astounding qualities of this Dhamma & Vinaya because of which, as they see them again & again, the monks take great joy in this Dhamma & Vinaya.”

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

Rain soddens what's covered
& doesn't sodden what's open.
So open up what's covered up,
so that it won't get soddened by the rain. — [*Ud 5:5*](#)

WANDERING

Although the Buddha now had a home base for his activities, he continued wandering from time to time, sometimes for seclusion—as we saw above—and sometimes to teach.

I have heard that on one occasion, as the Blessed One was wandering among the Magadhans, he entered Rājagaha, went to the potter Bhaggava and,

on arrival, said to him, “If it’s no inconvenience for you, Bhaggava, I will stay for one night in your shed.”

“It’s no inconvenience for me, lord, but there is a wanderer who has already taken up residence there. If he gives his permission, you may stay there as you like.”

Now at that time a clansman named Pukkusāti had, through conviction, gone forth from home into homelessness in dedication to the Blessed One. He was the one who had already taken up residence in the potter’s shed. So the Blessed One went to Ven. Pukkusāti and, on arrival, said to him, “If it’s no inconvenience for you, monk, I will stay one night in the shed.”

“The shed is roomy, my friend. Stay as you like.”

So the Blessed One, entering the potter’s shed and setting out a spread of grass to one side, sat down folding his legs crosswise, holding his body erect, and establishing mindfulness to the fore. He spent most of the night sitting (in meditation). Ven. Pukkusāti also spent most of the night sitting (in meditation). The thought occurred to the Blessed One, “How inspiring is the way this clansman behaves! What if I were to question him?” So he said to Ven. Pukkusāti, “In dedication to whom, monk, have you gone forth? Who is your teacher? Of whose Dhamma do you approve?”

“There is, my friend, Gotama the contemplative, a son of the Sakyans, gone forth from a Sakyan clan. Now, this excellent report about Master Gotama has been spread about: ‘Indeed, the Blessed One is worthy & rightly self-awakened, consummate in clear-knowing & conduct, well-gone, an expert with regard to the cosmos, unexcelled trainer of people fit to be tamed, teacher of devas & human beings, awakened, blessed.’ I have gone forth in dedication to that Blessed One. That Blessed One is my teacher. It is of that Blessed One’s Dhamma that I approve.”

“But where, monk, is that Blessed One—worthy & rightly self-awakened—staying now?”

“There is, my friend, a city in the northern lands named Sāvatthī. That is where the Blessed One—worthy & rightly self-awakened—is staying now.”

“Have you ever seen that Blessed One before? On seeing him, would you recognize him?”

“No, my friend, I have never seen the Blessed One before, nor on seeing him would I recognize him.”

Then the thought occurred to the Blessed One: “It’s in dedication to me that this clansman has gone forth. What if I were to teach him the Dhamma?” So he said to Ven. Pukkusāti, “I will teach you the Dhamma, monk. Listen & pay close attention. I will speak.”

“As you say, friend,” Ven. Pukkusāti responded to the Blessed One.

The Blessed One said: “A person has six properties, six media of sensory contact, eighteen considerations, & four determinations. He has been stilled where the currents of supposition do not flow. And when the currents of supposition do not flow, he is said to be a sage at peace. One should not be negligent of discernment, should guard the truth, be devoted to relinquishment, and train only for calm. This is the summary of the analysis of the six properties.”

The Buddha then proceeded to give a detailed explanation of this summary, concluding—

“‘He has been stilled where the currents of supposition do not flow. And when the currents of supposition do not flow, he is said to be a sage at peace.’ Thus it was said. With reference to what was it said? ‘I am’ is a supposition. ‘I am this’ is a supposition. ‘I shall be’ is a supposition. ‘I shall not be’... ‘I shall be possessed of form’... ‘I shall not be possessed of form’... ‘I shall be percipient’... ‘I shall not be percipient’... ‘I shall be neither percipient nor non-percipient’ is a supposition. Supposition is a disease, supposition is a cancer, supposition is an arrow. By going beyond all supposition, he is called a sage at peace.

“And further, a sage at peace is not born, does not age, does not die, is unagitated, and is free from longing. He has nothing whereby he would be born. Not being born, will he age? Not aging, will he die? Not dying, will he be agitated? Not being agitated, for what will he long? It was in reference to this that it was said, ‘He has been stilled where the currents of supposition do not flow. And when the currents of supposition do not flow, he is said to be a sage at peace.’ Now, monk, you should remember this, my brief analysis of the six properties.”

Then the thought occurred to Ven. Pukkusāti: “Surely, the Teacher has come to me! Surely, the One Well-Gone has come to me! Surely, the Rightly Self-awakened one has come to me!” Getting up from his seat, arranging his upper robe over one shoulder, and bowing down with his head at the Blessed One’s feet, he said, “A transgression has overcome me, lord, in that I was so foolish, so

muddle-headed, and so unskilled as to assume that it was proper to address the Blessed One as ‘friend.’ May the Blessed One please accept this confession of my transgression as such, so that I may restrain myself in the future.”

“Yes, monk, a transgression overcame you in that you were so foolish, so muddle-headed, and so unskilled as to assume that it was proper to address me as ‘friend.’ But because you see your transgression as such and make amends in accordance with the Dhamma, we accept your confession. For it is a cause of growth in the discipline of the noble ones when, seeing a transgression as such, one makes amends in accordance with the Dhamma and exercises restraint in the future.”

“Lord, may I receive Acceptance from the Blessed One?”

“And are your robes & bowl complete?”

“No, lord, my robes & bowl are not complete.”

“Tathāgatas do not give Acceptance to one whose robes & bowl are incomplete.”

Then Ven. Pukkusāti, delighting and rejoicing in the Blessed One’s words, got up from his seat, bowed down to the Blessed One and, keeping him on his right, left in search of robes & a bowl. And while he was searching for robes & a bowl, a runaway cow killed him.

Then a large number of monks approached the Blessed One and, on arrival, having bowed down to him, sat to one side. As they were sitting there, they said to the Blessed One, “Lord, the clansman Pukkusāti, whom the Blessed One instructed with a brief instruction, has died. What is his destination? What is his future state?”

“Monks, the clansman Pukkusāti was wise. He practiced the Dhamma in accordance with the Dhamma and did not pester me with issues related to the Dhamma. With the destruction of the five lower fetters, he has arisen spontaneously (in the Pure Abodes), there to be totally unbound, never again to return from that world.”

That is what the Blessed One said. Gratified, the monks delighted in the Blessed One’s words. — [*MN 140*](#)

FAMILY MATTERS

It was also at Sāvattthī that the Buddha continued his instruction of Ven. Nanda and Ven. Rāhula, leading them both eventually to full awakening.

I have heard that on one occasion the Blessed One was dwelling near Sāvattthī in Jeta’s Forest, Anāthapiṇḍika’s monastery. Then Ven. Nanda, the son of the Blessed One’s maternal aunt, putting on beaten, pressed robes, applying mascara to his eyes, and taking a glossy bowl, 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, “Nanda, it’s not proper for you—as a son of a good family who, through conviction, has gone forth from home into homelessness—to put on beaten, pressed robes, to apply mascara to your eyes, and to carry a glossy bowl. This is proper for you as a son of a good family who, through conviction, has gone forth from home into homelessness: that you be a wilderness-dweller, an almsfood eater, a cast-off cloth wearer, and live indifferent toward sensuality.”

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

“When will I see Nanda
a wilderness-dweller,
a cast-off cloth wearer,
getting by on the food of others,
indifferent toward sensuality?” — [SN 21:8](#)

The following incident shows the Buddha’s ingenuity as a teacher.

I have heard that on one occasion the Blessed One was dwelling near Sāvattthī in Jeta’s Forest, Anāthapiṇḍika’s monastery. And on that occasion Ven. Nanda—the Blessed One’s brother, son of his maternal aunt—announced to a large number of monks: “I don’t enjoy leading the holy life, my friends. I can’t keep up the holy life. Giving up the training, I will return to the common life.”

Then a certain monk went to the Blessed One and, on arrival, having bowed down to him, sat to one side. As he was sitting there, he told the Blessed One: “Lord, Ven. Nanda—the Blessed One’s brother, son of his maternal aunt—has announced to a large number of monks: ‘I don’t enjoy leading the holy life, my friends. I can’t keep up the holy life. Giving up the training, I will return to the lowly life.’”

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

Responding, “As you say, lord,” to the Blessed One, the monk went to Ven. Nanda. On arrival, he said, “The Teacher calls you, friend Nanda.”

Responding, “As you say, my friend,” to the monk, Ven. Nanda 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, Nanda, that you have announced to a large number of monks: ‘I don’t enjoy leading the holy life, my friends. I can’t keep up the holy life. Giving up the training, I will return to the lowly life’?”

“Yes, lord.”

“But why, Nanda, don’t you enjoy leading the holy life? Why can’t you keep up the holy life? Why, giving up the training, will you return to the common life?”

“Lord, as I was leaving home, a Sakyan girl—the envy of the countryside—glanced up at me, with her hair half-combed, and said, ‘Hurry back, master.’ Recollecting that, I don’t enjoy leading the holy life. I can’t keep up the holy life. Giving up the training, I will return to the common life.”

Then, taking Ven. Nanda by the arm—as a strong man might flex his extended arm or extend his flexed arm—the Blessed One disappeared from Jeta’s Forest and reappeared among the devas of the heaven of the Thirty-three [Tāvātimsa]. Now on that occasion about five hundred dove-footed nymphs had come to wait upon Sakka the deva-king. The Blessed One said to Ven. Nanda, “Nanda, do you see these five hundred dove-footed nymphs?”

“Yes, lord.”

“What do you think, Nanda? Which is lovelier, better looking, more charming: the Sakyan girl, the envy of the countryside, or these five hundred dove-footed nymphs?”

“Lord, compared to these five hundred dove-footed nymphs, the Sakyan girl, the envy of the countryside, is like a cauterized monkey with its ears & nose cut off. She doesn’t count. She’s not even a small fraction. There’s no comparison. The five hundred dove-footed nymphs are lovelier, better looking, more charming.”

“Then take joy, Nanda. Take joy! I am your guarantor for getting five hundred dove-footed nymphs.”

“If the Blessed One is my guarantor for getting five hundred dove-footed nymphs, I will enjoy leading the holy life under the Blessed One.”

Then, taking Ven. Nanda by the arm—as a strong man might flex his extended arm or extend his flexed arm—the Blessed One disappeared from among the devas of the heaven of the Thirty-three and reappeared in Jeta’s Forest. The monks heard, “They say that Ven. Nanda—the Blessed One’s brother, son of his maternal aunt—is leading the holy life for the sake of nymphs. They say that the Blessed One is his guarantor for getting five hundred dove-footed nymphs.”

Then the monks who were companions of Ven. Nanda went around addressing him as they would a hired hand & a person who had been bought: “Ven. Nanda, they say, has been hired. Ven. Nanda, they say, has been bought.”¹²¹ He’s leading the holy life for the sake of nymphs. The Blessed One is his guarantor for getting five hundred dove-footed nymphs.”

Then Ven. Nanda—humiliated, ashamed, & disgusted that the monks who were his companions were addressing him as they would a hired hand & a person who had been bought—went to dwell alone, secluded, heedful, ardent, & resolute.” — [Ud 3:2](#)

Then, at a later time, Ven. Nanda became a wilderness-dweller, an almsfood eater, & a cast-off cloth wearer; and lived indifferent toward sensuality. — [SN 21:8](#)

[The Buddha addressed the monks:] “Monks, speaking rightly of Nanda, one could say, ‘He is a son of a good family.’ Speaking rightly of Nanda, one could say, ‘He is strong.’ Speaking rightly of Nanda, one could say, ‘He is handsome.’ Speaking rightly of Nanda, one could say, ‘He is fiercely passionate.’ If Nanda did not guard the doors of his senses, did not know moderation in eating, was not devoted to wakefulness, and was not endowed with mindfulness & alertness, how would he be able to follow the holy life completely & purely?

“This is Nanda’s guarding of the doors of his senses: If he should look to the east, he looks focusing his entire awareness, (thinking,) ‘As I am looking thus to the east, greed & distress, evil, unskillful qualities, will not flow out.’ That’s how he is alert there. If he should look to the west... the north... the south... above... below... to the intermediate directions, he looks focusing his entire

awareness, (thinking,) ‘As I am looking thus to the intermediate directions, greed & distress, evil, unskillful qualities, will not flow out.’ That’s how he is alert there. This is Nanda’s guarding of the doors of his senses.

“This is Nanda’s knowledge of moderation in eating: Nanda takes his food reflecting appropriately, not playfully, nor for intoxication, nor for putting on bulk, nor for beautification, but simply for the survival & continuance of this body, for ending its afflictions, for the support of the holy life, (thinking,) ‘I will destroy old feelings (of hunger) & not create new feelings (from overeating). Thus I will maintain myself, be blameless, & live in comfort.’ This is Nanda’s knowledge of moderation in eating.

“This is Nanda’s devotion to wakefulness: There is the case where Nanda 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 Nanda’s devotion to wakefulness.

“This is Nanda’s being endowed with mindfulness & alertness: There is the case where feelings are known to Nanda as they arise, known as they persist, known as they subside. Perceptions are known as they arise, known as they persist, known as they subside. Thoughts are known as they arise, known as they persist, known as they subside. This is Nanda’s being endowed with mindfulness & alertness.

“Monks, if Nanda did not guard the doors of his senses, did not know moderation in eating, was not devoted to wakefulness, and was not endowed with mindfulness & alertness, how would he be able to follow the holy life completely & purely?” — [AN 8:9](#)

Then Ven. Nanda, in no long time, entered and remained in the supreme goal of the holy life for which clansmen rightly go forth from home into homelessness, knowing & realizing it for himself right in the here-&-now. He knew, “Birth is ended, the holy life fulfilled, the task done. There is nothing

further for the sake of this world.” And thus Ven. Nanda became another one of the arahants.

Then a certain devatā, in the far extreme of the night, her extreme radiance lighting up the entirety of Jetā’s Forest, approached the Blessed One. On arrival, having bowed down to him, she stood to one side. As she was standing there, she said to the Blessed One, “Lord, Ven. Nanda—the Blessed One’s brother, son of his maternal aunt—through the ending of effluents, has entered & remains in the effluent-free awareness-release & discernment-release, directly knowing & realizing them for himself right in the here-&-now.” And within the Blessed One, the knowledge arose: “Nanda, through the ending of effluents, has entered & remains in the effluent-free awareness-release & discernment-release, directly knowing & realizing them for himself right in the here-&-now.”

Then, when the night had passed, Ven. Nanda went to the Blessed One and, on arrival, having bowed down to him, sat to one side. As he was sitting there, he said to the Blessed One, “Lord, about the Blessed One’s being my guarantor for getting five hundred dove-footed nymphs: I hereby release the Blessed One from that promise.”

“Nanda, having comprehended your awareness with my own awareness, I realized that ‘Nanda, through the ending of effluents, has entered & remains in the effluent-free awareness-release & discernment-release, directly knowing & realizing them for himself right in the here-&-now.’ And a devatā informed me that ‘Ven. Nanda, through the ending of effluents, has entered & remains in the effluent-free awareness-release & discernment-release, directly knowing & realizing them for himself right in the here-&-now.’ When your mind, through lack of clinging, was released from effluents, I was thereby released from that promise.”

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

In whom the mire of sensuality is crossed over,^{[122](#)}
the thorn of sensuality crushed,
the ending of delusion reached:
He doesn’t quiver
from pleasures & pains
: a monk. — [Ud 3:2](#)

I have heard that on one occasion the Blessed One was dwelling near Sāvattthī in Jeta's Forest, Anāthapiṇḍika's monastery. Then, early in the morning, the Blessed One... went into Sāvattthī for alms. And Ven. Rāhula, early in the morning... went into Sāvattthī for alms following right behind the Blessed One.¹²³ Then the Blessed One, looking back at Rāhula, addressed him: "Rāhula, any form whatsoever that is past, future, or present; internal or external; blatant or subtle; common or sublime; far or near: every form is to be seen as it has come to be with right discernment as: 'This is not mine. This is not my self. This is not what I am.'"

"Just form, O Blessed One? Just form, O One Well-Gone?"

"Form, Rāhula, & feeling & perception & fabrications & consciousness."

Then the thought occurred to Ven. Rāhula, "Who, having been exhorted face-to-face by the Blessed One, would go into the town for alms today?" So he turned back and sat down at the foot of a tree, folding his legs crosswise, holding his body erect, & establishing mindfulness to the fore.

Ven. Sāriputta saw Ven. Rāhula sitting at the foot of a tree, his legs folded crosswise, his body held erect, & with mindfulness set to the fore. On seeing him, he said to him, "Rāhula, develop the meditation [*bhāvanā*] of mindfulness of in-&-out breathing. The meditation of mindfulness of in-&-out breathing, when developed & pursued, is of great fruit, of great benefit."

Then Ven. Rāhula, emerging from his seclusion in the late afternoon, went to the Blessed One and, having bowed down, sat to one side. As he was sitting there he said to him, "How, lord, is mindfulness of in-&-out breathing to be developed & pursued so as to be of great fruit, or great benefit?"

"Rāhula, any form whatsoever that is past, future, or present; internal or external; blatant or subtle; common or sublime; far or near: every form is to be seen as it has come to be with right discernment as: 'This is not mine. This is not my self. This is not what I am.' There are these five properties, Rāhula. Which five? The earth property, the water property, the fire property, the wind property, & the space property.

"And what is the earth property? The earth property can be either internal or external. What is the internal earth property? Anything internal, within oneself, that's hard, solid, & sustained (by craving): head hairs, body hairs, nails, teeth, skin, flesh, tendons, bones, bone marrow, kidneys, heart, liver, membranes, spleen, lungs, large intestines, small intestines, contents of the

stomach, feces, or anything else internal, within oneself, that's hard, solid, and sustained: This is called the internal earth property. Now both the internal earth property & the external earth property are simply earth property. And that should be seen as it has come to be with right discernment: 'This is not mine, this is not me, this is not my self.' When one sees it thus as it has come to be with right discernment, one becomes disenchanted with the earth property and makes the earth property fade from the mind.

"And what is the water property? The water property may be either internal or external. What is the internal water property? Anything internal, belonging to oneself, that's water, watery, & sustained: bile, phlegm, pus, blood, sweat, fat, tears, oil, saliva, mucus, oil-of-the-joints, urine, or anything else internal, within oneself, that's water, watery, & sustained: This is called the internal water property. Now both the internal water property & the external water property are simply water property. And that should be seen as it has come to be with right discernment: 'This is not mine, this is not me, this is not my self.' When one sees it thus as it has come to be with right discernment, one becomes disenchanted with the water property and makes the water property fade from the mind.

"And what is the fire property? The fire property may be either internal or external. What is the internal fire property? Anything internal, belonging to oneself, that's fire, fiery, & sustained: that by which (the body) is warmed, aged, & consumed with fever; and that by which what is eaten, drunk, chewed, & savored gets properly digested; or anything else internal, within oneself, that's fire, fiery, & sustained: This is called the internal fire property. Now both the internal fire property & the external fire property are simply fire property. And that should be seen as it has come to be with right discernment: 'This is not mine, this is not me, this is not my self.' When one sees it thus as it has come to be with right discernment, one becomes disenchanted with the fire property and makes the fire property fade from the mind.

"And what is the wind property? The wind property may be either internal or external. What is the internal wind property? Anything internal, belonging to oneself, that's wind, windy, & sustained: up-going winds, down-going winds, winds in the stomach, winds in the intestines, winds that course through the body, in-and-out breathing, or anything else internal, within oneself, that's wind, windy, & sustained: This is called the internal wind property. Now both the internal wind property & the external wind property are simply wind

property. And that should be seen as it has come to be with right discernment: ‘This is not mine, this is not me, this is not my self.’ When one sees it thus as it has come to be with right discernment, one becomes disenchanted with the wind property and makes the wind property fade from the mind.

“And what is the space property? The space property may be either internal or external. What is the internal space property? Anything internal, belonging to oneself, that’s space, spatial, & sustained: the holes of the ears, the nostrils, the mouth, the (passage) whereby what is eaten, drunk, consumed, & tasted gets swallowed, and where it collects, and whereby it is excreted from below, or anything else internal, within oneself, that’s space, spatial, & sustained: This is called the internal space property. Now both the internal space property & the external space property are simply space property. And that should be seen as it has come to be with right discernment: ‘This is not mine, this is not me, this is not my self.’ When one sees it thus as it has come to be with right discernment, one becomes disenchanted with the space property and makes the space property fade from the mind.

“Rāhula, develop the meditation in tune with earth. For when you are developing the meditation in tune with earth, agreeable & disagreeable sensory impressions that have arisen will not stay in charge of your mind. Just as when people throw what is clean or unclean on the earth—feces, urine, saliva, pus, or blood—the earth is not horrified, humiliated, or disgusted by it; in the same way, when you are developing the meditation in tune with earth, agreeable & disagreeable sensory impressions that have arisen will not stay in charge of your mind.

“Develop the meditation in tune with water. For when you are developing the meditation in tune with water, agreeable & disagreeable sensory impressions that have arisen will not stay in charge of your mind. Just as when people wash what is clean or unclean in water—feces, urine, saliva, pus, or blood—the water is not horrified, humiliated, or disgusted by it; in the same way, when you are developing the meditation in tune with water, agreeable & disagreeable sensory impressions that have arisen will not stay in charge of your mind.

“Develop the meditation in tune with fire. For when you are developing the meditation in tune with fire, agreeable & disagreeable sensory impressions that have arisen will not stay in charge of your mind. Just as when fire burns what is clean or unclean—feces, urine, saliva, pus, or blood—it is not horrified,

humiliated, or disgusted by it; in the same way, when you are developing the meditation in tune with fire, agreeable & disagreeable sensory impressions that have arisen will not stay in charge of your mind.

“Develop the meditation in tune with wind. For when you are developing the meditation in tune with wind, agreeable & disagreeable sensory impressions that have arisen will not stay in charge of your mind. Just as when wind blows what is clean or unclean—feces, urine, saliva, pus, or blood—it is not horrified, humiliated, or disgusted by it; in the same way, when you are developing the meditation in tune with wind, agreeable & disagreeable sensory impressions that have arisen will not stay in charge of your mind.

“Develop the meditation in tune with space. For when you are developing the meditation in tune with space, agreeable & disagreeable sensory impressions that have arisen will not stay in charge of your mind. Just as space is not established anywhere, in the same way, when you are developing the meditation in tune with space, agreeable & disagreeable sensory impressions that have arisen will not stay in charge of your mind.

“Develop the meditation of goodwill. For when you are developing the meditation of goodwill, ill-will will be abandoned.

“Develop the meditation of compassion. For when you are developing the meditation of compassion, harmfulness will be abandoned.

“Develop the meditation of empathetic joy. For when you are developing the meditation of empathetic joy, resentment will be abandoned.

“Develop the meditation of equanimity. For when you are developing the meditation of equanimity, irritation will be abandoned.

“Develop the meditation of the unattractive. For when you are developing the meditation of the unattractive, passion will be abandoned.

“Develop the meditation of the perception of inconstancy. For when you are developing the meditation of the perception of inconstancy, the conceit ‘I am’ will be abandoned.

“Develop the meditation of mindfulness of in-&-out breathing. Mindfulness of in-&-out breathing, when developed & pursued, is of great fruit, of great benefit.

“And how, Rāhula, is mindfulness of in-&-out breathing developed & pursued so as to be of great fruit, of great benefit?

“There is the case where a monk, having gone to the wilderness, to the shade of a tree, or to an empty building, sits down folding his legs crosswise, holding his body erect, and establishing mindfulness to the fore. Always mindful, he breathes in; mindful he breathes out. [Followed by the standard 16 steps.]”

“This, Rāhula, is how mindfulness of in-&-out breathing is developed & pursued so as to be of great fruit, of great benefit.

“When mindfulness of in-&-out breathing is developed & pursued in this way, even one’s final in-breaths & out-breaths are known as they cease, not unknown.”¹²⁴

That is what the Blessed One said. Gratified, Ven. Rāhula delighted in the Blessed One’s words. — [*MN 62*](#)

“Abandoning the five strings of sensuality
—endearing, charming—
going forth from home
through conviction,
be one who puts an end
to suffering & stress.
Cultivate admirable friends
and an isolated dwelling,
secluded, with next-to-no noise.
Know moderation in eating.
Robe, almsfood,
requisites, dwellings:
Don’t create craving for these.
Don’t be one who returns to the world.
Restrained in the Pāṭimokkha
and the five faculties,
have mindfulness immersed in the body,
be one who’s cultivated disenchantment.
Avoid the theme of beauty,
connected with passion.
Develop the mind in the unattractive—
gathered into one, well centered.
Develop the themeless.

Give up obsession with conceit.
Then, from having broken through conceit,
you will go about, stilled.”

In this way, the Blessed One often instructed Ven. Rāhula with these verses.
— [*Sn 2:11*](#)

I have heard that on one occasion the Blessed One was staying near Sāvattthī in Jeta’s Forest, Anāthapiṇḍika’s monastery. Then, as he was alone in seclusion, this line of thinking arose in the Blessed One’s awareness: “The mental qualities that ripen in release have ripened in Rāhula. What if I were to lead Rāhula further to the ending of the effluents?”

Then, early in the morning, the Blessed One—having adjusted his under robe and carrying his bowl & outer robe—went into Sāvattthī for alms. Having gone for alms in Sāvattthī, after the meal, returning from his almsround, he said to Ven. Rāhula, “Fetch your sitting cloth, Rāhula. We will go to the Forest of the Blind to spend the day.”

Responding, “As you say, lord,” to the Blessed One, Ven. Rāhula, carrying his sitting cloth, followed behind the Blessed One. Now at that time, many thousands of devas were following behind the Blessed One, (thinking,) “Today the Blessed One will lead Ven. Rāhula further to the ending of the effluents.”

Then the Blessed One, having plunged into the Forest of the Blind, sat down on a seat laid out at the foot of a tree. Ven. Rāhula, having bowed down to the Blessed One, sat to one side.

As he was sitting there, the Blessed One said to him, “What do you think, Rāhula? Is the eye constant or inconstant?”

“Inconstant, lord.”

“And is that which is inconstant easeful or stressful?”

“Stressful, lord.”

“And is it fitting to regard what is inconstant, stressful, subject to change as: ‘This is mine. This is my self. This is what I am?’”

“No, lord.”

“What do you think? Are forms constant or inconstant?” ...

“What do you think? Is consciousness at the eye constant or inconstant?” ...

“What do you think? Is contact at the eye constant or inconstant?” ...

“What do you think? Whatever there is that arises in dependence on contact at the eye as a mode of feeling, a mode of perception, a mode of fabrication, or a mode of consciousness: Is it constant or inconstant?”

“Inconstant, lord.”

“And is that which is inconstant easeful or stressful?”

“Stressful, lord.”

“And is it fitting to regard what is inconstant, stressful, subject to change as: ‘This is mine. This is my self. This is what I am?’”

“No, lord.”

[Similarly with the ear, nose, tongue, body, & intellect.]

“Seeing thus, Rāhula, the instructed disciple of the noble ones grows disenchanted with the eye, disenchanted with forms, disenchanted with consciousness at the eye, disenchanted with contact at the eye. And whatever there is that arises in dependence on contact at the eye as a mode of feeling, a mode of perception, a mode of fabrication, or a mode of consciousness: With that, too, he grows disenchanted.

“He grows disenchanted with the ear... the nose... the tongue... the body....

“He grows disenchanted with the intellect, disenchanted with ideas, disenchanted with consciousness at the intellect, disenchanted with contact at the intellect. And whatever there is that arises in dependence on contact at the intellect as a mode of feeling, a mode of perception, a mode of fabrication, or a mode of consciousness: With that, too, he grows disenchanted. Disenchanted, he becomes dispassionate. Through dispassion, he is released. With release, there is the knowledge, ‘Released.’ He discerns that ‘Birth is ended, the holy life fulfilled, the task done. There is nothing further for this world.’”

That is what the Blessed One said. Gratified, Ven. Rāhula delighted in the Blessed One’s words. And while this explanation was being given, Ven. Rāhula’s mind, through lack of clinging/sustenance, was released from effluents. And to those many thousands of devas there arose the dustless, stainless Dhamma eye: “*Whatever is subject to origination is all subject to cessation.*” — [*MN 147*](#)

It’s hard to come by
a thoroughbred of a man.
It’s simply not true
that he’s born everywhere.

Wherever he's born, enlightened,
the family prospers,
is happy. — [Dhp 193](#)

THE BUDDHA'S DWELLING

It's important to remember that, no matter where the Buddha dwelled physically, the dwelling of his mind was something apart. In his terms, he was “everywhere released” ([Dhp 90](#)).

I have heard that on one occasion the Blessed One was staying near Sāvattthī in the Eastern Monastery, the palace of Migāra's mother. Then Ven. Ānanda, emerging from his seclusion in the late afternoon, 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: “On one occasion, when the Blessed One was staying among the Sakyans in a Sakyan town named Nagaraka, there—face-to-face with the Blessed One—I heard this, face-to-face I learned this: ‘I now remain fully in a dwelling of emptiness.’ Did I hear that correctly, learn it correctly, attend to it correctly, remember it correctly?”

“Yes, Ānanda, you heard that correctly, learned it correctly, attended to it correctly, remembered it correctly. Now, as well as before, I remain fully in a dwelling of emptiness.

“Just as this palace of Migāra's mother is empty of elephants, cattle, & mares, empty of gold & silver, empty of assemblies of women & men, and there is only this non-emptiness—the singleness based on the Saṅgha of monks; even so, Ānanda, a monk—not attending to the perception of village, not attending to the perception of human being—attends to the singleness based on the perception of wilderness. His mind takes pleasure, finds satisfaction, settles, & indulges in its perception of wilderness.

“He discerns that ‘Whatever disturbances that would exist based on the perception of village are not present. Whatever disturbances that would exist based on the perception of human being are not present. There is only this modicum of disturbance: the singleness based on the perception of wilderness.’ He discerns that ‘This mode of perception is empty of the perception of village. This mode of perception is empty of the perception of human being. There is only this non-emptiness: the singleness based on the perception of wilderness.’

Thus he regards it as empty of whatever is not there. Whatever remains, he discerns as present: ‘There is this.’ And so this, his entry into emptiness, accords with actuality, is undistorted in meaning, & pure.

The Buddha then proceeded to describe states of mind progressively more and more empty of disturbance, up through the highest stages of concentration, until he described the highest emptiness, the emptiness in which he dwelled:

“Further, Ānanda, the monk—not attending to the perception of the dimension of nothingness, not attending to the perception of the dimension of neither perception nor non-perception—attends to the singleness based on the theme-less concentration of awareness. His mind takes pleasure, finds satisfaction, settles, & indulges in its theme-less concentration of awareness.

“He discerns that ‘This theme-less concentration of awareness is fabricated & mentally fashioned.’ And he discerns that ‘Whatever is fabricated & mentally fashioned is inconstant & subject to cessation.’ Thus knowing, thus seeing, his heart is released from the effluent of sensuality, released from the effluent of becoming, released from 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.’

“He discerns that ‘Whatever disturbances would exist based on the effluent of sensuality... the effluent of becoming... the effluent of ignorance, are not present. And there is only this modicum of disturbance: that connected with the six sensory spheres, dependent on this very body with life as its condition.’ He discerns that ‘This mode of perception is empty of the effluent of sensuality... becoming... ignorance. And there is just this non-emptiness: that connected with the six sensory spheres, dependent on this very body with life as its condition.’ Thus he regards it as empty of whatever is not there. Whatever remains, he discerns as present: ‘There is this.’ And so this, his entry into emptiness, accords with actuality, is undistorted in meaning, pure—superior & unsurpassed.

“Ānanda, whatever contemplatives & brahmans who in the past entered and remained in an emptiness that was pure, superior, & unsurpassed, they all entered and remained in this very same emptiness that is pure, superior, & unsurpassed. Whatever contemplatives & brahmans who in the future will enter and remain in an emptiness that will be pure, superior, & unsurpassed,

they all will enter and remain in this very same emptiness that is pure, superior, & unsurpassed. Whatever contemplatives & brahmans who at present enter and remain in an emptiness that is pure, superior, & unsurpassed, they all enter and remain in this very same emptiness that is pure, superior, & unsurpassed.

“Therefore, Ānanda, you should train yourselves: ‘We will enter and remain in the emptiness that is pure, superior, & unsurpassed.’” — [*MN 121*](#)

“Freed, dissociated, & released from ten things, Vāhuna, the Tathāgata dwells with unrestricted awareness. Which ten? Freed, dissociated, & released from form, the Tathāgata dwells with unrestricted awareness. Freed, dissociated, & released from feeling... Freed, dissociated, & released from perception... Freed, dissociated, & released from fabrications... Freed, dissociated, & released from consciousness... Freed, dissociated, & released from birth... Freed, dissociated, & released from aging... Freed, dissociated, & released from death... Freed, dissociated, & released from stress... Freed, dissociated, & released from defilement, the Tathāgata dwells with unrestricted awareness.

“Just as a red, blue, or white lotus born in the water and growing in the water, rises up above the water and stands with no water adhering to it, in the same way, the Tathāgata—freed, dissociated, & released from these ten things—dwells with unrestricted awareness.” — [*AN 10:81*](#)

The mindful keep active,
don't delight in settling back.
They renounce every home,
 every home,
like swans taking off from a lake. — [*Dhp 91*](#)

Effluents ended,
independent of nutriment,
their pasture—emptiness
& freedom without sign:
 Their trail,
like that of birds through space,
 can't be traced. — [*Dhp 93*](#)

Portraits of the Buddha

The Canon, in its narratives of the Buddha's actions, reveals a great deal about his personality and character. But there are a few instances where it provides more personal observations that give a sense of what it would have been like to have met him.

For instance, as we have seen, several of the narratives make passing reference to the fact that he was handsome. Apparently he was so attractive that even those smitten with their own beauty were awed by his:

Jenta, the Royal Chaplain's Son:

I was
drunk with the intoxication
of my birth, wealth, & sovereignty.
Drunk with the intoxication
of my body's build, coloring, & form,
I wandered about,
regarding no one
as my equal or better:
 foolish, arrogant, haughty,
 my banner held high.

I—disrespectful, arrogant, proud—
bowed down to no one,
not even mother,
 father,
or those commonly held
in respect.

Then—seeing the ultimate leader,
supreme, foremost of charioteers,
 like a blazing sun,
arrayed with a squadron of monks—
casting away pride & intoxication

through an awareness serene & clear,
I bowed down
my
head
to him, supreme
among all living beings. — [*Thag 6:9*](#)

The Canon contains only a few descriptions of the Buddha's day-to-day behavior and manners. The following account of his manners is especially interesting in that it comes from a brahman who had no ulterior motive to regard him in a positive light.

[The student Uttara is talking to his teacher, the brahman Brahmāyu:] “When walking, Master Gotama steps with his right foot first. He doesn't extend his foot too far or place it down too near. He walks neither too quickly nor too slowly. He walks without knocking his knees together or knocking his ankles together. He walks without raising or lowering his thighs, without pinching them together or spreading them apart. When he walks, only the lower part of his body moves, and he walks without bodily effort. When turning to look, he turns to look with his entire body. He doesn't look straight up or straight down. He walks without glancing around. He gazes a plow's length before him; beyond that, he has unhindered knowledge & vision.

“When going indoors, he doesn't raise or lower his body, bend it forward or back. He turns around neither too far from the seat nor too close. He doesn't lean on his seat with his hand. He doesn't plunk his body down on the seat.

“Seated indoors, he doesn't fidget with his hands or his feet. He doesn't sit with his knees crossed or with his ankles crossed. He doesn't sit with his hand holding his chin.

“Seated indoors, he isn't fearful, doesn't shiver, doesn't tremble, isn't nervous. Being unfearful, not shivering, not trembling, not nervous, he—without his hair standing on end—is intent on seclusion.

“When receiving bowl-water, he doesn't raise or lower the bowl, tip it forward or back. He receives neither too little nor too much bowl-water. He washes the bowl without making a sloshing sound. He washes the bowl without turning it over. He doesn't wash his hands having put the bowl on the ground. When his hands are washed, the bowl is washed. When the bowl is

washed, his hands are washed. He pours the bowl-water not too near, not too far, and without splashing.

“When receiving rice, he doesn’t raise or lower the bowl, tip it forward or back. He receives neither too little nor too much rice. He also receives curry, taking curry in the proper proportion. He doesn’t put too much curry in his mouthful. Having turned the mouthful over two or three times in his mouth, he swallows it. No unchewed rice grain enters his body; no rice grain remains in his mouth. Then he takes another mouthful. He takes his food experiencing the taste but not experiencing passion for the taste.

“Master Gotama eats food endowed with eight factors: 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.’

“When he has finished his meal and receives bowl-water, he doesn’t raise or lower the bowl, tip it forward or back. He receives neither too little nor too much bowl-water. He washes the bowl without making a sloshing sound. He washes the bowl without turning it over. He doesn’t wash his hands having put the bowl on the ground. When his hands are washed, the bowl is washed. When the bowl is washed, his hands are washed. He pours the bowl-water not too near, not too far, and without splashing.... He puts his bowl on the floor, not too near, not too far. He isn’t careless of the bowl, nor overly solicitous about it.... He sits in silence for a moment, but doesn’t exceed the time for the *anumodanā* [after-the-meal talk].... He gives the *anumodanā*, doesn’t criticize the meal, doesn’t expect another meal. He instructs, urges, rouses, & encourages the gathering with a talk purely on Dhamma. Having done so, he rises from his seat and departs. He walks neither too quickly nor too slowly, nor does he desire to get away.

“His robe is worn not too high on his body, not too low on his body, not too tight or too loose on his body. The wind doesn’t blow his robe away from his body. Dust & dirt don’t soil his body.

“Having gone to the monastery, he sits on a seat laid out. Seated, he washes his feet, but he doesn’t occupy himself with grooming his feet. Having washed his feet, he sits with his legs folded, sets his body erect, and sets mindfulness to the fore. He doesn’t set his mind on his own affliction, the affliction of others,

or the affliction of both. He sits setting his mind on his own welfare, the welfare of others, the welfare of both—even the welfare of the entire cosmos.

“Having gone to the monastery, he teaches Dhamma to the gathering. He neither flatters nor berates the gathering. He instructs, urges, rouses, & encourages the gathering with a talk purely on Dhamma. The voice that issues from his mouth is endowed with eight qualities: It is distinct, intelligible, melodious, audible, ringing, focused, deep, & resonant. But although his voice is intelligible to the gathering, the sound of his voice doesn’t extend outside the gathering. Those who have been instructed, urged, roused, & encouraged by his Dhamma talk rise from their seats and leave, looking only at him and concerned with nothing else.

“We have seen Master Gotama walking, sir, we have seen him standing, we have seen him entering indoors, we have seen him sitting in silence indoors, we have seen him eating indoors, we have seen him sitting in silence after eating, we have seen him giving the anumodanā after eating, we have seen him returning to the monastery, we have seen him sitting in silence after going to the monastery, we have seen him teaching the Dhamma to a gathering in the monastery. He is like that—like that and more than that.” — [MN 91](#)

That “more than that” is hard to measure. After all, as the Buddha himself noted, people are measured and defined by their obsessions and attachments. Being devoid of such things, the Buddha lay beyond measure and definition.

At that time the Blessed One was staying near Sāvattthī in Jeta’s Forest, Anāthapiṇḍika’s monastery. Then Ven. Rādhā went to the Blessed One and, on arrival, having bowed down to him, sat to one side. As he was sitting there he said to the Blessed One: “A being,’ lord. ‘A being,’ it’s said. To what extent is one said to be ‘a being’?”

“Any desire, passion, delight, or craving for form, Rādhā: When one is caught up [*satta*] there, tied up [*visatta*] there, one is said to be ‘a being [*satta*].

“Any desire, passion, delight, or craving for feeling... perception... fabrications... consciousness, Rādhā: When one is caught up [*satta*] there, tied up [*visatta*] there, one is said to be ‘a being [*satta*].” — [SN 23:2](#)

“If one stays obsessed with form, that’s what one is measured/limited by. Whatever one is measured by, that’s how one is classified.

“If one stays obsessed with feeling... perception... fabrications... consciousness, that’s what one is measured by. Whatever one is measured by, that’s how one is classified.

“But if one doesn’t stay obsessed with form... feeling... perception... fabrications... consciousness, that’s not what one is measured by. Whatever one isn’t measured by, that’s not how one is classified.” — [*SN 22:36*](#)

It’s for these reasons that the Buddha repeatedly insisted that an arahant after death can not be described in any way at all, because he cannot even be pinpointed or defined in the present life.

Then Ven. Anurādha went to the Blessed One and, on arrival, having bowed down to him, sat to one side. As he was sitting there, he said to the Blessed One: “Just now I was staying not far from the Blessed One in a wilderness hut. Then a large number of wandering sectarians came and.... said to me, ‘Friend Anurādha, the Tathāgata—the supreme man, the superlative man, attainer of the superlative attainment—being described, is described with (one of) these four positions: The Tathāgata exists after death, does not exist after death, both does & does not exist after death, neither exists nor does not exist after death.’

“When this was said, I said to them, ‘Friends, the Tathāgata—the supreme man, the superlative man, attainer of the superlative attainment—being described, is described otherwise than with these four positions...’

“When this was said, the wandering sectarians said to me, ‘This monk is either a newcomer, not long gone forth, or else an elder who is foolish & inexperienced.’ So, addressing me as they would a newcomer or a fool, they got up from their seats and left.

“Then not long after the wandering sectarians had left, this thought occurred to me: ‘If I am questioned again by those wandering sectarians, how will I answer in such a way that I will speak in line with what the Blessed One has said, will not slander the Blessed One with what is unfactual, will answer in line with the Dhamma, and no one whose thinking is in line with the Dhamma will have grounds for criticizing me?’”...

“What do you think, Anurādha? Do you regard form as the Tathāgata?”
“No, lord.”

“Do you regard feeling as the Tathāgata?” “No, lord.”

“Do you regard perception as the Tathāgata?” “No, lord.”

“Do you regard fabrications as the Tathāgata?” “No, lord.”

“Do you regard consciousness as the Tathāgata?” “No, lord.”

“What do you think, Anurādha? Do you regard the Tathāgata as being in form? ... Elsewhere than form? ... In feeling? ... Elsewhere than feeling? ... In perception? ... Elsewhere than perception? ... In fabrications? ... Elsewhere than fabrications? ... In consciousness? ... Elsewhere than consciousness?”

“No, lord.”

“What do you think, Anurādha? Do you regard the Tathāgata as form-feeling-perception-fabrications-consciousness?”

“No, lord.”

“Do you regard the Tathāgata as that which is without form, without feeling, without perception, without fabrications, without consciousness?”

“No, lord.”

“And so, Anurādha—when you can’t pin down the Tathāgata as a truth or reality even in the present life—is it proper for you to declare, ‘Friends, the Tathāgata—the supreme man, the superlative man, attainer of the superlative attainment—being described, is described otherwise than with these four positions: The Tathāgata exists after death, does not exist after death, both does & does not exist after death, neither exists nor does not exist after death?’”

“No, lord.”

“Very good, Anurādha. Very good. Both formerly & now, it is only stress that I describe, and the cessation of stress.” — [*SN 22:86*](#)

[Sister Khemā is addressing King Pasenadi:] “What do you think, great king? Do you have an accountant or calculator or mathematician who can count the grains of sand in the River Ganges as ‘so many grains of sand’ or ‘so many hundreds of grains of sand’ or ‘so many thousands of grains of sand’ or ‘so many hundreds of thousands of grains of sand’?”

“No, lady.”

“Then do you have an accountant or calculator or mathematician who can count the water in the great ocean as ‘so many buckets of water’ or ‘so many hundreds of buckets of water’ or ‘so many thousands of buckets of water’ or ‘so many hundreds of thousands of buckets of water’?”

“No, lady. Why is that? The great ocean is deep, boundless, hard to fathom.”

“Even so, great king, any form... feeling... perception... fabrications... consciousness by which one describing the Tathāgata would describe him: That the Tathāgata has abandoned, its root destroyed, made like a palmyra stump, deprived of the conditions of development, not destined for future arising. Freed from the classification of form... feeling... perception... fabrications... consciousness, great king, the Tathāgata is deep, boundless, hard to fathom, like the ocean. ‘The Tathāgata exists after death’ doesn’t apply. ‘The Tathāgata doesn’t exist after death’ doesn’t apply. ‘The Tathāgata both exists and doesn’t exist after death’ doesn’t apply. ‘The Tathāgata neither exists nor doesn’t exist after death’ doesn’t apply.” — [SN 44:1](#)

Although the Buddha cannot be adequately described in terms of what he *is*, he can be described in terms of what he *does* and has done.

This was said by the Blessed One, said by the Arahant, so I have heard:

“Monks, the cosmos^{[125](#)} has been fully awakened to by the Tathāgata. From the cosmos, the Tathāgata is disjoined. The origination of the cosmos has been fully awakened to by the Tathāgata. The origination of the cosmos has, by the Tathāgata, been abandoned. The cessation of the cosmos has been fully awakened to by the Tathāgata. The cessation of the cosmos has, by the Tathāgata, been realized. The path leading to the cessation of the cosmos has been fully awakened to by the Tathāgata. The path leading to the cessation of the cosmos has, by the Tathāgata, been developed.

“Whatever—in this cosmos with its devas, Māras, & Brahmās, in this generation with its contemplatives & brahmans, its royalty & common people—is seen, heard, sensed, cognized, attained, sought after, pondered by the intellect, that has been fully awakened to by the Tathāgata. Thus he is called the Tathāgata.

“From the night the Tathāgata fully awakens to the unsurpassed Right Self-awakening to the night he is totally unbound in the unbinding property with no fuel remaining,^{[126](#)} whatever the Tathāgata has said, spoken, explained is just so [*tatha*] and not otherwise. Thus he is called the Tathāgata.

“The Tathāgata is one who does in line with [*tathā*] what he teaches, one who teaches in line with what he does. Because he is one who does in line with what he teaches, one who teaches in line with what he does, he is thus called the Tathāgata.

“In this cosmos with its devas, Māras, & Brahmās, in this generation with its contemplatives & brahmans, its royalty & common people, the Tathāgata is the unconquered conqueror, total seer, wielder of power. Thus he is called the Tathāgata.”

This is the meaning of what the Blessed One said. So with regard to this it was said:

Directly knowing the entire cosmos,
all the cosmos as it really is,
from all the cosmos disjoined,
in all the cosmos unmatched.

Conquering all,
in all ways
enlightened,
released from all bonds,
he touches the foremost peace:
unbinding, free
from danger, from fear.

He is
free of effluent,
of trouble,
awakened,
his doubts cut through;
has attained the ending of action,
is released in the destruction of acquisitions.

He is blessed, awakened.
He is a lion, unsurpassed.
In the cosmos with its devas
he set the Brahmā-wheel going.

Thus do devas & human beings
who have gone to the Buddha for refuge,
gathering, pay homage
to the great one, thoroughly mature:
‘Tamed, he’s the best
of those who can be tamed;
calm, the seer

of those who can be calmed;
released, supreme
among those who can be released;
crossed, the foremost
of those who can cross.’

Thus they pay homage
to the great one, thoroughly mature:
‘In this cosmos with its devas,
there’s no one to compare
with you.’ — [*Iti 112*](#)

“Monks, whatever—in this cosmos with its devas, Māras & Brahmās, in this generation with its contemplatives & brahmans, its royalty & common people—is seen, heard, sensed, cognized, attained, sought after, pondered by the intellect: That do I know. Whatever in this cosmos with its devas, Māras & Brahmās; in this generation with its contemplatives & brahmans, its royalty & common people is seen, heard, sensed, cognized, attained, sought after, pondered by the intellect: That I directly know. That has been realized by the Tathāgata, but in the Tathāgata it has not been established.

“If I were to say, ‘I don’t know whatever in this cosmos... is seen, heard, sensed, cognized... pondered by the intellect,’ that would be a falsehood in me. If I were to say, ‘I both know and don’t know whatever in this cosmos... is seen, heard, sensed, cognized... pondered by the intellect,’ that would be just the same. If I were to say, ‘I neither know nor don’t know whatever in this cosmos... is seen, heard, sensed, cognized... pondered by the intellect,’ that would be a fault in me.

“Thus, monks, the Tathāgata, when seeing what is to be seen, doesn’t suppose an (object as) seen. He doesn’t suppose an unseen. He doesn’t suppose an (object) to-be-seen. He doesn’t suppose a seer.

“When hearing... When sensing... When cognizing what is to be cognized, he doesn’t suppose an (object as) cognized. He doesn’t suppose an uncognized. He doesn’t suppose an (object) to-be-cognized. He doesn’t suppose a cognizer.

“Thus, monks, the Tathāgata—being the same with regard to all phenomena that can be seen, heard, sensed, & cognized—is ‘Such.’ And I tell you: There is no other ‘Such’ higher or more sublime.

“Whatever is seen or heard or sensed

and fastened onto as true by others,
One who is Such—among the self-fettered—
would not further claim to be true or even false.

“Having seen well in advance that arrow
where generations are fastened & hung
—‘I know, I see, that’s just how it is!’—
there’s nothing of the Tathāgata fastened.” — [AN 4:24](#)

“Monks, two trains of thought often occur to the Tathāgata, worthy & rightly self-awakened: the thought of safety & that of seclusion.

“The Tathāgata enjoys non-ill will, delights in non-ill will. To him—enjoying non-ill will, delighting in non-ill will—this thought often occurs: ‘By this activity I harm no one at all, whether weak or firm.’

“The Tathāgata enjoys seclusion, delights in seclusion. To him—enjoying seclusion, delighting in seclusion—this thought often occurs: ‘Whatever is unskillful is abandoned.’” — [Iti 38](#)

“Sāriputta, there are these ten Tathāgata-strengths of the Tathāgata, endowed with which the Tathāgata makes known his status as the bull, roars his lion’s roar in the assembly, and sets the Brahmā-wheel in motion. Which ten?

“Here the Tathāgata discerns, as they have come to be, the possible as possible and the impossible as impossible. That the Tathāgata discerns, as they have come to be, the possible as possible and the impossible as impossible: This is a Tathāgata-strength of the Tathāgata, relying on which strength the Tathāgata makes known his status as the bull, roars his lion’s roar in the assembly, and sets the Brahmā-wheel in motion.

“Then again, the Tathāgata discerns, as it has come to be, the ripening—in line with possibilities and causes—of actions undertaken, whether past, future, or present. ...

“Then again, the Tathāgata discerns, as they have come to be, the paths of practice leading to every destination....

“Then again, the Tathāgata discerns, as it has come to be, the world with its many properties, its diverse properties....

“Then again, the Tathāgata discerns, as they have come to be, the diverse inclinations of beings....

“Then again, the Tathāgata discerns, as it has come to be, the (higher or lower) development of the faculties of other beings, other individuals....

“Then again, the Tathāgata discerns, as they have come to be, the defilement, purification, and arising out of the attainments of jhāna, the emancipations, & concentration....

“Then again, the Tathāgata recollects his manifold past lives....

“Then again, the Tathāgata sees—by means of the divine eye, purified and surpassing the human—beings passing away and re-appearing....

“Then again, the Tathāgata—with the ending of effluents—remains in the effluent-free awareness-release & discernment-release, having directly known & realized them for himself right in the here-&-now. That the Tathāgata—with the ending of effluents—remains in the effluent-free awareness-release & discernment-release, having directly known & realized them for himself right in the here-&-now: This is a Tathāgata-strength of the Tathāgata, relying on which strength the Tathāgata makes known his status as the bull, roars his lion’s roar in the assembly, and sets the Brahmā-wheel in motion.

“Sāriputta, these are the ten Tathāgata-strengths of the Tathāgata, endowed with which the Tathāgata makes known his status as the bull, roars his lion’s roar in the assembly, and sets the Brahmā-wheel in motion....

“Sāriputta, the Tathāgata has these four reasons for being undaunted, endowed with which he makes known his status as the bull, roars his lion’s roar in the assembly, and sets the Brahmā-wheel in motion. Which four?

“I can envision no sign by which any contemplative or brahman or deva or Māra or Brahmā or anyone else in the cosmos could, in line with the Dhamma, accuse me thus: ‘Although you claim to be rightly self-awakened, you have not awakened to these dhammas.’ Envisioning no such sign, I dwell in security, fearless & undaunted.

“I can envision no sign by which any contemplative or brahman... or anyone else in the cosmos could, in line with the Dhamma, accuse me thus: ‘Although you claim to have ended the effluents, there are these effluents that you have not ended.’ Envisioning no such sign, I dwell in security, fearless & undaunted.

“I can envision no sign by which any contemplative or brahman... or anyone else in the cosmos could, in line with the Dhamma, accuse me thus: ‘Those actions that you describe as obstructions, when indulged in are not

actually obstructive.’ Envisioning no such sign, I dwell in security, fearless & undaunted.

“I can envision no sign by which any contemplative or brahman... or anyone else in the cosmos could, in line with the Dhamma, accuse me thus: ‘Whenever your Dhamma is taught for anyone’s sake, it doesn’t lead those who act on it to the right ending of suffering & stress.’ Envisioning no such sign, I dwell in security, fearless & undaunted.

“Sāriputta, the Tathāgata has these four reasons for being undaunted, endowed with which he makes known his status as the bull, roars his lion’s roar in the assembly, and sets the Brahmā-wheel in motion” — [MN 12](#)

The Buddha’s main reason for addressing assemblies was to teach. Even though, after his awakening, he was no longer consistent in living the austere, secluded life that had led to his awakening, his many powers and strengths of character were enough to command the respect of his students.

[Sakuludāyin the wanderer is reporting to the Buddha what he has heard from other wanderers:] “Once, Gotama the contemplative was teaching the Dhamma to an assembly of many hundreds. There one of his disciples cleared his throat, upon which one of his fellows in the holy life nudged him with his knee: “Be quiet, venerable sir. Don’t make a sound. Our Teacher, the Blessed One, is teaching the Dhamma.”... Just as if a man at a crossroads were to press out pure honey, and a great crowd of people would be standing by in expectancy, in the same way, on any occasion when Gotama the contemplative is teaching the Dhamma to an assembly of many hundreds, there is no sound of coughing or throat-clearing among his disciples. Instead, that great crowd of people is standing by in expectancy: “We will hear the Dhamma the Blessed One will teach.”

“And even those of Gotama the contemplative’s disciples who, having fallen out with their fellows in the holy life, disavow the training and return to the lower life, even they speak in praise of their Teacher, in praise of the Dhamma, in praise of the Saṅgha. They blame themselves, and not others, (saying,) “We were unfortunate and without merit, in that even though we went forth into such a well taught Dhamma & Vinaya, we were unable to follow the holy life, complete and perfect, throughout life.” Becoming monastery attendants or lay followers, they undertake and observe the five training rules. In this way,

Gotama the contemplative is honored, respected, revered, and worshiped by his disciples. And his disciples, honoring & respecting him, remain in dependence on him.”

“But, Udāyin, how many qualities do you see in me for which my disciples honor, respect, revere, and worship me and—honoring & respecting me—remain in dependence on me?”

“Lord, I see five qualities in the Blessed One.... Which five? The Blessed One eats little and speaks in praise of eating little.... The Blessed One is content with any old robe cloth at all and speaks in praise of being content with any old robe cloth at all.... The Blessed One is content with any old almsfood at all and speaks in praise of being content with any old almsfood at all.... The Blessed One is content with any old lodging at all and speaks in praise of being content with any old lodging at all.... The Blessed One is secluded and speaks in praise of being secluded.... These are the five qualities I see in the Blessed One for which his disciples honor, respect, revere, and worship him and—honoring & respecting him—remain in dependence on him.”

“But, Udāyin,... there are disciples of mine who eat a cupful or half a cupful of food, a bamboo-fruit or half a bamboo-fruit (amount) of food (a day). Yet I sometimes eat as much as this bowlful of food or more. So if my disciples honored... me, (thinking,) ‘The Blessed One eats little and speaks in praise of eating little,’ then those disciples of mine who eat a cupful or half a cupful of food, a bamboo-fruit or half a bamboo-fruit (amount) of food (a day) wouldn’t honor, respect, revere, or worship me or—honoring & respecting me—remain in dependence on me....

“There are disciples of mine who wear coarse robes of cast-off cloth. They—gathering cloth scraps from a charnel ground, a rubbish heap, or a shop, and making them into patched-together robes—wear them. Yet I sometimes wear robes donated by householders, so fine that the hair of a bottle gourd plant is coarse in comparison. So if my disciples honored... me, (thinking,) ‘The Blessed One is content with any old robe cloth at all and speaks in praise of being content with any old robe cloth at all,’ then those disciples of mine who wear coarse robes of cast-off cloth wouldn’t honor, respect, revere, or worship me or—honoring & respecting me—remain in dependence on me....

“There are disciples of mine who are almsgoers, who go on unbroken almsround (not skipping over households), who delight in the practice of taking what is to be thrown away. When going among houses, they will not

consent even to sitting down when invited. Yet I sometimes eat invitational meals of select rice & wheat with many curries & sauces. So if my disciples honored... me, (thinking,) ‘The Blessed One is content with any old almsfood at all and speaks in praise of being content with any old almsfood at all,’ then those disciples of mine who are almsgoers... wouldn’t honor, respect, revere, or worship me or—honoring & respecting me—remain in dependence on me....

“There are disciples of mine who live at the roots of trees or in the open air. For eight months (of the dry season) they don’t rest under a roof. Yet I sometimes live in dwellings with a gabled roof, plastered inside & out, draft-free, with a close-fitting door & windows shut against the wind. So if my disciples honored... me, (thinking,) ‘The Blessed One is content with any old lodging at all and speaks in praise of being content with any old lodging at all,’ then those disciples of mine who live at the roots of trees or in the open air... wouldn’t honor, respect, revere, or worship me or—honoring & respecting me—remain in dependence on me....

“There are disciples of mine who are wilderness dwellers, who live, having plunged into remote dwelling spots, in wild forest thickets. Only once every half-month do they enter into the midst of the Saṅgha for the Pāṭimokkha recitation. Yet I sometimes live surrounded by monks & nuns, male lay followers & female lay followers, kings & kings’ ministers, sectarians & sectarians’ disciples. So if my disciples honored... me, (thinking,) ‘The Blessed One is secluded and speaks in praise of being secluded,’ then those disciples of mine who are wilderness dwellers... wouldn’t honor, respect, revere, or worship me or—honoring & respecting me—remain in dependence on me.

“There are, Udāyin, five other qualities for which my disciples honor, respect, revere, and worship me and—honoring & respecting me—remain in dependence on me. Which five?

“There is the case where my disciples esteem me for my heightened virtue, (thinking,) ‘Gotama the contemplative is virtuous, endowed with the foremost aggregate of virtue.’ This is the first quality....

“Further, there is the case where my disciples esteem me for my exceeding knowledge & vision, (thinking,) ‘Only when knowing does Gotama the contemplative say, “I know.” Only when seeing does he say, “I see.” It’s through direct knowledge that he teaches the Dhamma, not without direct knowledge. It’s with a cause that he teaches the Dhamma, not without a cause. It’s with

marvels that he teaches the Dhamma, not without marvels.’¹²⁷ This is the second quality....

“Further, there is the case where my disciples esteem me for my heightened discernment, (thinking,) ‘Gotama the contemplative is discerning, endowed with the foremost aggregate of discernment.’ It’s impossible that he wouldn’t foresee the future consequences of a doctrine, or that he wouldn’t refute an existing opposing doctrine, having well refuted it in line with the Dhamma.’ What do you think, Udāyin? Would my disciples—thus knowing, thus seeing—interrupt me in mid-sentence?”

“No, lord.”

“It’s not the case that I expect instruction from my disciples. Invariably, they expect instruction from me.” This is the third quality....

“Further, when my disciples have met with stress, are beset with stress & overcome with stress, they—having approached me—ask about the noble truth of stress. I, being asked, explain the noble truth of stress and I satisfy their minds with my answer. They ask me about the noble truth of the origination of stress... the noble truth of the cessation of stress... the noble truth of the path of practice leading to the cessation of stress. I, being asked, explain the noble truth of the path of practice leading to the cessation of stress and I satisfy their minds with my answer. This is the fourth quality....

“Further, I have pointed out to my disciples the path of practice, practicing in line with which they develop the four establishings of mindfulness... the four right exertions... the four bases of power... the five faculties... the five strengths... the seven factors for awakening... the noble eightfold path... the eight emancipations¹²⁸ ... the eight dimensions of (mental) mastery... the ten totality-dimensions¹²⁹ ... the four jhānas...

“Further, I have pointed out to my disciples the path of practice, practicing in line with which they discern, ‘This body of mine is endowed with form, composed of the four primary elements, born from mother & father, nourished with rice & porridge, subject to inconstancy, rubbing, pressing, dissolution, & dispersion. And this consciousness of mine is supported here and bound up here’...

“Further, I have pointed out to my disciples the path of practice, practicing in line with which they create from this body another body, endowed with form, made of the mind, complete in all its parts, not inferior in its

faculties¹³⁰ ... they wield manifold supranormal powers... they hear—by means of the divine ear-element, purified and surpassing the human—both kinds of sounds: divine & human, whether near or far... they know the awareness of other beings, other individuals, having encompassed it with their own awareness... they recollect their manifold past lives... they see—by means of the divine eye, purified & surpassing the human—beings passing away & re-appearing, and they discern how they are inferior & superior, beautiful & ugly, fortunate & unfortunate in accordance with their kamma....

“Further, I have pointed out to my disciples the path of practice, practicing in line with which they—through the ending of the effluents—enter and remain in the effluent-free awareness-release & discernment-release, having directly known & realized them for themselves right in the here-&-now. And there many of my disciples remain, having attained the perfection & consummation of direct knowledge.... This is the fifth quality for which my disciples honor, respect, revere, and worship me and—honoring & respecting me—remain in dependence on me.”...

That is what the Blessed One said. Gratified, Sakuludāyin the wanderer delighted in the Blessed One’s words. — [MN 77](#)

The Buddha’s two main accomplishments after his awakening—helping others get on the path to awakening and establishing the Dhamma and Vinaya so that the True Dhamma would last a long time—required that he teach. So it’s useful to understand his pedagogy: his own perspective on what these activities required of him, and what he could expect to accomplish.

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

“The Dhamma should be taught with the thought, ‘I will speak step-by-step.’ The Dhamma should be taught with the thought, ‘I will speak explaining the sequence [of cause & effect].’ The Dhamma should be taught with the thought, ‘I will speak out of kindness.’ The Dhamma should be taught with the thought, ‘I will speak not for the purpose of material reward.’ The Dhamma should be taught with the thought, ‘I will speak without hurting myself or others.’

“It’s not easy to teach the Dhamma to others, Ānanda. The Dhamma should be taught to others only when these five qualities are established within the person teaching.” — [AN 5:159](#)

The Buddha was exceedingly strict in observing the fourth principle: teaching not for the purpose of material reward.

I have heard that on one occasion the Blessed One was living among the Magadhans in the Southern Mountains in the brahman village of Ekanālā. Now at that time approximately five hundred of the brahman Kasi (Plowing) Bhāradvāja’s plows were yoked at the sowing time. Then, in the early morning—having adjusted his under robe and carrying his bowl & outer robe—the Blessed One went to where Kasi Bhāradvāja was working. Now at that time Kasi Bhāradvāja’s food distribution was underway. So the Blessed One went to Kasi Bhāradvāja’s food-distribution and, on arrival, stood to one side. Kasi Bhāradvāja saw the Blessed One standing for alms, and on seeing him, said to him, “I, contemplative, plow & sow. Having plowed & sown, I eat. You, too, contemplative, should plow & sow. Having plowed & sown, you (will) eat.”

“I, too, brahman, plow & sow. Having plowed & sown, I eat.”

“But, contemplative, I don’t see the Master Gotama’s yoke or plow, plowshare, goad, or oxen, and yet the Master Gotama says this: ‘I, too, brahman, plow & sow. Having plowed & sown, I eat.’”

Then Kasi Bhāradvāja addressed the Blessed One with a verse:

You claim to be a plowman,
but we don’t see your plowing.
Being asked, tell us about your plowing
so that we may know your plowing.

The Buddha:

Conviction’s my seed,
austerity my rain,
discernment my yoke & plow,
shame my pole,
mind my yoke-tie,
mindfulness my plowshare & goad.
Guarded in body,

guarded in speech,
restrained in terms of belly & food,
 I make truth a weeding-hook,
 and composure my unyoking.
Persistence, my beast of burden,
bearing me toward rest from the yoke,
takes me, without turning back,
to where, having gone,
one doesn't grieve.
That's how my plowing is plowed.
 It has
 as its fruit
 the deathless.
Having plowed this plowing
 one is unyoked
 from all suffering
 & stress.

Then Kasi Bhāradvāja, having heaped up milk-rice in a large bronze serving bowl, offered it to the Blessed One, (saying,) “May Master Gotama eat (this) milk-rice. The master is a plowman, for the Master Gotama plows the plowing that has as its fruit the deathless.”

The Buddha:

What's been chanted over with verses
shouldn't be eaten by me. [131](#)
That's not the nature, brahman,
of one who's seen rightly.
What's been chanted over with verses
Awakened Ones reject.
 That being their Dhamma, brahman,
 this is their way of life.
Serve with other food & drink
a fully-perfected great seer,
 his effluents ended,
 his anxiety stilled,
for that is the field

for one looking for merit.”

“Then to whom, Master Gotama, should I give this milk-rice?”

“Brahman, I don’t see that person in this cosmos—with its devas, Māras, & Brahmās, in this generation with its contemplatives & brahmans, its royalty & common people—by whom this milk-rice, having been eaten, would be rightly digested, aside from a Tathāgata or a Tathāgata’s disciple. In that case, brahman, throw the milk-rice away in a place without vegetation, or dump it in water with no living beings.”

So Kasi Bhāradvāja dumped the milk-rice in water with no living beings. And the milk-rice, when dropped in the water, hissed & sizzled, seethed & steamed. Just as an iron ball heated all day, when tossed in the water, hisses & sizzles, seethes & steams, in the same way, the milk-rice, when dropped in the water, hissed & sizzled, seethed & steamed.

Then Kasi Bhāradvāja—in awe, his hair standing on end—went to the Blessed One and, on arrival, throwing himself down with his head at the Blessed One’s feet, said to him, “Magnificent, Master Gotama! Magnificent! ... Let me obtain the Going-forth in Master Gotama’s presence, let me obtain Acceptance.”

Then the brahman Kasi Bhāradvāja obtained the Going-forth in the Blessed One’s presence, he obtained Acceptance. And not long after his admission—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 so Ven. Bhāradvāja became another one of the arahants. — [*Sn 1:4*](#)

Asibandhakaputta the headman said to the Blessed One, “Lord, doesn’t the Blessed One dwell with sympathy for the benefit of all beings?”

“Yes, headman, the Tathāgata dwells with sympathy for the benefit of all beings.”

“Then why is it that the Blessed One teaches the Dhamma with full attentiveness to some, and not with full attentiveness to others?”

“Very well then, headman, I will cross-question you on this matter. Answer as you see fit. What do you think? There is the case where a farming

householder has three fields: one excellent field, one middling, and one poor—sandy, salty, with bad soil. What do you think? If that farming householder wanted to sow seed, where would he sow the seed first: in the excellent field, in the middling field, or in the poor field—sandy, salty, with bad soil?”

“If that farming householder wanted to sow seed, he would sow the seed first in the excellent field. Having sown it there, he would sow it in the middling field. Having sown it there, he might not sow it in the poor field—sandy, salty, with bad soil—or he might. Why is that? It would at least go toward cattle fodder.”

“In the same way, headman, like the excellent field are the monks & nuns to me. I teach them the Dhamma that is admirable in the beginning, admirable in the middle, admirable in the end. I proclaim to them the holy life both in its particulars & in its meaning, entirely complete, surpassingly pure. Why is that? Because they live with me as their island, with me as their cave, with me as their shelter, with me as their refuge.

“Like the middling field are the male & female lay followers to me. I teach them the Dhamma.... Why is that? Because they live with me as their island, with me as their cave, with me as their shelter, with me as their refuge.

“Like the poor field—sandy, salty, with bad soil—are the followers of other sects to me: contemplatives, brahmans, & wanderers. I teach them the Dhamma.... Why is that? (I think,) ‘Perhaps they might understand even one sentence. That will be for their long-term benefit & happiness.’” — [*SN 42:7*](#)

Although the Buddha expected his following to listen to him with respect, he was at the same time open to questions. In fact, this openness to cross-questioning on the Dhamma and Vinaya was one of the distinctive features of the early Saṅgha.

“Monks, there are these two assemblies. Which two? The assembly trained in bombast and not in cross-questioning, and the assembly trained in cross-questioning and not in bombast.

“And which is the assembly trained in bombast and not in cross-questioning?

“There is the case where in any assembly when the discourses of the Tathāgata—deep, deep in their meaning, transcendent, connected with emptiness—are recited, the monks don’t listen, don’t lend ear, don’t set their

hearts on knowing them, don't regard them as worth grasping or mastering. But when discourses that are literary works—the works of poets, elegant in sound, elegant in rhetoric, the work of outsiders, words of disciples—are recited, they listen, they lend ear, they set their hearts on knowing them, they regard them as worth grasping & mastering. Yet when they have mastered that Dhamma, they don't cross-question one another about it, don't dissect: 'How is this? What is the meaning of this?' They don't make open what isn't open, don't make plain what isn't plain, don't dispel doubt on its various doubtful points. This is called an assembly trained in bombast, not in cross-questioning.

“And which is the assembly trained in cross-questioning and not in bombast?

“There is the case where in any assembly when discourses that are literary works—the works of poets, elegant in sound, elegant in rhetoric, the work of outsiders, words of disciples—are recited, the monks don't listen, don't lend ear, don't set their hearts on knowing them; don't regard them as worth grasping or mastering. But when the discourses of the Tathāgata—deep, deep in their meaning, transcendent, connected with emptiness—are recited, they listen, they lend ear, they set their hearts on knowing them, they regard them as worth grasping & mastering. And when they have mastered that Dhamma, they cross-question one another about it and dissect it: 'How is this? What is the meaning of this?' They make open what isn't open, make plain what isn't plain, dispel doubt on its various doubtful points. This is called an assembly trained in cross-questioning and not in bombast.” — [AN 2:46](#)

Despite the ideal conditions for learning that the Buddha established with his pedagogy, he knew that not all his listeners would be in a position to benefit immediately from his instructions. For that reason, a skilled teacher, in his eyes, needed to cultivate the proper attitude toward the duty of teaching.

“Endowed with these six qualities, a person is incapable of alighting on the lawfulness, the rightness of skillful qualities even when listening to the true Dhamma. Which six?

“He is endowed with a (present) kamma obstruction, a defilement obstruction, a result-of-(past)-kamma obstruction; he lacks conviction, has no desire (to listen), and has dull discernment.” — [AN 6:86](#)

“There are these three types of sick people to be found existing in the world. Which three?

“There is the case of the sick person who—regardless of whether he does or does not receive amenable food, regardless of whether he does or does not receive amenable medicine, regardless of whether he does or does not receive proper nursing—will not recover from that illness. There is the case of the sick person who—regardless of whether he does or does not receive amenable food, regardless of whether he does or does not receive amenable medicine, regardless of whether he does or does not receive proper nursing—will recover from that illness. There is the case of the sick person who will recover from that illness if he receives amenable food, amenable medicine, & proper nursing, but not if he doesn’t.

“Now, it is because of the sick person who will recover from that illness if he receives amenable food, amenable medicine, & proper nursing—but not if he doesn’t—that food for the sick has been allowed, medicine for the sick has been allowed, nursing for the sick has been allowed. And it is because there is this sort of sick person that the other sorts of sick persons are to be nursed as well.

“These are the three types of sick people to be found existing in the world.

“In the same way, these three types of people, like the three types of sick people, are to be found existing in the world. Which three?

“There is the case of the person who—regardless of whether he does or doesn’t get to see the Tathāgata, regardless of whether he does or doesn’t get to hear the Dhamma & Vinaya proclaimed by the Tathāgata—will not alight on the lawfulness, the rightness of skillful qualities. There is the case of the person who—regardless of whether he does or doesn’t get to see the Tathāgata, regardless of whether he does or doesn’t get to hear the Dhamma & Vinaya proclaimed by the Tathāgata—will alight on the lawfulness, the rightness of skillful qualities. There is the case of the person who will alight on the lawfulness, the rightness of skillful qualities if he gets to see the Tathāgata and gets to hear the Dhamma & Vinaya proclaimed by the Tathāgata, but not if he doesn’t.

“Now, it is because of the person who will alight on the lawfulness, the rightness of skillful qualities if he gets to see the Tathāgata and gets to hear the Dhamma & Vinaya proclaimed by the Tathāgata—but not if he doesn’t—that the teaching of the Dhamma has been allowed. And it is because there is this

sort of person that the other sorts of persons are to be taught the Dhamma as well.

“These are the three types of people, like the three types of sick people, to be found existing in the world.” — [AN 3:22](#)

Gaṇaka Moggallāna the brahman said to the Blessed One, “When Master Gotama’s disciples are thus exhorted & instructed by him, do they all attain unbinding, the absolute conclusion, or do some of them not?”

“Brahman, when my disciples are thus exhorted & instructed by me, some attain unbinding, the absolute conclusion, and some don’t.”

“What is the reason, what is the cause—when unbinding is there, and the path leading to unbinding is there, and Master Gotama is there as the guide—that when Master Gotama’s disciples are thus exhorted & instructed by him, some attain unbinding, the absolute conclusion, and some don’t?”

“Very well then, brahman, I will cross-question you on this matter. Answer as you see fit. What do you think? Are you skilled in the road leading to Rājagaha?”

“Yes, sir, I am skilled in the road leading to Rājagaha.”

“Now, what do you think? There’s the case where a man would come, wanting to go to Rājagaha. Having come to you, he would say, ‘I want to go to Rājagaha. Tell me the way to Rājagaha.’ You would tell him, ‘Well, my good man, this road goes to Rājagaha. Go along it for a while. Having gone along for a while, you will see a village named such-&-such. Go along for a while. Having gone along for a while, you will see a town named such-&-such. Go along for a while. Having gone along for a while, you will see Rājagaha with its lovely parks, lovely forests, lovely meadows, lovely ponds.’ Having been thus exhorted & instructed by you, he would take a wrong road and arrive out west.

“Then a second man would come, wanting to go to Rājagaha. Having come to you, he would say, ‘I want to go to Rājagaha. Tell me the way to Rājagaha.’ You would tell him, ‘Well, my good man, this road goes to Rājagaha. Go along it for a while. Having gone along for a while, you will see a village named such-&-such. Go along for a while. Having gone along for a while, you will see a town named such-&-such. Go along for a while. Having gone along for a while, you will see Rājagaha with its lovely parks, lovely forests, lovely meadows, lovely ponds. Having been thus exhorted & instructed by you, he would arrive safely at Rājagaha. Now, what is the reason, what is the cause—when Rājagaha

is there, and the road leading to Rājagaha is there, and you are there as the guide—that when they are thus exhorted & instructed by you, the first man takes the wrong road and arrives out west, whereas the second man arrives safely at Rājagaha?”

“What can I do about that, Master Gotama? I’m the one who shows the way.”

“In the same way, brahman—when unbinding is there, and the path leading to unbinding is there, and I am there as the guide—when my disciples are thus exhorted & instructed by me, some attain unbinding, the absolute conclusion, and some don’t. What can I do about that, brahman? The Tathāgata is the one who shows the way.” — [MN 107](#)

[*Uttiya the wanderer:*] “Now, Master Gotama, when having directly known it, you teach the Dhamma to your disciples for the purification of beings, for the overcoming of sorrow & lamentation, for the disappearance of pain & distress, for the attainment of the right method, & for the realization of unbinding, will all the cosmos be led (to release), or a half of it, or a third?”

When this was said, the Blessed One was silent.

Then the thought occurred to Ven. Ānanda: “Don’t let Uttiya the wanderer acquire the evil viewpoint that ‘When I asked him an all-encompassing question, Gotama the contemplative faltered and didn’t reply. Perhaps he was unable to.’ That would be for his long-term harm & suffering.” So he said to Uttiya, “In that case, my friend, I will give you an analogy, for there are cases where it is through the use of analogy that intelligent people can understand the meaning of what is being said.

“Suppose that there were a royal frontier city with strong ramparts, strong walls & arches, and a single gate. In it would be a wise, competent, & intelligent gatekeeper to keep out those he didn’t know and to let in those he did. Walking along the path encircling the city, he wouldn’t see a crack or an opening in the walls big enough for even a cat to slip through. Although he wouldn’t know that ‘So-and-so many creatures enter or leave the city,’ he would know this: ‘Whatever large creatures enter or leave the city all enter or leave it through this gate.’

“In the same way, the Tathāgata doesn’t endeavor to have all the cosmos or half of it or a third of it led (to release) by means of (his Dhamma). But he does know this: ‘All those who have been led, are being led, or will be led (to release)

from the cosmos have done so, are doing so, or will do so after having abandoned the five hindrances¹³²—those defilements of awareness that weaken discernment—having well established their minds in the four establishings of mindfulness, and having developed, as they have come to be, the seven factors for awakening.” — [AN 10:95](#)

Then Kestin the horse trainer went to the Blessed One and, on arrival, having bowed down to him, sat to one side. As he was sitting there, the Blessed One said to him, “You, Kestin, are well known as a trainer of tamable horses. How do you train a tamable horse?”

“Lord, I train a tamable horse (sometimes) with gentleness, (sometimes) with harshness, (sometimes) with both gentleness & harshness.”

“And if a tamable horse doesn’t submit either to a gentle training or to a harsh training or to a gentle & harsh training, Kestin, what do you do?”

“If a tamable horse doesn’t submit either to a gentle training or to a harsh training or to a gentle and harsh training, lord, then I kill it. Why is that? (I think,) ‘Don’t let this be a disgrace to my lineage of teachers.’ But the Blessed One, lord, is the unexcelled trainer of tamable people. How do you train a tamable person?”

“Kestin, I train a tamable person (sometimes) with gentleness, (sometimes) with harshness, (sometimes) with both gentleness & harshness.

“In using gentleness, (I teach,) ‘Such is good bodily conduct. Such is the result of good bodily conduct. Such is good verbal conduct. Such is the result of good verbal conduct. Such is good mental conduct. Such is the result of good mental conduct. Such are the devas. Such are human beings.’

“In using harshness, (I teach,) ‘Such is bodily misconduct. Such is the result of bodily misconduct. Such is verbal misconduct. Such is the result of verbal misconduct. Such is mental misconduct. Such is the result of mental misconduct. Such is hell. Such is the animal womb. Such the realm of the hungry shades.’

“In using gentleness & harshness, (I teach,) ‘Such is good bodily conduct. Such is the result of good bodily conduct. Such is bodily misconduct. Such is the result of bodily misconduct. Such is good verbal conduct. Such is the result of good verbal conduct. Such is verbal misconduct. Such is the result of verbal misconduct. Such is good mental conduct. Such is the result of good mental

conduct. Such is mental misconduct. Such is the result of mental misconduct. Such are the devas. Such are human beings. Such is hell. Such is the animal womb. Such the realm of the hungry shades.”

“And if a tamable person doesn’t submit either to a gentle training or to a harsh training or to a gentle & harsh training, what do you do?”

“If a tamable person doesn’t submit either to a gentle training or to a harsh training or to a gentle & harsh training, then I kill him, Kesin.”

“But it’s not proper for our Blessed One to take life! And yet the Blessed One just said, ‘I kill him, Kesin.’”

“It is true, Kesin, that it’s not proper for a Tathāgata to take life. But if a tamable person doesn’t submit either to a gentle training or to a harsh training or to a gentle & harsh training, then the Tathāgata doesn’t regard him as being worth speaking to or admonishing. His knowledgeable fellows in the holy life don’t regard him as being worth speaking to or admonishing. This is what it means to be totally destroyed in the Dhamma & Vinaya: when the Tathāgata doesn’t regard one as being worth speaking to or admonishing, and one’s knowledgeable fellows in the holy life don’t regard one as being worth speaking to or admonishing.”

“Yes, lord, wouldn’t one be totally destroyed if the Tathāgata doesn’t regard one as being worth speaking to or admonishing, and one’s knowledgeable fellows in the holy life don’t regard one as being worth speaking to or admonishing.” — [AN 4:111](#)

There was one tragic case where the monks actually put the Buddha’s teachings into practice but, because he wasn’t there for them to consult, they ended up using them in a wrong and harmful way.

I have heard that on one occasion the Blessed One was dwelling near Vesālī in the Great Forest, at the Gabled Hall. Now on that occasion the Blessed One, with many lines of reasoning, was giving the monks a talk on the unattractiveness (of the body), was speaking in praise of (the perception of) unattractiveness, was speaking in praise of the development of (the perception of) unattractiveness. Then the Blessed One addressed the monks: “Monks, I wish to go into seclusion for half a month. I am not to be approached by anyone at all except for the one who brings almsfood.”

“As you say, lord,” the monks responded to him. And no one approached the Blessed One except for the one who brought almsfood.

Then the monks—(thinking,) “The Blessed One, with many lines of reasoning, has given a talk on the unattractiveness (of the body), has spoken in praise of (the perception of) unattractiveness, has spoken in praise of the development of (the perception of) unattractiveness”—remained committed to the development of (the perception of) unattractiveness in many modes & manners. They—ashamed, repelled, & disgusted with this body—sought for an assassin. In one day, ten monks took the knife. In one day, twenty monks took the knife. In one day, thirty monks took the knife.

Then the Blessed One, emerging from his seclusion after half a month’s time, said to Ven. Ānanda, “Ānanda, why does the Saṅgha of monks seem so depleted?”

“Because, lord, the Blessed One, with many lines of reasoning, gave the monks a talk on the unattractiveness (of the body), spoke in praise of (the perception of) unattractiveness, spoke in praise of the development of (the perception of) unattractiveness. The monks—(thinking,) ‘The Blessed One, with many lines of reasoning, has given a talk on the unattractiveness (of the body), has spoken in praise of (the perception of) unattractiveness, has spoken in praise of the development of (the perception of) unattractiveness’—remained committed to the development of (the perception of) unattractiveness in many modes & manners. They—ashamed, repelled, & disgusted with this body—sought for an assassin. In one day, ten monks took the knife. In one day, twenty monks took the knife. In one day, thirty monks took the knife. It would be good, lord, if the Blessed One would explain another method so that this Saṅgha of monks might be established in gnosis.”

“In that case, Ānanda, gather in the assembly hall all the monks who live in dependence on Vesālī.”

“As you say, lord,” Ven. Ānanda responded. When he had gathered in the assembly hall all the monks who lived in dependence on Vesālī, he went to the Blessed One and said, “The Saṅgha of monks is gathered, lord. Now is the time to do as the Blessed One sees fit.”

Then the Blessed One went to the assembly hall and sat down on a seat laid out. Seated, he addressed the monks: “Monks, this concentration through mindfulness of in-&-out breathing, when developed & pursued, is both peaceful & exquisite, a refreshing & pleasant abiding that immediately

disperses & allays any evil, unskillful (mental) qualities that have arisen. Just as when, in the last month of the hot season, a great rain-cloud out of season immediately disperses & allays the dust & dirt that have stirred up, in the same way, this concentration through mindfulness of in-&-out breathing, when developed & pursued, is both peaceful & exquisite, a refreshing & pleasant abiding that immediately disperses & allays any evil, unskillful (mental) qualities that have arisen.

“And how is concentration through mindfulness of in-&-out breathing developed & pursued so as to be both peaceful & exquisite, a refreshing & pleasant abiding that immediately disperses & allays any evil, unskillful (mental) qualities that have arisen?

“There is the case where a monk, having gone to the wilderness, to the shade of a tree, or to an empty building, sits down folding his legs crosswise, holding his body erect, and establishing mindfulness to the fore. Always mindful, he breathes in; mindful he breathes out. [Followed by the standard sixteen steps.]” — [SN 54:9](#)

This was not the only case in which the monks misused the teachings—the entire quarrel at Kosambī, discussed in [Chapter 12](#), can be regarded as a misuse of the rules, for the sake of one-upmanship rather than for training. It was because of cases like these that the Buddha insisted that a genuine teacher must develop the right attitude toward his students’ actions.

“‘There are three establishing of mindfulness that a noble one cultivates, cultivating which he is a teacher fit to instruct a group’: Thus was it said. And in reference to what was it said?

“There is the case where the Teacher—out of sympathy, seeking their well-being—teaches the Dhamma to his disciples: ‘This is for your well-being, this is for your happiness.’ His disciples do not listen or lend ear or apply their minds to gnosis. Turning aside, they stray from the Teacher’s message. In this case the Tathāgata is not satisfied nor is he sensitive to satisfaction, yet he remains untroubled, mindful, & alert. This is the first establishing of mindfulness that a noble one cultivates, cultivating which he is a teacher fit to instruct a group.

“And further, there is the case where the Teacher—out of sympathy, seeking their well-being—teaches the Dhamma to his disciples: ‘This is for your well-being, this is for your happiness.’ Some of his disciples do not listen or lend ear

or apply their minds to gnosis. Turning aside, they stray from the Teacher's message. But some of his disciples listen, lend ear, & apply their minds to gnosis. They do not turn aside or stray from the Teacher's message. In this case the Tathāgata is not satisfied nor is he sensitive to satisfaction; at the same time, he is not dissatisfied nor is he sensitive to dissatisfaction. Free from both satisfaction & dissatisfaction, he remains equanimous, mindful, & alert. This is the second establishing of mindfulness....

“And further, there is the case where the Teacher—out of sympathy, seeking their well-being—teaches the Dhamma to his disciples: ‘This is for your well-being, this is for your happiness.’ His disciples listen, lend ear, & apply their minds to gnosis. They do not turn aside or stray from the Teacher's message. In this case the Tathāgata is satisfied and is sensitive to satisfaction, yet he remains untroubled, mindful, & alert. This is the third establishing of mindfulness that a noble one cultivates, cultivating which he is a teacher fit to instruct a group.

“There are three establishings of mindfulness that a noble one cultivates, cultivating which he is a teacher fit to instruct a group’: Thus was it said. And in reference to this was it said.

“Among master trainers, he is said to be the unexcelled trainer of people fit to be tamed’: Thus was it said. And in reference to what was it said?

“Steered by the elephant trainer, the elephant to be tamed runs in only one direction: east, west, north, or south. Steered by the horse trainer, the horse to be tamed runs in only one direction: east, west, north, or south. Steered by the ox trainer, the ox to be tamed runs in only one direction: east, west, north, or south.

“But steered by the Tathāgata—worthy & rightly self-awakened—the person to be tamed fans out in eight directions.

“Possessed of form, he/she sees forms. This is the first direction.

“Not percipient of form internally, he/she sees forms externally. This is the second direction.

“He/she is intent only on the beautiful. This is the third direction.

“With the complete transcending of perceptions of form, with the disappearance of perceptions of resistance, and not attending to perceptions of multiplicity, (perceiving,) ‘Infinite space,’ he/she enters and remains in the dimension of the infinitude of space. This is the fourth direction.

“With the complete transcending of the dimension of the infinitude of space, (perceiving,) ‘Infinite consciousness,’ he/she enters and remains in the dimension of the infinitude of consciousness. This is the fifth direction.

“With the complete transcending of the dimension of the infinitude of consciousness, (perceiving,) ‘There is nothing,’ he/she enters and remains in the dimension of nothingness. This is the sixth direction.

“With the complete transcending of the dimension of nothingness, he/she enters and remains in the dimension of neither perception nor non-perception. This is the seventh direction.

“With the complete transcending of the dimension of neither perception nor non-perception, he/she enters and remains in the cessation of perception and feeling. This is the eighth direction.

“Steered by the Tathāgata—worthy & rightly self-awakened—the person to be tamed fans out in eight directions.

“Among master trainers, he [the Tathāgata] is said to be the unexcelled trainer of people fit to be tamed’: Thus was it said. And in reference to this was it said.” — [*MN 137*](#)

The Buddha as Victor

One of the Buddha's epithets was Jina, or Victor. A medieval poem, *The Verses of the Buddha's Victory Blessings*, lists eight events—six of them drawn from the Canon, two from the Commentary—that exemplify his victories over dangerous opponents: victories that were for the sake of their welfare and that of others. Two of these events, his victory over Māra prior to his awakening and his victory over the elephant released by Devadatta, are reported elsewhere in this book. To show how the Buddha, even after his awakening, was not free from conflict and was willing to defeat those who tried to defeat him, either physically or intellectually, this chapter covers the remaining canonical events cited in the poem, plus one canonical event—the incident involving Sundarī the female wanderer—that parallels an event drawn from the Commentary.

I have heard that on one occasion the Blessed One was dwelling near Sāvattthī in Jeta's Forest, Anāthapiṇḍika's monastery. And at that time in King Pasenadi's realm there was a bandit named Aṅgulimāla: brutal, bloody-handed, devoted to killing & slaying, showing no mercy to living beings. He turned villages into non-villages, towns into non-towns, settled countryside into unsettled countryside. Having repeatedly killed human beings, he wore a garland [*mālā*] made of fingers [*aṅguli*].

Then, early in the morning, the Blessed One—having adjusted his under robe and carrying his bowl & outer robe—went into Sāvattthī for alms. Having wandered for alms in Sāvattthī and returning from his almsround after his meal, he set his lodging in order. Carrying his bowl & robe, he went along the road to where Aṅgulimāla was staying. Cowherds, shepherds, & farmers saw him going along the road to where Aṅgulimāla was staying, and on seeing him said to him, “Don't go along that road, contemplative, for on that road is Aṅgulimāla: brutal, bloody-handed, devoted to killing & slaying, showing no mercy to living beings. He has turned villages into non-villages, towns into non-towns, settled countryside into unsettled countryside. Having repeatedly killed human beings, he wears a garland made of fingers. Groups of ten, twenty, thirty, & forty men have gone along that road, and even they have fallen into

Aṅgulimāla's hands." When this was said, the Blessed One kept going in silence.

A second time... A third time, cowherds, shepherds, & farmers said to the Blessed One, "Don't go along that road, contemplative.... Groups of ten, twenty, thirty, & forty men have gone along that road, and even they have fallen into Aṅgulimāla's hands." When this was said, the Blessed One kept going in silence.

Then Aṅgulimāla saw the Blessed One coming from afar. On seeing him, the thought occurred to him: "Isn't it amazing! Isn't it astounding! Groups of ten, twenty, thirty, & forty men have gone along this road, and even they have fallen into my hands, and yet now this contemplative comes attacking, as it were, alone and without a companion. Why don't I kill him?" So Aṅgulimāla, taking up his sword & shield, buckling on his bow & quiver, followed right behind the Blessed One.

Then the Blessed One willed a feat of supranormal power such that Aṅgulimāla, though running with all his might, could not catch up with the Blessed One walking at normal pace. Then the thought occurred to Aṅgulimāla: "Isn't it amazing! Isn't it astounding! In the past I've chased & seized even a swift-running elephant, a swift-running horse, a swift-running chariot, a swift-running deer. But now, even though I'm running with all my might, I can't catch up with this contemplative walking at normal pace." So he stopped and called out to the Blessed One, "Stop, contemplative! Stop!"

"I have stopped, Aṅgulimāla. You stop."

Then the thought occurred to Aṅgulimāla, "These Sakyan contemplatives are speakers of the truth, asserters of the truths, and yet this contemplative, even while walking, says, 'I have stopped, Aṅgulimāla. You stop.' Why don't I question him?"

So Aṅgulimāla the bandit addressed this verse to the Blessed One:

"While walking, contemplative,
you say, 'I have stopped.'
But when I have stopped
you say I haven't.
I ask you the meaning of this:
How have you stopped?
How haven't I?"

The Buddha:

“I have stopped, Aṅgulimāla,
once & for all,
having cast off violence
toward all living beings.
You, though,
are unrestrained toward beings.
That’s how I’ve stopped
and you haven’t.”

Aṅgulimāla:

“At long last a greatly revered great seer
for my sake
has come to the great forest.
Having heard your verse
in line with the Dhamma,
I will go about
having abandoned evil.”

So saying, the bandit
hurled his sword & weapons
over a cliff
into a chasm,
a pit.

Then the bandit paid homage
to the feet of the One Well-Gone,
and right there requested the Going-forth.
The Awakened One,
the compassionate great seer,
the teacher of the world, along with its devas,
said to him then:

“Come, monk.”

That in itself
was monkhood for him.

Then the Blessed One set out wandering toward Sāvattthī with Ven.
Aṅgulimāla as his attendant monk. After wandering by stages he reached

Sāvattthī, and there he stayed in Jeta's Forest, Anāthapiṇḍika's monastery.

Now at that time a large crowd of people, loud & noisy, had gathered at the gates to King Pasenadi Kosala's inner palace, (calling out,) "There is a bandit in your realm, sire, named Aṅgulimāla: brutal, bloody-handed, devoted to killing & slaying, showing no mercy to living beings. He has turned villages into non-villages, towns into non-towns, settled countryside into unsettled countryside. Having repeatedly killed human beings, he wears a garland made of fingers. The king must stamp him out!"

Then King Pasenadi Kosala, with a cavalry of roughly five hundred horsemen, drove out of Sāvattthī in the middle of the day and entered the monastery. Driving as far as the ground permitted, he got down from his chariot and proceeded on foot to the Blessed One. On arrival, having bowed down to the Blessed One, he sat to one side. As he was sitting there, the Blessed One said to him, "What is it, great king? Has the King of Magadha, Seniya Bimbisāra, provoked you or have the Licchavis of Vesālī or some other hostile king?"

"No, lord. The King of Magadha, Seniya Bimbisāra, hasn't provoked me, nor have the Licchavis of Vesālī, nor has some other hostile king. There is a bandit in my realm, lord, named Aṅgulimāla: brutal, bloody-handed, devoted to killing & slaying, showing no mercy to living beings. He has turned villages into non-villages, towns into non-towns, settled countryside into unsettled countryside. Having repeatedly killed human beings, he wears a garland made of fingers. I am going to stamp him out." ¹³³

"Great king, suppose you were to see Aṅgulimāla with his hair & beard shaved off, wearing the ochre robe, having gone forth from home into homelessness, refraining from killing living beings, refraining from taking what is not given, refraining from telling lies, living the holy life on one meal a day, virtuous & of fine character: What would you do to him?"

"We would bow down to him, lord, or rise up to greet him, or offer him a seat, or offer him robes, almsfood, lodgings, or medicinal requisites for curing illness; or we would arrange a lawful guard, protection, & defense. But how could there be such virtue & restraint in an unvirtuous, evil character?"

Now at that time Ven. Aṅgulimāla was sitting not far from the Blessed One. So the Blessed One, pointing with his right arm, said to King Pasenadi Kosala, "That, great king, is Aṅgulimāla." Then King Pasenadi Kosala was frightened,

terrified, his hair standing on end. So the Blessed One, sensing the king's fear & hair-raising awe, said to him, "Don't be afraid, great king. Don't be afraid. He poses no danger to you.

Then the king's fear, his terror, his hair-standing-on-end subsided. He went over to Ven. Aṅgulimāla and said, "Are you really Aṅgulimāla, lord?"

"Yes, great king."

"What is your father's clan? What is your mother's clan?"

"My father is a Gagga, great king, and my mother a Mantāṇi."

"Then may Master Gagga Mantāṇiputta delight (in staying here). I will be responsible for your robes, almsfood, lodgings, & medicinal requisites for curing illness."

Now it so happened that at that time Ven. Aṅgulimāla was a wilderness-dweller, an almsgoer, wearing one set of the triple robe made of cast-off cloth. So he said to King Pasenadi Kosala, "Enough, great king. My triple robe is complete."

So King Pasenadi Kosala went to the Blessed One and, on arrival, having bowed down to him, sat to one side. As he was sitting there he said to the Blessed One, "It's amazing, lord. It's astounding, how the Blessed One has tamed the untamed, pacified the unpeaceful, and brought to unbinding those who were not unbound. For what we could not tame even with blunt or bladed weapons, the Blessed One has tamed without blunt or bladed weapons. Well then, lord, we will go now. Many are our duties, many our responsibilities."

"Then do, great king, what you think it is now time to do."

Then King Pasenadi Kosala got up from his seat and, having bowed down to the Blessed One, circumambulated him, keeping him to his right, and left.

Then, early in the morning, Ven. Aṅgulimāla—having adjusted his under robe and carrying his bowl & outer robe—went into Sāvattthī for alms. As he was going from house to house for alms, he saw a woman suffering a breech birth. On seeing her, the thought occurred to him: "How tormented are living beings! How tormented are living beings!" Then, having wandered for alms in Sāvattthī and returning from his almsround after his meal, he went to the Blessed One. On arrival, having bowed down to him, he sat to one side. As he was sitting there he said to the Blessed One, "Just now, lord, early in the morning—having adjusted my under robe and carrying my bowl & outer robe—I went into Sāvattthī for alms. As I was going from house to house for alms, I

saw a woman suffering a breech birth. On seeing her, the thought occurred to me: ‘How tormented are living beings! How tormented are living beings!’”

“In that case, Aṅgulimāla, go to that woman and, on arrival, say to her, ‘Sister, since I was born I do not recall intentionally killing a living being. Through this truth may there be well-being for you, well-being for your fetus.’”

“But, lord, wouldn’t that be a lie for me? For I have intentionally killed many living beings.”

“Then in that case, Aṅgulimāla, go to that woman and, on arrival, say to her, ‘Sister, since I was born in the noble birth, I do not recall intentionally killing a living being. Through this truth may there be well-being for you, well-being for your fetus.’”

Responding, “As you say, lord,” to the Blessed One, Aṅgulimāla went to that woman and, on arrival, said to her, “Sister, since I was born in the noble birth, I do not recall intentionally killing a living being. Through this may there be well-being for you, well-being for your fetus.” And there was well-being for the woman, well-being for her fetus.

Then Ven. Aṅgulimāla, dwelling alone, secluded, heedful, ardent, & resolute, 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. Aṅgulimāla became another one of the arahants.

Then, early in the morning, Ven. Aṅgulimāla—having adjusted his under robe and carrying his bowl & outer robe—went into Sāvattthī for alms. Now at that time a clod thrown by one person hit Ven. Aṅgulimāla on the body, a stone thrown by another person hit him on the body, and a potsherd thrown by still another person hit him on the body. So Ven. Aṅgulimāla—his head broken open and dripping with blood, his bowl broken, and his outer robe ripped to shreds—went to the Blessed One. The Blessed One saw him coming from afar and, on seeing him, said to him: “Bear with it, brahman! Bear with it! The fruit of the kamma that would have burned you in hell for many years, many hundreds of years, many thousands of years, you are now experiencing in the here-&-now!”

Then Ven. Aṅgulimāla, having gone alone into seclusion, experienced the bliss of release. At that time he exclaimed:

Who once was heedless
but later is not
 brightens the world
 like the moon set free from a cloud.

His evil-done deed
is replaced with skillfulness:
 He brightens the world
 like the moon set free from a cloud.

Whatever young monk
devotes himself
to the Buddha's bidding:
 He brightens the world
 like the moon set free from a cloud.

May even my enemies
hear talk of the Dhamma.
May even my enemies
devote themselves
to the Buddha's bidding.
May even my enemies
associate with those people
who—peaceful, good—
get others to accept the Dhamma.
May even my enemies
hear the Dhamma time & again
from those who advise endurance,
 forbearance,
who praise non-opposition,
 and may they follow it.
For surely he wouldn't harm me,
or anyone else;
he would attain the foremost peace,
would protect the feeble & firm.
Irrigators guide the water.
Fletchers shape the arrow shaft.
Carpenters shape the wood.

The wise control
themselves.

Some tame with a blunt stick,
with hooks, & with whips
But without blunt or bladed weapons
I was tamed by the one who is Such.

“Doer of No Harm” is my name,
but I used to be a doer of harm.
Today I am true to my name,
for I harm no one at all.

A bandit
I used to be,
renowned as Aṅgulimāla.
Swept along by a great flood,
I went to the Buddha as refuge.

Bloody-handed
I used to be,
renowned as Aṅgulimāla.
See my going for refuge!
Uprooted is [craving,]
the guide to becoming.
Having done the type of kamma
that would lead to many
bad destinations,
touched by the fruit of (that) kamma,
unindebted, I eat my food.

They’re addicted to heedlessness
—dullards, fools—
whereas one who is wise
cherishes heedfulness
as his highest wealth.
Don’t give way to heedlessness
or to intimacy
with sensual delight—
for a heedful person,
absorbed in jhāna,

attains an abundant bliss.

This has come well & not gone away,
it was not badly thought through for me.
From among well analyzed qualities,
I have obtained
the best.

This has come well & not gone away,
it was not badly thought through for me.
The three knowledges
have been attained;
the Buddha's bidding,
done. — [MN 86](#)

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

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

“Come in, contemplative!”

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

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

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

“Come in, contemplative!”

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

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

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

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

“My friend, I see no one in the cosmos with its devas, Māras & Brahmās, in this generation with its contemplatives & brahmans, its royalty & common people, who could possess my mind or rip open my heart or, grabbing me by the feet, hurl me across the Ganges. But nevertheless, ask me what you wish.”

Ālavaka:

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

The Buddha:

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

Ālavaka:

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

The Buddha:

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

Ālavaka:

How does one gain discernment?
How does one find wealth?
How does one attain honor?
How bind friends to oneself?
Passing from this world
to the next world,
how does one not grieve?

The Buddha:

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

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

Through truth
 one attains honor.

Giving
 binds friends to oneself.

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

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

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

Ālavaka:

How could I go ask
common contemplatives & brahmans?—
now that today I understand
 what benefits
 the next life.

It was truly for my well-being
that the Awakened One came
to stay in Āḷavī.
Today I understand
where what is given
bears great fruit.
I'll wander from village to village,
town to town,
paying homage to the Self-awakened one
& the true rightness of the Dhamma.” — [*SN 10:12*](#)

I have heard that on one occasion the Blessed One was dwelling near Sāvattthī in Jeta's Forest, Anāthapiṇḍika's monastery. Now at that time the Blessed One was worshipped, revered, honored, venerated, and given homage—a recipient of robes, almsfood, lodgings, & medicinal requisites for the sick. The Saṅgha of monks was also worshipped, revered, honored, venerated, and given homage—a recipient of robes, almsfood, lodgings, & medicinal requisites for the sick. But the wanderers of other sects were not worshipped, revered, honored, venerated, or given homage; nor were they recipients of robes, almsfood, lodgings, or medicinal requisites for the sick.

So the wanderers of other sects—unable to stand the veneration given to the Blessed One and the Saṅgha of monks—went to Sundarī the female wanderer and, on arrival, said to her, “Sundarī, would you dare to do something for the benefit of your kinsmen?”

“What shall I do, masters? What can I *not* do? ¹³⁴ I have given up even my life for the benefit of my kinsmen!”

“In that case, sister, go often to Jeta's Forest.”

Responding, “As you say, masters,” to those wanderers of other sects, Sundarī the female wanderer went often to Jeta's Forest. When the wanderers of other sects knew that many people had seen Sundarī the female wanderer going often to Jeta's Forest, then—having murdered her and buried her right there in the moat-ditch surrounding Jeta's Forest—they went to King Pasenadi Kosala and, on arrival, said to him, “Great king, we can't find Sundarī the female wanderer.”

“But where do you suspect she is?”

“In Jeta's Forest, great king.”

“Then in that case, search Jeta’s Forest.”

Then those wanderers of other sects, having searched Jeta’s Forest, having dug up what they had buried in the surrounding moat-ditch, having mounted it on a litter, took it into Sāvattthī and went from street to street, crossroad to crossroad, stirring up people’s indignation: “See, masters, the handiwork of the Sakyan-son contemplatives! They’re shameless, these Sakyan-son contemplatives: unvirtuous, evil-natured, liars, unholy, though they claim to be practicing the Dhamma, practicing what is harmonious, practicing the holy life, speakers of the truth, virtuous, fine-natured. They have no quality of a contemplative, no holy quality. Destroyed is their quality of a contemplative! Destroyed is their holy quality! From where is their quality of a contemplative? From where, their holy quality? Gone are they from any quality of a contemplative! Gone from any holy quality! How can a man, having done a man’s business with a woman, take her life?”

So on that occasion, people seeing monks in Sāvattthī would insult, revile, irritate, & harass them with discourteous, abusive language: “They’re shameless, these Sakyan-son contemplatives: unvirtuous, evil-natured, liars, unholy, though they claim to be practicing the Dhamma, practicing what is harmonious, practicing the holy life, speakers of the truth, virtuous, fine-natured. They have no quality of a contemplative, no holy quality. Destroyed is their quality of a contemplative! Destroyed is their holy quality! From where is their quality of a contemplative? From where, their holy quality? Gone are they from any quality of a contemplative! Gone from any holy quality! How can a man, having done a man’s business with a woman, take her life?”

Then, early in the morning, a large number of monks—having adjusted their under robes and carrying their bowls & outer robes—went into Sāvattthī for alms. Then, having gone for alms in Sāvattthī, after the meal, returning from their almsround, they went to the Blessed One and, on arrival, having bowed down to him, sat to one side. As they were sitting there they said to the Blessed One, “At present, lord, people seeing monks in Sāvattthī insult, revile, irritate, & harass them with discourteous, abusive language: ‘They’re shameless, these Sakyan-son contemplatives: unvirtuous, evil-natured, liars, unholy.... How can a man, having done a man’s business with a woman, take her life?’”

“Monks, this noise will not last long. It will last only seven days. With the passing of seven days, it will disappear. So in that case, when those people, on

seeing monks, insult, revile, irritate, & harass them with discourteous, abusive language, counter their accusation with this verse:

“He goes to hell,
the one who asserts
what didn’t take place,
as does the one
who, having done,
says, ‘I didn’t.’
Both—low-acting people—
there become equal:
after death, in the world beyond.”

So, having learned this verse in the Blessed One’s presence, the monks—whenever people, on seeing monks in Sāvattthī, insulted, reviled, irritated, & harassed them with discourteous, abusive language—countered the accusation with this verse:

“He goes to hell,
the one who asserts
what didn’t take place,
as does the one
who, having done,
says, ‘I didn’t.’
Both—low-acting people—
there become equal:
after death, in the world beyond.”

The thought occurred to those people, “They’re innocent, these Sakyan-son contemplatives. It wasn’t done by them. They’re taking an oath, these Sakyan-son contemplatives.”¹³⁵ And so that noise didn’t last long. It lasted only seven days. With the passing of seven days, it disappeared.

Then a large number of monks went to the Blessed One and, on arrival, having bowed down to him, sat to one side. As they were sitting there, they said to him, “It’s amazing, lord. It’s astounding—how well said that was by the Blessed One: ‘Monks, this noise will not last long. It will last only seven days. With the passing of seven days, it will disappear.’ Lord, that noise has disappeared.”

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

They stab with their words
—people unrestrained—
as they do, with arrows,
a tusker gone into battle.
Hearing abusive words spoken,
one should endure them:
a monk with unbothered mind. — [Ud 4:8](#)

I have heard that on one occasion the Blessed One was dwelling near Vesālī, at the Gabled Hall in the Great Forest. And on that occasion Saccaka the Nigaṇṭha-son was dwelling in Vesālī—a debater, a sophist, [136](#) well regarded by people at large. He made this statement before the assembly in Vesālī: “I see no contemplative or brahman, the head of an order, the head of a group, or even one who claims to be an arahant, rightly self-awakened, who—engaged in debate with me—would not shiver, quiver, shake, & break out in sweat under the armpits. Even if I were to engage a senseless stump in debate, it—engaged with me in debate—would shiver, quiver, & shake, to say nothing of a human being.”

Then, early in the morning, Ven. Assaji [137](#)—having adjusted his under robe and carrying his bowl & outer robe—went into Vesālī for alms. Saccaka the Nigaṇṭha-son, walking & wandering around Vesālī to exercise his legs, saw Ven. Assaji coming from afar. On seeing him, he went up to him and exchanged courteous greetings with him. After an exchange of friendly greetings & courtesies, he stood to one side. As he was standing there, he said to him, “Master Assaji, how does Gotama the contemplative discipline his disciples? Or what part of his instruction is generally presented to his disciples?”

“Aggivessana, [138](#) the Blessed One disciplines his disciples in this way; this part of the Blessed One’s instruction is generally presented to his disciples: ‘Form is inconstant. Feeling is inconstant. Perception is inconstant. Fabrications are inconstant. Consciousness is inconstant. Form is not-self. Feeling is not-self. Perception is not-self. Fabrications are not-self. Consciousness is not-self. All fabrications are inconstant. All phenomena are

not-self.' This, Aggivessana, is the way in which the Blessed One disciplines his disciples; this part of the Blessed One's instruction is generally presented to his disciples."

"What a bad thing to hear we have heard, Master Assaji, when we have heard that Gotama the contemplative teaches this sort of thing. Perhaps sooner or later we might go to meet with Gotama the contemplative. Perhaps there might be some discussion. Perhaps we might pry him away from that evil viewpoint."

Now on that occasion, five hundred Licchavis had gathered at a meeting hall on some business or other. So Saccaka the Nigaṇṭha-son went to those Licchavis and, on arrival, said to them, "Come out, good Licchavis! Come out, good Licchavis! Today will be my discussion with Gotama the contemplative! If he takes the position with me that was taken with me by his famous disciple, the monk named Assaji, then just as a strong man, seizing a long-haired ram by the hair, would drag him to and drag him fro and drag him all around, in the same way I, statement by statement, will drag Gotama the contemplative to and drag him fro and drag him all around. Just as a strong distillery worker, throwing a large distiller's strainer into a deep water tank and grabbing it by the corners, would drag it to and drag it fro and drag it all around, in the same way I, statement by statement, will drag Gotama the contemplative to and drag him fro and drag him all around. Just as a strong distillery ruffian, grabbing a horse-hair strainer by the corners, would shake it down and shake it out and thump it, in the same way I, statement by statement, will shake Gotama the contemplative down and shake him out and thump him. Just as a sixty-year old elephant, plunging into a deep pond, would amuse itself playing the game of hemp-washing, in the same way, I will amuse myself playing the game of hemp-washing Gotama the contemplative, as it were. Come on out, good Licchavis! Come on out, good Licchavis! Today will be my discussion with Gotama the contemplative!"

Then some of the Licchavis said, "Who is Gotama the contemplative that he will refute the statement of Saccaka the Nigaṇṭha-son? It's Saccaka the Nigaṇṭha-son who will refute the statement of Gotama the contemplative." Some of the Licchavis said, "Who is Saccaka the Nigaṇṭha-son that he will refute the statement of Gotama the contemplative? It's Gotama the contemplative who will refute the statement of Saccaka the Nigaṇṭha-son."

So Saccaka the Nigaṇṭha-son, surrounded by five hundred Licchavis, went to the Gabled Hall in the Great Forest.

Now on that occasion a large number of monks were doing walking meditation in the open air. So Saccaka the Nigaṇṭha-son went up to the monks and said, “Where, masters, is Master Gotama now? We want to see Master Gotama.”

“The Blessed One, Aggivessana, having plunged into the Great Forest, is sitting under a certain tree for the day’s abiding.”

Then Saccaka the Nigaṇṭha-son together with a large group of Licchavis plunged into the Great Forest and went to the Blessed One. On arrival, he exchanged courteous greetings with the Blessed One. After an exchange of friendly greetings & courtesies, he sat to one side. Some of the Licchavis, having bowed down to the Blessed One, sat to one side. Some of the Licchavis exchanged courteous greetings with the Blessed One and, after an exchange of friendly greetings & courtesies, sat to one side. Some of the Licchavis, having raised their hands palm-to-palm in front of the chest, sat to one side. Some of the Licchavis, after announcing their name & clan, sat to one side. Some of the Licchavis, staying silent, sat to one side.

As he was sitting there, he said to the Blessed One, “I would like to question Master Gotama on a certain point, if Master Gotama would grant me the favor of an answer to the question.”

“Ask, Aggivessana, as you see fit.”

“How does Master Gotama discipline his disciples? Or what part of his instruction is generally presented to his disciples?”

“Aggivessana, I discipline my disciples in this way; this part of my instruction is generally presented to my disciples: ‘Form is inconstant. Feeling is inconstant. Perception is inconstant. Fabrications are inconstant. Consciousness is inconstant. Form is not-self. Feeling is not-self. Perception is not-self. Fabrications are not-self. Consciousness is not-self. All fabrications are inconstant. All phenomena are not-self.’ This, Aggivessana, is the way in which I discipline my disciples; this part of my instruction is generally presented to my disciples.”

“A simile occurs to me, Master Gotama.”

“Let it occur to you, Aggivessana.”

“Just as any seeds that exhibit growth, increase, & proliferation, all do so in dependence on the earth; or just as any activities requiring strength that are done, all are done in dependence on the earth; in the same way, Master Gotama, an individual with form as self, taking a stance on form, produces merit or demerit. An individual with feeling as self... with perception as self... with fabrications as self... with consciousness as self, taking a stance on consciousness, produces merit or demerit.”

“Then, Aggivessana, are you saying, ‘Form is my self, feeling is my self, perception is my self, fabrications are my self, consciousness is my self’?”

“Yes, Master Gotama, I’m saying that ‘Form is my self, feeling is my self, perception is my self, fabrications are my self, consciousness is my self.’ As does this great multitude.”¹³⁹

“What does this great multitude have to do with you? Please focus just on your own assertion.”

“Yes, Master Gotama, I’m saying that ‘Form is my self, feeling is my self, perception is my self, fabrications are my self, consciousness is my self.’”

“Very well then, Aggivessana, I will cross-question you on this matter. Answer as you see fit. What do you think? Would a consecrated, noble-warrior king—such as King Pasenadi Kosala or the King of Magadha, Ajātasattu Vedehiputta—wield the power in his own domain to execute those (he has) sentenced to be executed, to fine those (he has) sentenced to be fined, or to banish those (he has) sentenced to be banished?”

“Yes, Master Gotama, he would wield the power in his own domain to execute those (he has) sentenced to be executed, to fine those (he has) sentenced to be fined, or to banish those (he has) sentenced to be banished. Even these oligarchic groups, such as the Vajjians & Mallans, wield the power in their own domains to execute those (they’ve) sentenced to be executed, to fine those (they’ve) sentenced to be fined, or to banish those (they’ve) sentenced to be banished,¹⁴⁰ to say nothing of a consecrated, noble-warrior king such as King Pasenadi Kosala, or the King of Magadha, Ajātasattu Vedehiputta. He would wield it, and he would deserve to wield it.”

“What do you think, Aggivessana? When you say, ‘Form is my self,’ do you wield power over that form: ‘May my form be thus, may my form not be thus’?”

When this was said, Saccaka the Nigaṇṭha-son was silent.

A second time, the Blessed One said to Saccaka the Nigaṇṭha-son: “What do you think, Aggivessana? When you say, ‘Form is my self,’ do you wield power over that form: ‘May my form be thus, may my form not be thus?’”

When this was said, Saccaka the Nigaṇṭha-son was silent a second time.

Then the Blessed One said to him, “Answer now, Aggivessana. This is not the time to be silent. When anyone doesn’t answer when asked a legitimate question by the Tathāgata up to three times, his head splits into seven pieces right here.”

Now on that occasion Vajirapāṇin [Thunderbolt-in-Hand] the yakkha, carrying an iron thunderbolt, was poised in the air above Saccaka the Nigaṇṭha-son, (thinking,) “If Saccaka the Nigaṇṭha-son doesn’t answer when asked a legitimate question by the Blessed One up to three times, I will split his head into seven pieces right here.”

The Blessed One saw Vajirapāṇin the yakkha, as did Saccaka the Nigaṇṭha-son. So Saccaka—afraid, terrified, his hair standing on end—seeking shelter in the Blessed One, seeking asylum in the Blessed One, seeking refuge in the Blessed One—said to the Blessed One, “Let Master Gotama ask me. I will answer.”

“What do you think, Aggivessana? When you say, ‘Form is my self,’ do you wield power over that form: ‘May my form be thus, may my form not be thus?’”

“No, Master Gotama.”

“Pay attention, Aggivessana, and answer (only) after having paid attention! What you said after isn’t consistent with what you said before, nor is what you said before consistent with what you said after.

“What do you think, Aggivessana? When you say, ‘Feeling is my self... Perception is my self... Fabrications are my self... Consciousness is my self,’ do you wield power over that consciousness: ‘May my consciousness be thus, may my consciousness not be thus?’”

“No, Master Gotama.”

“Pay attention, Aggivessana, and answer (only) after having paid attention! What you said after isn’t consistent with what you said before, nor is what you said before consistent with what you said after.

“What do you think, Aggivessana? Is form constant or inconstant?”

“Inconstant, Master Gotama.”

“And is that which is inconstant easeful or stressful?”

“Stressful, Master Gotama.”

“And is it fitting to regard what is inconstant, stressful, subject to change as: ‘This is mine. This is my self. This is what I am?’”

“No, Master Gotama.”

[Similarly with feeling, perception, fabrications, & consciousness.]

“What do you think, Aggivessana? When one adheres to stress, holds to stress, is attached to stress, and envisions of stress that ‘This is mine; this is my self; this is what I am,’ would he comprehend stress or dwell having totally destroyed stress?”

“How could that be, Master Gotama? No, Master Gotama.”

“That being the case, Aggivessana, don’t you adhere to stress, hold to stress, aren’t you attached to stress, and don’t you envision of stress that ‘This is mine. This is my self. This is what I am?’”

“How could that not be the case, Master Gotama? Yes, Master Gotama.”

“Suppose a man—in need of heartwood, seeking heartwood, wandering in search of heartwood—were to enter a forest taking a sharp ax. There he would see a large plantain trunk: straight, young, immature. He would cut it at the root and, having cut it at the root, cut off the crown. Having cut off the crown, he would unfurl the leaf sheaths. Unfurling the leaf sheaths, he wouldn’t even find sapwood there, to say nothing of heartwood. In the same way, Aggivessana, when you are interrogated, rebuked, & pressed by me with regard to your own statement, you are empty, void, mistaken. But it was you who made this statement before the assembly in Vesālī: ‘I see no contemplative or brahman, the head of an order, the head of a group, or even one who claims to be an arahant, rightly self-awakened, who—engaged in debate with me—would not shiver, quiver, shake, & break out in sweat under the armpits. Even if I were to engage a senseless stump in debate, it—engaged with me in debate—would shiver, quiver, & shake, to say nothing of a human being.’ But now some drops of sweat coming out of your forehead, drenching your upper robe, are landing on the ground, whereas now I have no sweat on my body.” And the Blessed One uncovered his golden-colored body to the assembly.

When this was said, Saccaka the Nigaṇṭha-son fell silent, abashed, sitting with his shoulders drooping, his head down, brooding, at a loss for words.

Then Dummukha [BadMouth] the Licchavi-son—sensing that Saccaka the Nigaṇṭha-son was silent, abashed, sitting with his shoulders drooping, his head

down, brooding, at a loss for words—said to the Blessed One, “Lord, a simile has come to me.”

“Let it come to you, Dummukha,” the Blessed One said.

“Suppose, lord, that not far from a village or town was a pond. There in it was a crab. Then a number of boys & girls, leaving the village or town, would go to the pond and, on arrival, would go down to bathe in it. Taking the crab out of the water, they would place it on the ground. And whenever the crab extended a leg, the boys or girls would cut it off, break it, and smash it with sticks or stones right there, so that the crab—with all its legs cut off, broken, & smashed—would be unable to get back in the water as before. In the same way, whatever Saccaka the Nigaṇṭha-son’s writhings, capers, & contortions, the Blessed One has cut them off, broken them, and smashed them all, so that Saccaka the Nigaṇṭha-son is now unable to approach the Blessed One again for the purpose of debate.”

When this was said, Saccaka the Nigaṇṭha-son said to Dummukha the Licchavi-son, “Just you wait, Dummukha. Just you wait, Dummukha. You’re a big-mouth, Dummukha.¹⁴¹ We’re not taking counsel with you. We’re here taking counsel with Master Gotama.” [Then, turning to the Buddha,] “Let that be, Master Gotama, our words & those of other ordinary contemplatives & brahmins—prattled prattling, as it were.

“Now, Master Gotama, to what extent is a disciple of Master Gotama one who carries out his message, carries out his instruction, one who has crossed over & beyond doubt, one with no more questioning, one who has gained fearlessness and dwells independent of others with regard to the Teacher’s message?”

“There is the case, Aggivessana, where a disciple of mine sees with right discernment any form whatsoever—past, future, or present; internal or external; blatant or subtle; common or sublime; far or near: every form as it has come to be—as ‘This is not mine. This is not my self. This is not what I am.’

“He sees with right discernment any feeling... any perception... any fabrications... any consciousness whatsoever—past, future, or present; internal or external; blatant or subtle; common or sublime; far or near: every consciousness as it has come to be—as ‘This is not mine. This is not my self. This is not what I am.’

“It’s to this extent, Aggivessana, that a disciple of mine is one who carries out my message, carries out my instruction, one who has crossed over & beyond doubt, one with no more questioning, one who has gained fearlessness and dwells independent of others with regard to the Teacher’s message.”

“And to what extent, Master Gotama, is a monk an arahant, one whose mental effluents are ended, who has reached fulfillment, done the task, laid down the burden, attained the true goal, laid to waste the fetter of becoming, and is released through right gnosis?”

“There is the case, Aggivessana, where a monk—having seen with right discernment any form whatsoever—past, future, or present; internal or external; blatant or subtle; common or sublime; far or near: every form as it has come to be—as ‘This is not mine. This is not my self. This is not what I am’ is, through lack of clinging/sustenance, released.

“Having seen with right discernment any feeling... any perception... any fabrications... any consciousness whatsoever—past, future, or present; internal or external; blatant or subtle; common or sublime; far or near: every consciousness as it has come to be—as ‘This is not mine. This is not my self. This is not what I am,’ he is, through lack of clinging/sustenance, released.

“It’s to this extent, Aggivessana, that a monk is an arahant, one whose mental effluents are ended, who has reached fulfillment, done the task, laid down the burden, attained the true goal, laid to waste the fetter of becoming, and is released through right gnosis.

“One thus released is endowed with three unsurpassables: unsurpassable vision, unsurpassable practice, unsurpassable release. And a monk whose mind is thus released still honors, respects, reveres, & worships the Tathāgata (in this way): “Awakened, the Blessed One teaches the Dhamma for awakening. Tamed, the Blessed One teaches the Dhamma for taming. Tranquil, the Blessed One teaches the Dhamma for tranquility. Having crossed over, the Blessed One teaches the Dhamma for crossing over. Totally unbound, the Blessed One teaches the Dhamma for total unbinding.”

When this was said, Saccaka the Nigaṇṭha-son said to the Blessed One, “It is we, Master Gotama, who were insolent, we who were reckless, in that we supposed that Master Gotama could be attacked statement by statement. For there might be safety for a person who has attacked a rutting elephant, but there is no safety for a person who has attacked Master Gotama. There might be safety for a person who has attacked a mass of fire, but there is no safety for

a person who has attacked Master Gotama. There might be safety for a person who has attacked a fanged snake, terrifyingly poisonous, but there is no safety for a person who has attacked Master Gotama. It is we, Master Gotama, who were insolent, we who were reckless, in that we supposed that Master Gotama could be attacked statement by statement.

“May Master Gotama, together with the Saṅgha of monks, acquiesce to my offer of tomorrow’s meal.”

The Blessed One acquiesced with silence.

Then Saccaka the Nigaṇṭha-son, sensing the Blessed One’s acquiescence, addressed the Licchavis, “Listen, Master Licchavis. Gotama the contemplative is invited for tomorrow together with the Saṅgha of monks. Offer to me what you think would be proper for him.”

Then, after the night had passed, the Licchavis offered to Saccaka the Nigaṇṭha-son approximately five hundred pots of food-offerings. Saccaka the Nigaṇṭha-son, after having exquisite staple & non-staple food prepared in his own monastery, announced the time to the Blessed One: “It’s time, Master Gotama. The meal is ready.”

Then, early in the morning, the Blessed One—having adjusted his under robe and carrying his bowl & outer robe—went together with the Saṅgha of monks to Saccaka the Nigaṇṭha-son’s monastery. On arrival, he sat down on a seat laid out. Saccaka the Nigaṇṭha-son, with his own hand, served & satisfied the Saṅgha of monks headed by the Blessed One with exquisite staple & non-staple food. Then, when the Blessed One had finished his meal and had rinsed his bowl & hands, Saccaka the Nigaṇṭha-son, taking a lower seat, sat down to one side. As he was sitting there, he said to the Blessed One, “Master Gotama, may the merit and accoutrements of the merit of this gift be exclusively for the happiness of the donors.”

“Aggivessana, whatever has come from (giving to) a recipient such as you—not without passion, not without aversion, not without delusion—that will be for the donors. Whatever has come from (giving to) a recipient such as me—without passion, without aversion, without delusion—that will be for you.” —

[MN 35](#)

As he was sitting to one side, Ven. Ānanda said to the Blessed One, “Lord, does the Blessed One have direct experience of going to the Brahmā world by means of supranormal power with a mind-made body?

“Yes, Ānanda....”

“But does the Blessed One also have direct experience of going to the Brahmā world by means of supranormal power with this very physical body, composed of the four great elements?”

“Yes, Ānanda....”

“It’s amazing & astounding that the Blessed One is capable of going to the Brahmā world by means of supranormal power with a mind-made body and has direct experience of going to the Brahmā world by means of supranormal power with this very physical body, composed of the four great elements.”

“Tathāgatas are both amazing, Ānanda, and endowed with amazing qualities. They are both astounding and endowed with astounding qualities....

“Just as when an iron ball heated all day becomes lighter, more pliant, more malleable, & more radiant; in the same way, whenever the Tathāgata merges his body with his mind and his mind with his body and remains having alighted on the perception of ease and buoyancy with regard to the body, then his body becomes lighter, more pliant, more malleable, & more radiant....

“Just as a tuft of cotton seed or a ball of thistle down, lightly wafted by the wind, rises effortlessly from the earth up into the sky, in the same way, whenever the Tathāgata merges his body with his mind and his mind with his body, and remains having alighted on the perception of ease and buoyancy with regard to the body, then his body rises effortlessly from the earth up into the sky. He then experiences manifold supranormal powers. Having been one he becomes many; having been many he becomes one. He appears. He vanishes. He goes unimpeded through walls, ramparts, & mountains as if through space. He dives in & out of the earth as if it were water. He walks on water without sinking as if it were dry land. Sitting cross-legged he flies through the air like a winged bird. With his hand he touches & strokes even the sun & moon, so mighty & powerful. He exercises influence with his body even as far as the Brahmā worlds.” — [SN 51:22](#)

The Blessed One said: “On one occasion recently I was dwelling near Ukkatṭha in the Subhaga Forest at the root of a royal Sal tree. Now on that occasion an evil viewpoint had arisen to Baka Brahmā: ‘This is constant. This is permanent. This is eternal. This is total. This is not subject to falling away—for this does not take birth, does not age, does not die, does not fall away, does not reappear.’¹⁴² And there is no other, higher escape.’

“So I—having known with my awareness the train of thought in Baka Brahmā’s awareness—as a strong man would extend his flexed arm or flex his extended arm, vanished into the root of the royal Sal tree in the Subhaga Forest in Ukkaṭṭha and appeared in that Brahmā world. Baka Brahmā saw me coming from afar and, on seeing me, said, ‘Come, good sir. You are well-come, good sir. It has been long, good sir, since you arranged to come here—for this, good sir, is constant. This is permanent. This is eternal. This is total. This is not subject to falling away—for here one does not take birth, does not age, does not die, does not fall away, does not reappear. And there is no other, higher escape.’

“When this was said, I told Baka Brahmā, ‘How immersed in ignorance is Baka Brahmā! How immersed in ignorance is Baka Brahmā! — in that what is actually inconstant he calls “constant.” What is actually impermanent he calls “permanent.” What is actually non-eternal he calls “eternal.” What is actually partial he calls “total.” What is actually subject to falling away he calls “not subject to falling away.” Where one takes birth, ages, dies, falls away, and reappears, he says, “For here one does not take birth, does not age, does not die, does not fall away, does not reappear.” And there being another, higher escape, he says, “There is no other, higher escape.”’

“Then Māra the Evil One, taking possession of an attendant of the Brahmā assembly, said to me, ‘Monk! Monk! Don’t attack him! Don’t attack him! For this Brahmā, monk, is the Great Brahmā, the Conqueror, the Unconquered, the All-Seeing, All-Powerful, the Sovereign Lord, the Maker, Creator, Chief, Appointer and Ruler, Father of All That Have Been and Shall Be. There were, monk, before your time, contemplatives & brahmans in the world

who found fault with earth and were disgusted with earth,

who found fault with liquid and were disgusted with liquid,

who found fault with fire and were disgusted with fire,

who found fault with wind and were disgusted with wind,

who found fault with beings and were disgusted with beings,

who found fault with devas and were disgusted with devas,

who found fault with Pajāpati and were disgusted with Pajāpati,¹⁴³

who found fault with Brahmā and were disgusted with Brahmā.

“They, with the breakup of the body, with the cutting off of life, were established in a coarse body.¹⁴⁴ There were, monk, before your time,

contemplatives & brahmans in the world

who praised earth and were delighted with earth,
who praised liquid and were delighted with liquid,
who praised fire and were delighted with fire,
who praised wind and were delighted with wind,
who praised beings and were delighted with beings,
who praised devas and were delighted with devas,
who praised Pajāpati and were delighted with Pajāpati,
who praised Brahmā and were delighted with Brahmā.

“They, with the breakup of the body, with the cutting off of life, were established in a refined body. So I tell you, monk, “Please, good sir, do only as Brahmā says. Don’t defy the word of Brahmā. If you defy the word of Brahmā, then—as a man, when the goddess of fortune approaches, chases her away with a stick, or as a man, falling into hell, loses hold of the earth with his hands and feet—that will be what you have accomplished. Please, good sir, do only as Brahmā says. Don’t defy the word of Brahmā. Don’t you see that Brahmā’s assembly has gathered?” And so Māra the Evil One directed my attention to Brahmā’s assembly.

“When this was said, I told Māra the Evil One, ‘I know you, Evil One. Don’t assume, “He doesn’t know me.” You are Māra, Evil One. And Brahmā, and Brahmā’s assembly, and the attendants of Brahmā’s assembly have all come into your hands. They have all come under your sway. And you think, “This one, too, has come into my hands, has come under my sway.” But, Evil One, I have neither come into your hands nor have I come under your sway.’

“When this was said, Baka Brahmā told me, ‘But, good sir, what is actually constant I call “constant.” What is actually permanent I call “permanent.” What is actually eternal I call “eternal.” What is actually total I call “total.” What is actually not subject to falling away I call “not subject to falling away.” Where one does not take birth, age, die, fall away, or reappear, I say, “For this does not take birth, does not age, does not die, does not fall away, does not reappear.” And there being no other, higher escape, I say, “There is no other, higher escape.”’

“There were, monk, before your time, contemplatives & brahmans in the world whose ascetic practice lasted as long as your entire life span. They knew, when there was another, higher escape, that there was another, higher escape;

or, when there was no other, higher escape, that there was no other, higher escape. So I tell you, monk, both that you will not find another, higher escape, and that, to that extent, you will reap your share of trouble & weariness. Monk, if you relish earth, you will lie close to me, lie within my domain, for me to banish and to do with as I like. If you relish liquid... fire... wind... beings... devas... Pajāpati... Brahmā, you will lie close to me, lie within my domain, for me to banish and to do with as I like.’

“I, too, know that, Brahmā. If I relish earth, I will lie close to you, lie within your domain, for you to banish and to do with as you like. If I relish liquid... fire... wind... beings... devas... Pajāpati... Brahmā, I will lie close to you, lie within your domain, for you to banish and to do with as you like. Moreover, I discern your sphere, I discern your splendor: “Baka Brahmā has this much great power. Baka Brahmā has this much great might. Baka Brahmā has this much great influence.”

“Well, monk, how do you discern my sphere, how do you discern my splendor: “Baka Brahmā has this much great power. Baka Brahmā has this much great might. Baka Brahmā has this much great influence”?

“As far as suns & moons revolve,
shining, illuminating the directions,
over a thousand-fold cosmos,
your control holds sway.
There you know those above & below,
those with lust & those without,
the state of what is as it is,
the state of what becomes otherwise,
the coming & going of beings.

“That, Brahmā, is how I discern your sphere, that is how I discern your splendor: “Baka Brahmā has this much great power. Baka Brahmā has this much great might. Baka Brahmā has this much great influence.” There are, Brahmā, bodies other than yours that you don’t know, don’t see, but that I know, I see. There is, Brahmā, the body named Ābhassarā [Radiant] from which you fell away & reappeared here.¹⁴⁵ From your having lived here so long, your memory of that has become muddled. That is why you don’t know it, don’t see it, but I know it, I see it. Thus I am not your mere equal in terms of direct knowing, so how could I be inferior? I am actually superior to you.

“There is, Brahmā, the body named Subhakiṇhā [Beautiful Black]... the body named Vehapphalā [Sky-fruit], {the body named Abhibhū [Conqueror]}¹⁴⁶ which you don’t know, don’t see, but that I know, I see. Thus I am not your mere equal in terms of direct knowing, so how could I be your inferior? I am actually superior to you.

“Having directly known earth as earth and having directly known the extent of what hasn’t been experienced through the earthness of earth,¹⁴⁷ I wasn’t earth, I wasn’t in earth, I wasn’t coming from earth, I wasn’t “Earth is mine.” I didn’t affirm earth.¹⁴⁸ Thus I am not your mere equal in terms of direct knowing, so how could I be inferior? I am actually superior to you.

“Having directly known liquid as liquid... fire as fire... wind as wind... beings as beings... devas as devas... Pajāpati as Pajāpati... Brahmā as Brahmā... the radiant as radiant... the beautiful black as the beautiful black... the sky-fruit as the sky-fruit... the conqueror as the conqueror...

“Having directly known the all as the all¹⁴⁹ and having directly known the extent of what hasn’t been experienced through the allness of the all, I wasn’t the all, I wasn’t in the all, I wasn’t coming forth from the all, I wasn’t “The all is mine.” I didn’t affirm the all. Thus I am not your mere equal in terms of direct knowing, so how could I be inferior? I am actually superior to you.’

“If, good sir, you have directly known the extent of what has not been experienced through the allness of the all, may it not turn out to be actually vain and void for you.’

“Consciousness without surface,
endless, radiant all around,

has not been experienced through the earthness of earth... the liquidity of liquid... the fieriness of fire... the windiness of wind... the allness of the all.’¹⁵⁰

“Well then, good sir, I will disappear from you.’

“Well then, Brahmā, disappear from me if you can.’

“Then Baka Brahmā, (thinking,) ‘I will disappear from Gotama the contemplative. I will disappear from Gotama the contemplative,’ was not able to disappear from me. When this was said, I said to Baka Brahmā, ‘Well then, Brahmā, I will disappear from you.’

“Well then, good sir, disappear from me if you can.’

“So then, monks, I fabricated a fabrication of supranormal power to the extent that Brahmā, the Brahmā assembly, and the attendants of the Brahmā assembly heard my voice but did not see me. Having disappeared, I recited this verse:

‘Having seen
danger
right in becoming,
and becoming
in searching for non-becoming, [151](#)
I didn’t affirm
any kind of becoming,
or cling to any delight.’

“Then in Brahmā, the Brahmā assembly, and the attendants of the Brahmā assembly there arose a sense of amazement & astonishment: ‘How amazing! How astounding!—The great power, the great might of Gotama the contemplative! Never before have we seen or heard of any other contemplative or brahman of such great power, such great might as that of this Gotama the contemplative, who went forth from a Sakyan clan! Living in a generation that so delights in becoming, so rejoices in becoming, is so fond of becoming, he has pulled out becoming by the root!’

“Then Māra the Evil One, taking possession of an attendant of the Brahmā assembly, said to me, ‘If, good sir, this is what you discern, if this is what you have awakened to, do not lead (lay) disciples or those gone forth. Do not teach the Dhamma to (lay) disciples or those gone forth. Do not yearn for (lay) disciples or those gone forth. There were, good sir, before your time, contemplatives & brahmans in the world who claimed to be worthy & rightly self-awakened. They led (lay) disciples & those gone forth. They taught the Dhamma to (lay) disciples & those gone forth. They yearned for (lay) disciples & those gone forth. Having led (lay) disciples & those gone forth, having taught the Dhamma to (lay) disciples & those gone forth, having yearned for (lay) disciples & those gone forth, they—on the breakup of the body, with the cutting off of life—were established in a coarse body.

“‘There were, good sir, before your time, contemplatives & brahmans in the world who claimed to be worthy & rightly self-awakened. They did not lead (lay) disciples or those gone forth. They did not teach the Dhamma to (lay)

disciples or those gone forth. They did not yearn for (lay) disciples or those gone forth. Having not led (lay) disciples or those gone forth, having not taught the Dhamma to (lay) disciples or those gone forth, having not yearned for (lay) disciples or those gone forth, they—on the breakup of the body, with the cutting off of life—were established in a refined body.

“So, monk, I tell you this: Please, good sir, be effortless. Abide committed to a pleasant abiding in the here-&-now—for it’s skillful, good sir, that this not be taught. Don’t instruct others.’

“When this was said, I told Māra the Evil One, ‘I know you, Evil One. Don’t assume, “He doesn’t know me.” You are Māra, Evil One. And it’s not sympathetic to welfare that you speak thus to me. It’s sympathetic to what is not welfare that you speak thus to me. You think this, Evil One: “Those to whom Gotama the contemplative will teach the Dhamma will defy my sovereignty. Without being rightly self-awakened, Evil One, your contemplatives & brahmans claimed to be rightly self-awakened. I, however, being rightly self-awakened claim to be rightly self-awakened. For when the Tathāgata is teaching the Dhamma to his disciples, he is Such. When he is not teaching the Dhamma to his disciples, he is Such. When leading his disciples he is Such. When not leading his disciples he is Such. Why is that? The effluents that defile, that lead to further-becoming, that disturb, that ripen in stress, that tend to future birth, aging, & death: Those the Tathāgata has abandoned, their root destroyed, made like a palmyra stump—deprived of the conditions of development, not destined for future arising. Just as a palmyra tree with its crown cut off is incapable of growing again; so, too, the effluents that defile, that lead to further-becoming, that disturb, that ripen in stress, that tend to future birth, aging, & death: Those the Tathāgata has abandoned, their root destroyed, made like a palmyra stump—deprived of the conditions of development, not destined for future arising.”’

Thus, because of the silencing of Māra, and because of the Brahmā’s invitation, this discourse is entitled, “The Brahmā Invitation.” — [*MN 49*](#)

The Quarrel at Kosambī

There were two major challenges to the unity of the Saṅgha during the Buddha's lifetime. The one that occurred during his old age will be discussed in the next chapter. The other one, the quarrel at Kosambī, is hard to date, as the narrative of the incident makes no reference to how old the Buddha was at the time.

At that time the Blessed One was dwelling near Kosambī in Ghosita's monastery. And at that time, a certain monk fell into an offense. He was of the view that that offense was (in fact) an offense. Other monks were of the view that it wasn't an offense. At a later time, he was of the view that the offense was not an offense, and the other monks were of the view that it was an offense.

Then the monks said to that (the first) monk, "Friend, you have fallen into an offense. See (admit) the offense (as such)."

"I have no offense that I should see, friends."

Then the monks, having achieved unanimity (in meeting of the Saṅgha), suspended the monk for not seeing the offense. But the monk was learned & well versed in the tradition, had memorized the Dhamma, the Vinaya, & the Mātikās, ¹⁵² was wise, competent, knowledgeable, scrupulous, anxious (not to commit an offense), & desirous of training.

And so the monk went to his like-minded companions and said, "This is a non-offense. This is not an offense. I have not fallen into an offense. It's not the case that I have fallen into an offense. I am unsuspended, not suspended. I was suspended with a non-Dhamma transaction—reversible, not fit to stand. Be on my side as being in accordance with the Dhamma & Vinaya." So the monk was able to get his like-minded companions to be on his side.

He sent a messenger to like-minded companions in the countryside, (saying,) "This is a non-offense. This is not an offense. I have not fallen into an offense. It's not the case that I have fallen into an offense. I am unsuspended, not suspended. I was suspended with a non-Dhamma transaction—reversible, not fit to stand. Be on my side as being in accordance with the Dhamma &

Vinaya.” So the monk was able to get his friends & companions in the countryside to be on his side.

Then those monks—partisans of the suspended monk—went to the monks who had suspended him and said to them, “This is a non-offense. This is not an offense. That monk has not fallen into an offense. It’s not the case that he has fallen into an offense. He is unsuspended, not suspended. He was suspended with a non-Dhamma transaction—reversible, not fit to stand.”

When that was said, the monks who had suspended him said to his partisans, “This is an offense. This is not a non-offense. That monk has fallen into an offense. It’s not the case that he has not fallen into an offense. He is suspended, not unsuspended. He was suspended with a Dhamma transaction that is irreversible and fit to stand. Venerable sirs, don’t be partisans or followers of that suspended monk.”

Being told that by the monks who had suspended him, the followers (of the suspended monk) still were his partisans & followers.

Then a certain monk went to the Blessed One and, on arrival, bowed down to him and sat to one side. As he was sitting there, he said to the Blessed One, “There is a case, lord, where a certain monk has fallen into an offense. He was of the view that that offense was (in fact) an offense.... Being told that by the monks who had suspended him, the followers (of the suspended monk) still are his partisans & followers.”

Then the Blessed One, (thinking,) “The Saṅgha of monks is split. The Saṅgha of monks is split,” got up from his seat and went to the monks who had suspended (the first monk), and sat down on a seat laid out. Seated, he said to them, “Monks, don’t suppose, (thinking,) ‘It’s clear to us. It’s clear to us,’ that in every case a monk should be suspended.

“Monks, there is the case where a monk falls into an offense. He is of the view that that offense is not an offense. Other monks are of the view that it is an offense. And the monks know of that monk that, ‘This monk is learned... and is desirous of training.’

“(They think,) ‘If we suspend this monk for not seeing an offense, then we won’t do the Uposatha with him. We will do the Uposatha without him. From that cause there would be arguing, quarreling, clashes, & disputes in the Saṅgha, a split in the Saṅgha, a crack in the Saṅgha, a falling apart in the Saṅgha, a separation in the Saṅgha.’

“Monks who see the seriousness of a split (in the Saṅgha) would not suspend that monk for not seeing an offense.

“Monks, there is the case where a monk falls into an offense. He is of the view that that offense is not an offense. Other monks are of the view that it is an offense. And the monks know of that monk that, ‘This monk is learned... and is desirous of training.’

“(They think,) ‘If we suspend this monk for not seeing an offense, then we won’t do the Invitation [*pavāraṇā*] with him. We will do the Invitation without him. We won’t do Saṅgha transactions with him. We will do Saṅgha transactions without him. We won’t sit on (the same) seat with him. We will sit on a seat separate from him. We won’t sit having conjei with him. We will sit having conjei separate from him. We won’t sit in the meal hall with him. We will sit in the meal hall separate from him. We won’t dwell under the same roof with him. We will dwell under a roof separate from him. We won’t—in line with seniority—bow down to him, stand up to greet him, salute him with hands placed palm-to-palm over the heart, or perform form of respect due to superiors. From that cause there would be arguing, quarreling, clashes, & disputes in the Saṅgha, a split in the Saṅgha, a crack in the Saṅgha, a falling apart in the Saṅgha, a separation in the Saṅgha.’

“Monks who see the seriousness of a split (in the Saṅgha) would not suspend that monk for not seeing an offense.”

Then the Blessed One, having explained the matter to the monks who had suspended (the first monk), got up from his seat, went to the partisans of the suspended monk, and sat down on a seat laid out. Seated, he said to them, “Don’t suppose that, having fallen into an offense, (thinking,) ‘We haven’t fallen (into an offense). We haven’t fallen (into an offense),’ it should not be confessed.

“Monks, there is the case where a monk falls into an offense. He is of the view that that offense is not an offense. Other monks are of the view that it is an offense. And that monk knows of the other monks that, ‘These monks are learned... and are desirous of training.’

“(He thinks,) ‘It’s unlikely that they—on my account or the account of others—would from desire, aversion, delusion, or fear follow a wrong course. If these monks suspend me for not seeing an offense, then they won’t do the Uposatha with me. They’ll do the Uposatha without me. From that cause there would be arguing, quarreling, clashes, & disputes in the Saṅgha, a split in the

Saṅgha, a crack in the Saṅgha, a falling apart in the Saṅgha, a separation in the Saṅgha.’

“A monk who sees the seriousness of a split (in the Saṅgha) should confess an offense even out of conviction in others.

“Monks, there is the case where a monk falls into an offense. He is of the view that that offense is not an offense. Other monks are of the view that it is an offense. And that monk knows of the other monks that ‘These monks are learned... and are desirous of training.

“(He thinks,) ‘It’s unlikely that they—on my account or the account of others—would from desire, aversion, delusion, or fear follow a wrong course. If these monks suspend me for not seeing an offense, then they won’t do the Invitation with me. They’ll do the Invitation without me. They won’t do Saṅgha transactions with me. They’ll do Saṅgha transactions without me. They won’t sit on (the same) seat with me. They’ll sit on a seat separate from me. They won’t sit having conjeṃ with me. They’ll sit having conjeṃ separate from me. They won’t sit in the meal hall with me. They’ll sit in the meal hall separate from me. They won’t dwell under the same roof with me. They’ll dwell under a roof separate from me. They won’t—in line with seniority—bow down to me, stand up to greet me, salute me with hands placed palm-to-palm over the heart, or perform forms of respect due to superiors to me. From that cause there would be arguing, quarreling, clashes, & disputes in the Saṅgha, a split in the Saṅgha, a crack in the Saṅgha, a falling apart in the Saṅgha, a separation in the Saṅgha.’

“A monk who sees the seriousness of a split (in the Saṅgha) should confess an offense even out of conviction in others.”

Then the Blessed One, having explained the matter to the partisans of the suspended monk, got up from his seat and left. — [*Mv 10:1.1–8*](#)

And at that time the monks were quarreling, arguing, & disputing in the midst of the Saṅgha, wounding one another with verbal daggers. They couldn’t resolve the issue.

Then a certain monk went to the Blessed One and, on arrival, bowed down to him and sat to one side. As he was sitting there, he said to the Blessed One, “Lord, now the monks are quarreling, arguing, & disputing in the midst of the Saṅgha, wounding one another with verbal daggers. It would be good if the Blessed One would go to them out of sympathy.”

The Blessed One acquiesced with silence.

Then the Blessed One went to the monks and sat down on a seat laid out. Seated, he said to them, “Enough, monks. Don’t quarrel. Don’t argue. Don’t make strife. Don’t dispute.”

When that was said, a certain non-Dhamma-declaring monk said to the Blessed One, “Wait, Lord Blessed One. May the Master of the Dhamma dwell at rest, devoted to a pleasant abiding in the here-&-now, Lord Blessed One. We will be the ones who deal with this argument, quarrel, strife, & dispute.”

A second time, the Blessed One said to the monks, “Enough, monks. Don’t argue. Don’t quarrel. Don’t make strife. Don’t dispute.”

A second time, the non-Dhamma-declaring monk said to the Blessed One, “Wait, Lord Blessed One. May the Master of the Dhamma dwell at ease, devoted to a pleasant abiding in the here-and-now, Lord Blessed One. We will be the ones who deal with this argument, quarrel, strife, & dispute.”

Then the Blessed One addressed the monks, saying, “Once, monks, in Vārāṇasī, Brahmadatta was the king of Kāśi—rich, prosperous, with many possessions, many troops, many vehicles, many territories, with fully stocked armories & granaries. Dīghīti was the king of Kosala—poor, not very prosperous, with few possessions, few troops, few vehicles, few territories, with poorly stocked armories & granaries. So Brahmadatta the king of Kāśi, raising a fourfold army, marched against Dīghīti the king of Kosala. Dīghīti the king of Kosala heard, ‘Brahmadatta the king of Kāśi, they say, has raised a fourfold army and is marching against me.’ Then the thought occurred to him, ‘King Brahmadatta is rich, prosperous... with fully stocked armories & granaries, whereas I am poor... with poorly stocked armories & granaries. I am not competent to stand against even one attack by him. Why don’t I slip out of the city beforehand?’ So, taking his chief consort, he slipped out of the city beforehand. Then King Brahmadatta, conquering the troops, vehicles, lands, armories, & granaries of King Dīghīti, lived in lordship over them.

“Meanwhile, King Dīghīti had set out for Vārāṇasī together with his consort and, traveling by stages, arrived there. There he lived with her on the outskirts of Vārāṇasī in a potter’s house, disguised as a wanderer. Not long afterwards, she became pregnant. She had a pregnancy wish of this sort: She wanted to see a fourfold army, armed & arrayed, standing on a parade ground at dawn, and to drink the water used for washing the swords. She said to King Dīghīti, ‘Your majesty, I am pregnant and I have a pregnancy wish of this sort: I want to see a

fourfold army, armed & arrayed, standing on a parade ground at dawn, and to drink the water used for washing the swords.' He said, 'My queen, where is there for us—fallen on hard times—a fourfold army, armed & arrayed, standing on a parade ground, and water used for washing the swords?'

"If I don't get this, your majesty, I will die.'

Now at that time, the brahman adviser to King Brahmadatta was a friend of King Dīghīti. So King Dīghīti went to him and, on arrival, said, 'A lady friend of yours, old friend, is pregnant, and she has a pregnancy wish of this sort: She wants to see a fourfold army, armed & arrayed, standing on a parade ground at dawn, and to drink the water used for washing the swords.'

"In that case, let me see her.'

"So King Dīghīti's consort went to King Brahmadatta's brahman adviser. When the brahman adviser saw her coming from afar, he rose from his seat, arranged his robe over one shoulder and, with his hands raised in salutation to her, exclaimed three times, 'Surely the king of Kosala has come to your womb! Surely the king of Kosala has come to your womb! Surely the king of Kosala has come to your womb! Don't be worried, my queen. You will get to see a fourfold army, armed & arrayed, standing on a parade ground at dawn, and to drink the water used for washing the swords.'

"Then he went to King Brahmadatta and, on arrival, said to him, 'Your majesty, signs have appeared such that tomorrow at dawn a fourfold army, armed & arrayed, should stand on a parade ground and that the swords should be washed.'

"So King Brahmadatta ordered his people, 'I say, then: Do as the brahman adviser says.' Thus King Dīghīti's chief consort got to see a fourfold army, armed & arrayed, standing on a parade ground at dawn, and got to drink the water used for washing the swords. Then, with the maturing of the fetus, she gave birth to a son, whom they named Dīghāvu [LongLife]. Not long afterwards, Prince Dīghāvu reached the age of discretion. The thought occurred to King Dīghīti, 'This King Brahmadatta of Kāśi has done us great harm. He has seized our troops, vehicles, lands, armories, & granaries. If he finds out about us, he will have all three of us killed. Why don't I send Prince Dīghāvu to live outside of the city?' So Prince Dīghāvu, having gone to live outside of the city, learned all the crafts.

"Now at that time King Dīghīti's barber had gone over to King Brahmadatta. He saw King Dīghīti, together with his consort, living on the outskirts of

Vārāṇasī in a potter's house, disguised as a wanderer. On seeing them, he went to King Brahmadatta and, on arrival, said to him, 'Your majesty, King Dīghīti of Kosala, together with his consort, is living on the outskirts of Vārāṇasī in a potter's house, disguised as a wanderer.'

"So King Brahmadatta ordered his people, 'I say, then: Go fetch King Dīghīti together with his consort.'

"Responding, 'As you say, your majesty,' to the king, they went and fetched King Dīghīti together with his consort.

"Then King Brahmadatta ordered his people, 'I say, then: Having bound King Dīghīti & his consort with a stout rope with their arms pinned tightly against their backs, and having shaved them bald, march them to a harsh-sounding drum from street to street, crossroads to crossroads, evict them out the south gate of the city and there, to the south of the city, cut them into four pieces and bury them in holes placed in the four directions.'

Responding, 'As you say, your majesty,' to the king, the king's people bound King Dīghīti & his consort with a stout rope, pinning their arms tightly against their backs, shaved them bald, and marched them to a harsh-sounding drum from street to street, crossroads to crossroads.

"Then the thought occurred to Prince Dīghāvu, 'It's been a long time since I saw my mother & father. What if I were to go see them?' So he entered Vārāṇasī and saw his mother & father bound with a stout rope, their arms pinned tightly against their backs, their heads shaven bald, being marched to a harsh-sounding drum from street to street, crossroads to crossroads. So he went to them. King Dīghīti saw Prince Dīghāvu coming from afar and, on seeing him, said to him, 'Don't, my dear Dīghāvu, be far-sighted. Don't be near-sighted. For vengeance is not settled through vengeance. Vengeance is settled through non-vengeance.'

"When this was said, the people said to him, 'This King Dīghīti has gone crazy. He's talking nonsense. Who is Dīghāvu? Why is he saying, "Don't, my dear Dīghāvu, be far-sighted. Don't be near-sighted. For vengeance is not settled through vengeance. Vengeance is settled through non-vengeance"?'"

"I'm not crazy or talking nonsense. He who knows will understand.' Then a second time... a third time he said, 'Don't, my dear Dīghāvu, be far-sighted. Don't be near-sighted. For vengeance is not settled through vengeance. Vengeance is settled through non-vengeance.'

“A third time, the people said to him, ‘This King Dīghīti has gone crazy. He’s talking nonsense. Who is Dīghāvu? Why is he saying, “Don’t, my dear Dīghāvu, be far-sighted. Don’t be near-sighted. For vengeance is not settled through vengeance. Vengeance is settled through non-vengeance”?’

“I’m not crazy or talking nonsense. He who knows will understand.’

“Then the king’s people, having marched King Dīghīti together with his chief consort to a harsh-sounding drum from street to street, crossroads to crossroads, evicted them out the south gate of the city and there, to the south of the city, cut them into four pieces, buried them in holes placed in the four directions, stationed guards, and left.

“Then Prince Dīghāvu, having entered Vārāṇasī, brought out some liquor and got the guards to drink it. When they had fallen down drunk, he collected sticks, made a pyre, raised the bodies of his mother & father onto the pyre, set fire to it, and then circumambulated it three times with his hands raised in salutation.

“Now at that time, King Brahmadatta had gone up to the terrace on top of his palace. He saw Prince Dīghāvu circumambulating the pyre three times with his hands raised in salutation, and on seeing him, the thought occurred to him, ‘Doubtlessly, this person is a relative or blood-kinsman of King Dīghīti. Ah, how unfortunate for me, for there is no one who will tell me what this means!’

“Then Prince Dīghāvu, having gone into the wilderness and having cried & wept as much as he needed to, dried his tears and entered Vārāṇasī. Going to an elephant stable next to the king’s palace, he said to the chief elephant trainer, ‘Teacher, I want to learn this craft.’

“In that case, young man, you may learn it.’

“Then, rising in the last watch of the night, Prince Dīghāvu sang in a sweet voice and played the lute in the elephant stable. King Brahmadatta, also rising in the last watch of the night, heard the sweet-voiced singing & lute-playing in the elephant stable. On hearing it, he asked his people, ‘I say: Who was that, rising in the last watch of the night, singing in a sweet voice and playing a lute in the elephant stable?’

“Your majesty, a young man—the student of such-and-such an elephant trainer, rising in the last watch of the night—was singing in a sweet voice and playing a lute in the elephant stable.’

“I say, then: Go fetch that young man.’

“Responding, ‘As you say, your majesty,’ to the king, they went and fetched Prince Dīghāvu.

“Then King Brahmadatta said to Prince Dīghāvu, ‘I say, my young man: Was that you rising in the last watch of the night, singing in a sweet voice and playing a lute in the elephant stable?’

“‘Yes, your majesty.’

“I say then, my young man: Sing and play the lute.’

“Responding, ‘As you say, your majesty,’ to the king and seeking to win favor, Prince Dīghāvu sang with a sweet voice and played the lute.

Then King Brahmadatta said to him, ‘I say: You, my young man, are to stay and attend to me.’

“As you say, your majesty,’ Prince Dīghāvu responded to the king. Then he rose in the morning before King Brahmadatta, went to bed in the evening after him, did whatever the king ordered, always acting to please him, speaking politely to him. And it wasn’t long before King Brahmadatta placed the prince close to him in a position of trust.

“Then one day King Brahmadatta said to Prince Dīghāvu, ‘I say then, my young man: Harness the chariot. I’m going hunting.’

“Responding, ‘As you say, your majesty,’ to the king, Prince Dīghāvu harnessed the chariot and then said to King Brahmadatta, ‘Your chariot is harnessed, your majesty. Now is the time for you to do as you see fit.’

“Then King Brahmadatta mounted the chariot, and Prince Dīghāvu drove it. He drove it in such a way that the king’s entourage went one way, and the chariot another. Then, after they had gone far, King Brahmadatta said to Prince Dīghāvu, ‘I say then, my young man: Unharness the chariot. I’m tired. I’m going to lie down.’

“Responding, ‘As you say, your majesty,’ to the king, Prince Dīghāvu unharnessed the chariot and sat down cross-legged on the ground. Then King Brahmadatta lay down, placing his head on Prince Dīghāvu’s lap. As he was tired, he went to sleep right away. Then the thought occurred to Prince Dīghāvu: ‘This King Brahmadatta of Kāsi has done us great harm. He has seized our troops, vehicles, lands, armories, & granaries. And it was because of him that my mother & father were killed. Now is my chance to wreak vengeance!’ He drew his sword from his scabbard. But then he thought, ‘My father told me, as he was about to die, “Don’t, my dear Dīghāvu, be far-sighted.

Don't be near-sighted. For vengeance is not settled through vengeance. Vengeance is settled through non-vengeance." It would not be proper for me to transgress my father's words.' So he put his sword back in its scabbard.

"A second time... A third time the thought occurred to Prince Dīghāvu: 'This King Brahmadatta of Kāsi has done us great harm. He has seized our troops, vehicles, lands, armories, & granaries. And it was because of him that my mother & father were killed. Now is my chance to wreak vengeance!' He drew his sword from his scabbard. But then he thought, 'My father told me, as he was about to die, "Don't, my dear Dīghāvu, be far-sighted. Don't be near-sighted. For vengeance is not settled through vengeance. Vengeance is settled through non-vengeance." It would not be proper for me to transgress my father's words.' So once again he put his sword back in its scabbard.

"Then King Brahmadatta suddenly got up—frightened, agitated, unnerved, alarmed. Prince Dīghāvu said to him, 'Your majesty, why have you gotten up suddenly—frightened, agitated, unnerved, & alarmed?'

"I say, my young man: Just now as I was dreaming, Prince Dīghāvu—son of Dīghīti, king of Kosala—struck me down with a sword.' Then Prince Dīghāvu, grabbing King Brahmadatta by the head with his left hand, and drawing his sword from its scabbard with his right, said, 'I, your majesty, am that very Prince Dīghāvu, son of Dīghīti, king of Kāsi. You have done us great harm. You have seized our troops, vehicles, lands, armories, & granaries. And it was because of you that my mother & father were killed. Now is my chance to wreak vengeance!'

"So King Brahmadatta, dropping his head down to Prince Dīghāvu's feet, said, 'Grant me my life, my dear Dīghāvu! Grant me my life, my dear Dīghāvu!'

"Who am I that I would dare grant life to your majesty? It is your majesty who should grant life to me!'

"In that case, my dear Dīghāvu, you grant me my life, and I grant you your life.'

"Then King Brahmadatta and Prince Dīghāvu granted one another their lives and, taking one another by the hands, swore an oath to do one another no harm.

"Then King Brahmadatta said to Prince Dīghāvu, 'In that case, my dear Dīghāvu, harness the chariot. We will go on.'

“Responding, ‘As you say, your majesty,’ to the king, Prince Dīghāvu harnessed the chariot and then said to King Brahmadatta, ‘Your chariot is harnessed, your majesty. Now is the time for you to do as you see fit.’

“Then King Brahmadatta mounted the chariot, and Prince Dīghāvu drove it. He drove it in such a way that it wasn’t long before they met up with the king’s entourage.

“Then King Brahmadatta, having entered Vārāṇasī, had his ministers & councilors convened and said to them, ‘I say, then. If you were to see Prince Dīghāvu, the son of Dīghīti, the king of Kosala, what would you do to him?’

“Different ministers said, ‘We would cut off his hands, your majesty’—‘We would cut off his feet, your majesty’—‘We would cut off his hands & feet, your majesty’—‘We would cut off his ears, your majesty’—‘We would cut off his nose, your majesty’—‘We would cut off his ears & nose, your majesty’—‘We would cut off his head, your majesty.’

“Then the king said, ‘This, I say, is Prince Dīghāvu, the son of Dīghīti, the king of Kāśi. You are not allowed to do anything to him. It was by him that my life was granted to me, and it was by me that his life was granted to him.’

“Then King Brahmadatta said to Prince Dīghāvu, ‘What your father said to you as he was about to die—“Don’t, my dear Dīghāvu, be far-sighted. Don’t be near-sighted. For vengeance is not settled through vengeance. Vengeance is settled through non-vengeance”—in reference to what did he say that?’

“‘What my father said to me as he was about to die—“Don’t be far-sighted”: “Don’t bear vengeance for a long time” is what he was saying to me as he was about to die. And what he said to me as he was about to die—“Don’t be near-sighted”: “Don’t be quick to break with a friend” is what he was saying to me as he was about to die. And what he said to me as he was about to die—“For vengeance is not settled through vengeance. Vengeance is settled through non-vengeance”: My mother & father were killed by your majesty. If I were to deprive your majesty of life, those who hope for your majesty’s well-being would deprive me of life. And those who hope for my well-being would deprive them of life. And in that way, vengeance would not be settled by vengeance. But now I have been granted my life by your majesty, and your majesty has been granted your life by me. And in this way vengeance has been settled by non-vengeance. That is what my father was saying to me as he was about to die.’

“Then King Brahmadatta said, ‘Isn’t it amazing! Isn’t it astounding! How wise this Prince Dīghāvu is, in that he can understand in full the meaning of

what his father said in brief!’ So he returned his father’s troops, vehicles, lands, armories, & granaries to him, and gave him his daughter in marriage.

“Such, monks, is the forbearance & gentleness of kings who wield the scepter, who wield the sword. So now let your light shine forth, so that you—who have gone forth in such a well taught Dhamma & Vinaya—will be their equal in forbearance & gentleness.”

So a third time, the Blessed One said to the monks, “Enough, monks. Don’t argue. Don’t quarrel. Don’t make strife. Don’t dispute.”

And a third time, the non-Dhamma-declaring monk said to the Blessed One, “Wait, Lord Blessed One. May the Master of the Dhamma dwell at ease, devoted to a pleasant abiding in the here-and-now, Lord Blessed One. We will be the ones who deal with this argument, quarrel, strife, & dispute.”

Then the Blessed One, (thinking,) “These worthless men seem to be out of control—they’re not easy to convince,” got up from his seat and left. —

[*Mv 10:2,2–20*](#)

Then, early in the morning, the Blessed One—having adjusted his under robe and carrying his bowl & outer robe—went into Kosambī for alms. Having gone for alms in Kosambī, after the meal, returning from his almsround, having set his dwelling in order, taking his robes & bowl, standing in the midst of the Saṅgha, he recited these verses:

Loud-voiced
on a par with people at large,
no one considers himself
a fool.
Though the Saṅgha is splitting
they don’t consider
anything else more.

Totally forgotten:
the words of the wise
declaring the right range of speech.
They stretch out their mouths
as far as they want,
led on where, by what,
they don’t know.

'He insulted me,
hit me,
beat me,
robbed me':
For those who brood on this,
 hostility isn't stilled.

'He insulted me,
hit me,
beat me,
robbed me':
For those who don't brood on this,
 hostility is stilled.

Hostilities aren't stilled
 through hostility,
 regardless.

Hostilities are stilled
through non-hostility:
 This, an unending truth.

Unlike those who don't realize
that we're here on the verge
 of perishing,
those who do:
 Their quarrels are stilled.

Bone-breakers, killers,
robbers, cattle thieves,
those who plunder the land:
Even they have their fellowship.
Why shouldn't you have yours?

If you gain a mature companion—
a fellow traveler,
 right-living,
 enlightened—
overcoming all dangers
go with him,
gratified,

mindful.

If you don't gain a mature companion—
a fellow traveler,

right-living,

enlightened—

go alone like a king renouncing his kingdom,
like the elephant in the Mātanga wilds, his herd.

Going alone is better,
there's no companionship with a fool.

Go alone,

doing no evil,

at peace,

like the elephant in the Mātanga wilds.

Having recited these verses while standing in the midst of the Saṅgha, the Blessed One went to Bālakaloṇakāraka Village. At that time, Ven. Bhagu was living near Bālakaloṇakāraka Village. He saw the Blessed One coming from afar and, on seeing him, laid out a seat. Having set out water for washing his feet, a foot stand, & a pebble foot-washer, he went out to receive his robes & bowl. The Blessed One sat down on the seat laid out and, seated, washed his feet. Ven. Bhagu, having bowed down to the Blessed One, sat to one side. As he was sitting there, the Blessed One said to him, “Is it tolerable, monk? Are you getting by? Are you weary from going for alms?”

“It's tolerable, O Blessed One. I'm getting by, O Blessed One. And I'm not weary, lord, from going for alms.”

Then the Blessed One, having instructed, urged, roused, & encouraged Ven. Bhagu with a Dhamma talk, got up from his seat and went to the Eastern Bamboo Park.

At that time, Ven. Anuruddha, Ven. Nandiya, & Ven. Kimbila were staying in the Eastern Bamboo Park. The park warden saw the Blessed One coming from afar and, on seeing him, said to him, “Contemplative, don't enter the park. There are three sons of good families living there, apparently desiring their own (welfare). Don't make them uncomfortable.”

Ven. Anuruddha heard the park warden conversing with the Blessed One and, on hearing him, said to the park warden, “Friend park warden, don't keep out the Blessed One. It's our Teacher, the Blessed One, who has arrived.”

Then Ven. Anuruddha went to Ven. Nandiya & Ven. Kimbila and, on arrival, said to them, “Come out, venerables! Come out, venerables! It’s our Teacher, the Blessed One, who has arrived.”

Then Ven. Anuruddha, Ven. Nandiya, & Ven. Kimbila went out to greet the Blessed One. One received his robe & bowl. Another laid out a seat. Another set out water for washing his feet, a foot stand, & a pebble foot-washer. The Blessed One sat down on the seat laid out and, seated, washed his feet. They, having bowed down to the Blessed One, sat to one side. As they were sitting there, the Blessed One said to Ven. Anuruddha, “Is it tolerable for you, Anuruddhas? ¹⁵³ Are you getting by? Are you weary from going for alms?”

“It’s tolerable, O Blessed One. We’re getting by, O Blessed One. And we’re not weary, lord, from going for alms.”

“But, Anuruddhas, are you living harmoniously, cordially, & without dispute, blending like milk & water, looking at one another with eyes of affection?”

“Yes, lord, we’re living harmoniously, cordially, & without dispute, blending like milk & water, looking at one another with eyes of affection.”

“But, Anuruddhas, how are you living harmoniously, cordially, & without dispute, blending like milk & water, looking at one another with eyes of affection?”

“Here, lord, the thought occurs to me, ‘It’s a gain for me, a great gain, that I am living with companions of this sort in the holy life.’ I am set on bodily acts of goodwill with regard to these venerable ones, to their faces & behind their backs. I am set on verbal & mental acts of goodwill with regard to these venerable ones, to their faces & behind their backs. The thought occurs to me, ‘Why don’t I, having put aside my own thoughts, conduct myself in line with the thoughts of these venerable ones.’ And having put aside my own thoughts, I do conduct myself in line with the thoughts of these venerable ones. Our bodies are separate, lord, but we are one—as it were—in mind.”

Ven. Nandiya & Ven. Kimbila said to the Blessed One, “Here, lord, the thought occurs to me also, ‘It’s a gain for me, a great gain... Our bodies are separate, lord, but we are one—as it were—in mind.’

“This, lord, is how we are living harmoniously, cordially, & without dispute, blending like milk & water, looking at one another with eyes of affection.”

“But, Anuruddhas, do you remain heedful, ardent, & resolute?”

“Yes, lord, we remain heedful, ardent, & resolute.”

“But, Anuruddhas, how do you remain heedful, ardent, & resolute?”

“Here, lord, whichever of us returns first from going to the village for alms arranges the seats; sets out water for washing the feet, a foot stand, & a pebble foot-washer; washes the refuse bucket and sets it out; and sets out water for drinking & water for using. Whoever returns afterwards from going to the village for alms eats the leftovers—if there are any and if he wants to—and if not, he throws them out in a place where there are no crops or dumps them into water without living beings in it. He folds up the seats; puts away the water for washing the feet, the foot stand, & the pebble foot-washer; washes and puts away the refuse bucket; puts away the water for drinking & water for using; and sweeps the meal hall.

“Whoever sees that the drinking-water pitcher, using-water pitcher, or rinsing-water pitcher [in the bathroom] are low or empty refills it. If it occurs to him, ‘It’s too much for me,’ calling another by waving—using hand signals—and we refill it. Thus, lord, we don’t, for that reason, break out into speech.

“And every five days we sit together for the whole night to discuss the Dhamma. That’s how we remain heedful, ardent, & resolute.”

Then the Blessed One, having instructed, urged, roused, & encouraged Ven. Anuruddha, Ven. Nandiya, & Ven. Kimbila with a Dhamma talk, got up from his seat and set out on a wandering tour toward Pārileyyaka, and, wandering by stages, arrived at Pārileyyaka. There he stayed in Pārileyyaka in the protected forest grove at the root of the auspicious Sal tree.

Then, when the Blessed One was alone in seclusion, this train of thought arose in his awareness: “Before, I was living unpleasantly, hemmed in by those Kosambī monks—quarrelsome, makers of strife, makers of disputes, makers of rumors, makers of issues in the Saṅgha. Now I’m alone, without a second person. I live pleasantly and in ease, away from those Kosambī monks... makers of issues in the Saṅgha.”

It so happened that a certain bull elephant was living hemmed in by elephants, cow-elephants, calf-elephants, & baby elephants. He fed off grass with cut-off tips. They chewed up his stash of broken-off branches. He drank disturbed water. And when he came up from his bathing-place, cow-elephants went along, banging up against his body. Hemmed in, he lived unpleasantly and not in ease. The thought occurred to him: “I now live hemmed in by elephants, cow-elephants, calf-elephants, & baby elephants. I feed off grass with

cut-off tips. They chew up my stash of broken-off branches. I drink disturbed water. And when I come up from my bathing place, cow-elephants go along, banging up against my body. Hemmed in, I live unpleasantly and not in ease. What if I were to live alone, apart from the crowd?”

So the bull elephant, leaving the herd, went to Pārileyyaka, to the protected forest grove and the root of the auspicious Sal tree—to where the Blessed One was staying. There he kept the grass down in the area where the Blessed One was staying, and brought drinking water & washing water for the Blessed One with his trunk.

And this train of thought appeared to the awareness of the bull elephant, “Before, I lived hemmed in by elephants, cow-elephants, calf-elephants, & baby elephants. I fed off grass with cut-off tips. They chewed up my stash of broken-off branches. I drank disturbed water. And when I came up from my bathing place, cow-elephants went along, banging up against my body. Hemmed in, I lived unpleasantly and not in ease. But now I live not hemmed in by elephants, cow-elephants, calf-elephants, & baby elephants. I feed off grass with uncut tips. They don’t chew up my stash of broken-off branches. I drink undisturbed water. When I come up from my bathing place, cow-elephants don’t go along, banging up against my body. Not hemmed in, I live pleasantly and in ease.”

Then the Blessed One, realizing his own seclusion and knowing the train of thought in the bull elephant’s awareness, on that occasion exclaimed:

This
harmonizes
mind with mind—
the nāga’s with the nāga’s—
the elephant with tusks like chariot poles:
that each finds joy
alone
in the forest.

Then the Blessed One, having stayed at Pārileyyaka as long as he liked, set out on a wandering tour toward Sāvattthī and, wandering by stages, arrived at Sāvattthī. There he stayed in Jeta’s Forest, Anāthapiṇḍika’s monastery.

Then the thought occurred to the lay followers of Kosambī, “These masters, the Kosambī monks, have done us a lot of harm. Exasperated with them, the

Blessed One left. Let's not bow down to them, stand up to greet them, salute them with hands raised palm-to-palm over the heart, honor them, show them respect, venerate them, do homage to them, or give them alms when they approach. Thus not honored by us, nor shown respect, venerated, nor done homage to, being brushed off rudely, will leave or disrobe or else regain the confidence of the Blessed One."

So the lay followers of Kosambī didn't bow down to the Kosambī monks, stand up to greet them, salute them with hands raised palm-to-palm over the heart, honor them, show them respect, venerate them, do homage to them, or give them alms when they approached. And the thought occurred to the Kosambī monks—as they were not being honored by the lay followers of Kosambī, nor shown respect, venerated, nor done homage to, and being brushed off rudely—"Friends, let's go to Sāvattthī and settle this issue in the Blessed One's presence."

Then the Kosambī monks—having set their lodgings in order, and taking their robes & bowls—headed to Sāvattthī. Ven. Sāriputta heard that "They say that the Kosambī monks—quarrelsome, makers of strife, makers of disputes, makers of rumors, makers of issues in the Saṅgha—are coming to Sāvattthī."

So Ven. Sāriputta went to the Blessed One and, on arrival, bowed down to him and sat to one side. As he was sitting there, he said to the Blessed One, "They say that the Kosambī monks—quarrelsome, makers of strife, makers of disputes, makers of rumors, makers of issues in the Saṅgha—are coming to Sāvattthī. How am I to behave with regard to these monks?"

"In that case, Sāriputta, take your stance in line with the Dhamma..."

Mahāpajāpatī Gotamī heard... As she was sitting there, she said to the Blessed One, "They say that the Kosambī monks—quarrelsome, makers of strife, makers of disputes, talkers, makers of issues in the Saṅgha—are coming to Sāvattthī. How am I to behave with regard to these monks?"

"In that case, Gotamī, listen to the Dhamma from both sides. Having listened to the Dhamma from both sides, give preference to the view, approval, preference, & belief of the side of those who speak Dhamma. And whatever the Bhikkhunī Saṅgha expects from the Bhikkhu Saṅgha should all be expected from the side of those who speak Dhamma."

Anāthapiṇḍika the householder heard... Visākhā, Migāra's mother heard...

“In that case, Visākhā, give gifts to both sides. Having given gifts to both sides, listen to the Dhamma from both sides. Having listened to the Dhamma from both sides, give preference to the view, approval, preference, & belief of the side of those who speak Dhamma.”

Then the Kosambī monks, traveling by stages, arrived at Sāvattthī. Then Ven. Sāriputta went to the Blessed One.... As he was sitting there, he said to the Blessed One, “They say that the Kosambī monks—quarrelsome, makers of strife, makers of disputes, makers of rumors, makers of issues in the Saṅgha—have arrived at Sāvattthī. How am I to behave with regard to their lodgings?”

“In that case, Sāriputta, vacant lodgings are to be given to them.”

“And if there are no vacant lodgings, what should I do?”

“In that case, they are to be given after having made them vacant. But in no way do I say that a senior monk’s lodging should be preempted. Whoever should preempt it: an offense of wrongdoing.”

“And how am I to act with regard to material gifts?”

“Material gifts are to be divided equally among all.”

Then the thought occurred to the suspended monk as he was contemplating the Dhamma & Vinaya, “This is an offense, not a non-offense. I have fallen into an offense. It’s not the case that I haven’t fallen into an offense. I am suspended. It’s not the case that I’m not suspended. I was suspended with a Dhamma transaction that is irreversible and fit to stand.”

So the suspended monk went to his partisans and, on arrival, said to them, “Friends, this is an offense, not a non-offense.... Come, venerable sirs, get me rehabilitated.”

Then the partisans of the suspended monk, taking him along, went to the Blessed One. On arrival, they bowed down to him and sat to one side. As they were sitting there, they said to the Blessed One, “Lord, this suspended monk says, ‘This is an offense, not a non-offense... Come, venerable sirs, get me rehabilitated.’ What should be done?”

“Monks, that is an offense, not a non-offense. This monk has fallen into an offense. It’s not the case that he hasn’t fallen into an offense. He is suspended. It’s not the case that he’s not suspended. He was suspended with a Dhamma transaction that is irreversible and fit to stand. Because this monk, fallen into an offense, suspended, sees the offense, then in that case, monks, rehabilitate him.”

Then the partisans of the suspended monk, having rehabilitated him, went to the monks who suspended him and, on arrival, said to them, “Regarding the matter about which there was arguing, quarreling, clashes, & disputes in the Saṅgha, a split in the Saṅgha, a crack in the Saṅgha, a falling apart in the Saṅgha, a separation in the Saṅgha: That monk *did* fall into an offense and *was* suspended but (now) has seen his offense and has been rehabilitated. Friends, for the sake of settling this matter, let’s perform a Saṅgha-unification.”

Then the monks who had suspended (the monk) went to the Blessed One and, on arrival, bowed down to him and sat to one side. As they were sitting there, they said to the Blessed One, “Lord, the partisans of the suspended monk say, ‘Regarding the matter about which there was arguing... Friends, for the sake of settling this matter, let’s perform a Saṅgha-unification.’ What should be done?”

“Because the monk, fallen into an offense, suspended, has seen the offense, and has been rehabilitated, then in that case, monks, for the sake of settling of this matter, a Saṅgha-unification should be performed.” — [*Mv 10:3–5*](#)

Devadatta

The second—and more serious—of the two challenges to the unity of the Saṅgha came late in the Buddha's life.

Then the Blessed One, having stayed at Anupiyā as long as he liked, set out on a wandering tour toward Kosambī and, traveling by stages, arrived there. There at Kosambī, the Blessed One stayed at Ghosita's monastery.

Then, when Devadatta was alone in seclusion, this train of thought arose in his awareness: "Who could I impress, so that, when he is impressed with me, plenty of honor & gain would arise for me?"

The thought occurred to Devadatta, "This Prince Ajātasattu is young and in the future will be fortunate. Why don't I impress him? When he is impressed with me, plenty of honor & gain will arise for me."

Then Devadatta, having put his dwelling in order, taking his robe & bowl, set out on a walking tour toward Rājagaha, and traveling by stages, arrived there.

Retracting his own appearance and assuming the appearance of a baby boy girdled with snakes, he appeared in Prince Ajātasattu's lap. Prince Ajātasattu was afraid, apprehensive, alarmed, & trembling. Then Devadatta said to Prince Ajātasattu, "Are you afraid of me, Prince?"

"Yes, I'm afraid. Who are you?"

"I'm Devadatta."

"Sir, if you're Master Devadatta, please appear in your own appearance."

So Devadatta, retracting the appearance of a baby boy, stood holding his bowl, upper robe, & outer robe in front of Prince Ajātasattu. Impressed by Devadatta's feat of supranormal power, Prince Ajātasattu went to visit him with five hundred chariots, morning & evening, and a donation of five hundred pots of food-offerings was offered [each day].

Then ambition arose in Devadatta—overcome by gains, offerings, & fame, his mind out of control—so that he thought, "I'll take charge of the Saṅgha of monks." With the arising of this thought, he fell away from his supranormal power.

At that time, Kakkudha the Koliyan-son, Ven. Mahā Moggallāna's attendant, not long deceased, re-arose in a certain group of mind-made devas. He had an acquisition of identity [body] that was like two or three Magadhan village-territories [in size], but he injured neither himself nor others because of that acquisition of identity.

Then Kakkudha the deva-son went to Ven. Mahā Moggallāna and, on arrival, bowed down to him and stood to one side. As he was standing there, he said to Ven. Mahā Moggallāna, "Ambition has arisen for Devadatta—overcome by gains, offerings, & fame, his mind out of control—so that he thinks, 'I'll take charge of the Saṅgha of monks.' With the arising of this thought, Devadatta has fallen away from his supranormal power."

That is what Kakkudha the deva-son said. Having said that, then—bowing down to Ven. Mahā Moggallāna, circumambulating him, keeping him on his right—he disappeared right there.

Then Ven. Mahā Moggallāna went to the Blessed One and, on arrival, having bowed down to him, sat to one side. As he was sitting there, Ven. Mahā Moggallāna said to the Blessed One, "Lord, Kakkudha the Koliyan-son, my attendant, not long deceased, has re-arisen in a certain group of mind-made devas. He has an acquisition of identity that's like two or three Magadhan village-territories in size, but he injures neither himself nor others because of that acquisition of identity. Then Kakkudha the deva-son came to me and, on arrival, bowed down to me and stood to one side. As he was standing there, he said to me, 'Ambition has arisen for Devadatta—overcome by gains, offerings, & fame, his mind out of control—so that he thinks, 'I'll take charge of the Saṅgha of monks.' With the arising of this thought, Devadatta has fallen away from his supranormal power.'

"That is what Kakkudha the deva-son said. Having said that, then—bowing down to me, circumambulating me, keeping me on his right—he disappeared right there."

"Moggallāna, have you investigated and known Kakkudha the deva-son's awareness with your awareness that 'Whatever Kakkudha the deva-son says is all true and not otherwise?'"

"Lord, I have investigated and known Kakkudha the deva-son's awareness with my awareness that 'Whatever Kakkudha the deva-son says is all true and not otherwise.'"

“Mark these words, Moggallāna. Mark these words. Soon this worthless man will reveal himself.

“Moggallāna, there are these five teachers to be found existing in the world. Which five?

“There is the case where a certain teacher, being impure in virtue, claims to be pure in virtue, ‘My virtue is pure, clean, & undefiled.’ But his students know of him that, ‘This honorable teacher, being impure in virtue, claims to be pure in virtue: “My virtue is pure, clean, & undefiled.” But if we were to tell the householders, he wouldn’t be pleased, and how could we behave toward him in a way that would make him displeased? And, besides, he is honored with robes, almsfood, lodgings, & medicines for curing the sick. Whatever one does oneself, by that will one be known.’

“The students protect such a teacher with regard to his virtue, and such a teacher expects from his students protection with regard to his virtue.

“Then again, there is the case where a teacher, being impure in livelihood... Dhamma-teaching... explaining (the Dhamma)... knowledge & vision, claims to be pure in knowledge & vision, ‘My knowledge & vision is pure, clean, & undefiled.’ But his students know of him that ‘This honorable teacher, being impure in knowledge & vision, claims to be pure in knowledge & vision: “My knowledge & vision is pure, clean, & undefiled.” But if we were to tell the householders, he wouldn’t be pleased, and how could we behave toward him in a way that would make him displeased? And besides, he is honored with robes, almsfood, lodgings, & medicines for curing the sick. Whatever one does oneself, by that will one be known.’

“The students protect such a teacher with regard to his knowledge & vision, and such a teacher expects from his students protection with regard to his knowledge & vision.

“Moggallāna, these are the five teachers to be found existing in the world.

“But I, being pure in virtue, claim to be pure in virtue: ‘My virtue is pure, clean, & undefiled.’ My students don’t protect me with regard to my virtue, and I don’t expect from my students protection with regard to my virtue. Being pure in my livelihood... Dhamma-teaching... in explaining... knowledge & vision, I claim to be pure in knowledge & vision: ‘My knowledge & vision is pure, clean, & undefiled.’ My students don’t protect me with regard to my knowledge & vision, and I don’t expect from my students protection with regard to my knowledge & vision.”

Then the Blessed One, having stayed at Kosambī as long as he liked, set out on a wandering tour toward Rājagaha and, traveling by stages, arrived at Rājagaha. There at Rājagaha he stayed in the Bamboo Forest, the Squirrels' Sanctuary.

Then many monks went to the Blessed One. On arrival, having bowed down to him, they sat to one side. As they were sitting there, the monks said to the Blessed One, "Lord, Prince Ajātasattu goes to visit Devadatta with five hundred chariots, morning & evening, and five hundred pots of food-offerings are being offered."

"Monks, don't envy Devadatta's gains, honor, & fame. As long as Prince Ajātasattu goes to visit him with five hundred chariots, morning & evening, and five hundred pots of food-offerings are being offered, only decline in terms of skillful qualities can be expected for Devadatta, not increase.

"Just as when bile breaks into a vicious dog's nose¹⁵⁴ it becomes even more vicious, in the same way, as long as Prince Ajātasattu goes to visit him with five hundred chariots, morning & evening, and five hundred pots of food-offerings are being offered, only decline in terms of skillful qualities can be expected for Devadatta, not increase.

"It's for his own destruction that gains, honor, & fame have arisen for Devadatta; it's for his own ruin that gains, honor, & fame have arisen for Devadatta.

"Just as it's for its own destruction that a banana tree bears fruit; it's for its own ruin that a banana tree bears fruit, in just the same way, it's for his own destruction... his own ruin that gains, honor, & fame have arisen for Devadatta.

"Just as it's for its own destruction that a bamboo plant bears fruit... a reed bears fruit... a she-mule becomes pregnant... in just the same way, it's for his own destruction... his own ruin that gains, honor, & fame have arisen for Devadatta.

"The fruit, truly, kills the banana tree;
the fruit, the bamboo;
the fruit, the reed.
Honor kills the vile man
like a fetus, a she-mule." — Cv 7:2

“Monks, gains, honor, & fame are a cruel thing, a harsh, bitter obstacle to the attainment of the unexcelled rest from bondage.

“Once, monks, a large family of turtles had lived for a long time in a certain freshwater lake. Then one turtle said to another, ‘My dear turtle, don’t go to that area.’ But the turtle went to that area, and because of that a hunter lanced him with a harpoon. So he went back to the first turtle. The first turtle saw him coming from afar and, on seeing him, said to him, ‘I hope, dear turtle, that you didn’t go to that area.’

“‘I went to that area, dear turtle.’

“‘Then I hope you haven’t been wounded or hurt.’

“‘I haven’t been wounded or hurt, but there’s this cord that keeps dragging behind me.’

“‘Yes, dear turtle, you’re wounded, you’re hurt. It was because of that cord that your father & grandfather fell into misfortune & disaster. Now go, dear turtle. You are no longer one of us.’

“The hunter, monks, stands for Māra the Evil One. The harpoon stands for gains, honor, & fame. The cord stands for delight & passion. Any monk who relishes & revels in gains, offerings, & fame that have arisen is called a monk lanced by the harpoon, who has fallen into misfortune & disaster. The Evil One can do with him as he will. That’s how cruel gains, honor, & fame are: a harsh, bitter obstacle to the attainment of the unexcelled rest from bondage.

“So you should train yourselves: ‘We will put aside any gains, honor, & fame that have arisen; and we will not let any gains, honor, & fame that have arisen keep our minds consumed.’ That’s how you should train yourselves.” — [*SN 17:3*](#)

At that time, the Blessed One—surrounded by a large assembly, including the king—was sitting and teaching the Dhamma. Then Devadatta, getting up from his seat, arranging his robe over one shoulder, and raising his hands palm-to-palm in front of his heart, said to the Blessed One, “Lord, the Blessed One is now old, elderly, aged, advanced in years, in the last phase of life. May the Blessed One dwell at rest, devoted to a pleasant abiding in the here-&-now. May the Blessed One relinquish the Saṅgha of monks to me. I’ll take charge of the Saṅgha of monks.”

“Enough, Devadatta, don’t aim at taking charge of the Saṅgha of monks.”

A second time... A third time, Devadatta said to the Blessed One, “Lord, the Blessed One is now old, elderly, aged, advanced in years, in the last phase of life. May the Blessed One dwell at rest, devoted to a pleasant abiding in the here-and-now. May the Blessed One relinquish the Saṅgha of monks to me. I’ll take charge of the Saṅgha of monks.”

“I wouldn’t relinquish the Saṅgha of monks even to Sāriputta & Moggallāna, so why would I relinquish it to you, you miserable lick-spittle?”

Then Devadatta, (thinking,) “Even in an assembly including the king, the Blessed One insults me with the word ‘lick-spittle’ and extols Sāriputta & Moggallāna,” angry and displeased, having bowed down to the Blessed One, circumambulated him, keeping him to his right, and left. This, then, was the beginning of Devadatta’s hatred of the Blessed One.

Then the Blessed One addressed the monks: “In that case, monks, the Saṅgha should perform an act for the denouncement of Devadatta in Rājagaha: ‘Previously, Devadatta’s character was one thing; now it’s another. Whatever Devadatta does, by body or speech, neither the Buddha, the Dhamma, nor the Saṅgha should be regarded in light of that. Only Devadatta should be regarded in light of that.’

“Monks, it should be done like this: An experienced and competent monk should inform the Saṅgha: ‘Venerable sirs, may the Saṅgha listen to me. If the Saṅgha is ready, it should perform an act for the denouncement of Devadatta in Rājagaha: “Previously, Devadatta’s character was one thing; now it’s another. Whatever Devadatta does, by body or speech, neither the Buddha, nor the Dhamma, nor the Saṅgha should be regarded in light of that; only Devadatta should be regarded in light of that.” This is the motion.

“Venerable sirs, may the Saṅgha listen to me. The Saṅgha is performing an act for the denouncement of Devadatta in Rājagaha: “Previously, Devadatta’s character was one thing; now it’s another. Whatever Devadatta does, by body or speech, neither the Buddha, nor the Dhamma, nor the Saṅgha should be regarded in light of that; only Devadatta should be regarded in light of that.”

“He to whom the performing of an act for the denouncement of Devadatta in Rājagaha thus—“Previously, Devadatta’s character was one thing; now it’s another. Whatever Devadatta does, by body or speech, neither the Buddha, nor the Dhamma, nor the Saṅgha should be regarded in light of that; only Devadatta should be regarded in light of that”—is agreeable should remain silent. He to whom it is not agreeable should speak.

“An act for the denouncement of Devadatta in Rājagaha has been done by the Saṅgha: “Previously, Devadatta’s character was one thing; now it’s another. Whatever Devadatta does, by body or speech, neither the Buddha, nor the Dhamma, nor the Saṅgha should be regarded in light of that; only Devadatta should be regarded in light of that.” This is agreeable to the Saṅgha, therefore it is silent. Thus do I hold it.”

Then the Blessed One addressed Ven. Sāriputta, “In this case, Sāriputta, denounce Devadatta in Rājagaha.”

“Lord, before, I spoke in praise of Devadatta in Rājagaha: ‘Godhiputta [Devadatta] is mighty; Godhiputta is powerful.’ How could I denounce Devadatta in Rājagaha?”

“Was it true, Sāriputta, the praise you spoke of Devadatta in Rājagaha: ‘Godhiputta is mighty; Godhiputta is powerful’?”

“Yes, lord.”

“In just the same way, Sāriputta, denounce Devadatta in Rājagaha truthfully.”

“As you say, lord,” Ven. Sāriputta responded to the Blessed One.

Then the Blessed One addressed the monks: “In this case, monks, the Saṅgha should authorize Sāriputta to denounce Devadatta in Rājagaha...”

Ven. Sāriputta, authorized by the Saṅgha, entered Rājagaha along with a large number of monks and denounced Devadatta there: “Previously, Devadatta’s character was one thing; now it’s another. Whatever Devadatta does, by body or speech, neither the Buddha, nor the Dhamma, nor the Saṅgha should be regarded in light of that; only Devadatta should be regarded in light of that.”

The people there who were lacking in conviction and confidence, of little intelligence, said, “These Sakyan-son contemplatives are envious. They envy Devadatta’s gains, honor, & fame.” But those with conviction and confidence, intelligent, said, “This must be no small matter that the Blessed One is having Devadatta denounced in Rājagaha.”

ATTEMPTS ON THE BUDDHA’S LIFE

Then Devadatta went to Prince Ajātasattu and, on arrival, said to him, “Prince, previously people were long-lived but now they are short-lived. It’s

possible that you will die while still a prince. In that case, having killed your father, become king. I, having killed the Blessed One, will become Buddha.”

Then Prince Ajātasattu, (thinking,) “Master Devadatta is mighty & powerful; Master Devadatta should know,” strapping a dagger to his thigh—afraid, apprehensive, alarmed, & trembling—rushed into the inner palace in the middle of the day.

The ministers guarding the inner palace saw him—afraid, apprehensive, alarmed, & trembling—rushing into the inner palace in the middle of the day. On seeing him, they seized him. Examining him and seeing the dagger strapped to his thigh, they said to him, “Prince, what do you want to do?”

“I want to kill my father.”

“Who incited you?”

“Master Devadatta.”

Some ministers expressed the opinion: “The Prince should be killed, as well as Devadatta and all of the monks.” Some ministers expressed the opinion: “The monks shouldn’t be killed. They haven’t committed any wrongdoing. The Prince and Devadatta should be killed.” Some ministers expressed the opinion: “Neither the Prince nor Devadatta nor the monks should be killed. The king should be informed. Whatever the King says, that’s what we’ll do.”

So the ministers, with Prince Ajātasattu in tow, went to the King of Magadha, Seniya Bimbisāra, and on arrival reported the matter to him.

“I say, what opinion have the ministers expressed?”

“Some ministers, your majesty, have expressed the opinion: ‘The Prince should be killed, as well as Devadatta and all of the monks.’ Some ministers have expressed the opinion: ‘The monks shouldn’t be killed. They haven’t committed any wrongdoing. The Prince and Devadatta should be killed.’ Some ministers have expressed the opinion: ‘Neither the Prince nor Devadatta nor the monks should be killed. The king should be informed. Whatever the King says, that’s what we’ll do.’”

“I say, what do the Buddha, Dhamma, or Saṅgha have to do with this? Didn’t the Blessed One have Devadatta denounced in Rājagaha in advance: ‘Previously, Devadatta’s character was one thing; now it’s another. Whatever Devadatta does, by body or speech, neither the Buddha, nor the Dhamma, nor the Saṅgha should be regarded in light of that; only Devadatta should be regarded in light of that?’”

Thus those ministers who had expressed the opinion: “The Prince should be killed, as well as Devadatta and all of the monks,” he stripped of their rank. Those ministers who had expressed the opinion: “The monks shouldn’t be killed. They haven’t committed any wrongdoing. The Prince and Devadatta should be killed,” he set in a low rank. Those ministers who had expressed the opinion: “Neither the Prince nor Devadatta nor the monks should be killed. The king should be informed. Whatever the King says, that’s what we’ll do,” he set in a high rank.

Then the King of Magadha, Seniya Bimbisāra, said to Prince Ajātasattu, “Why, prince, do you want to kill me?”

“I want the kingdom, your majesty.”

(Saying,) “If you want the kingdom, prince, then the kingdom is yours,” he handed the kingdom over to Prince Ajātasattu.

Then Devadatta went to Prince Ajātasattu and, on arrival, said to him, “Great king, order your men to deprive Gotama the contemplative of his life.”

So Prince Ajātasattu ordered his people, “I say, do whatever Master Devadatta tells you to do.”

Then Devadatta ordered one man, “Go, friend. Gotama the contemplative is staying in such-and-such a place. Having deprived him of life, come back by this road.” On that road, he posted two men, (saying,) “Whatever man comes alone by this road, having deprived him of life, come back by this road.” On that road, he posted four men, (saying,) “Whatever pair of men comes by this road, having deprived them of life, come back by this road.” On that road, he posted eight men, (saying,) “Whatever group of four men comes by this road, having deprived them of life, come back by this road.” On that road, he posted sixteen men, (saying,) “Whatever group of eight men comes by this road, having deprived them of life, come back by this road.”

So the one man, taking a shield & sword, strapping on a quiver & bow, went to the Blessed One. On arriving not far from the Blessed One, he stood with his body frozen—afraid, apprehensive, alarmed, & trembling. The Blessed One saw the man standing with his body frozen—afraid, apprehensive, alarmed, & trembling. On seeing him, he said to him, “Come friend. Don’t be afraid.”

So the man, putting his shield & sword to one side, throwing down his quiver & bow, went to the Blessed One and, on arrival, put his head at the Blessed One’s feet and said to him, “A transgression has overcome me, lord, in

that I was so foolish, so muddle-headed, and so unskilled as to come here with a corrupt intention, a murderous intention. May the Blessed One please accept this confession of my transgression as such, so that I may restrain myself in the future.”

“Yes, friend, a transgression overcame you in that you were so foolish, so muddle-headed, and so unskilled as to come here with a corrupt intention, a murderous intention. But because you see your transgression as such and make amends in accordance with the Dhamma, we accept your confession. For it is a cause of growth in the discipline of the noble ones when, seeing a transgression as such, one makes amends in accordance with the Dhamma and exercises restraint in the future.”

Then the Blessed One gave the man a graduated talk: a talk on giving, a talk on virtue, a talk on heaven; he proclaimed the drawbacks of, degradation in, & defilement in sensuality, and the rewards of renunciation. Then—when he knew that the man was of ready mind, malleable mind, unhindered mind, exultant mind, confident mind—he proclaimed to him the distinctive teaching of the Buddhas: stress, origination, cessation, path. Just as a clean piece of cloth, free from grime, would properly take dye, in the same way, the dustless, stainless Dhamma eye arose for the man as he was sitting right there:

“Whatever is subject to origination is all subject to cessation.”

Then the man, having seen the Dhamma... said to the Blessed One, “Magnificent, lord! Magnificent! ... May the Blessed One remember me as a lay follower who has gone for refuge from this day forward, for life.”

Then the Blessed One said to the man, “Friend, don’t go by that road. Go by this road,” and sent him away by another road.

Then the pair of men, (thinking,) “Why is that one man taking so long to come?” going up the road, saw the Blessed One sitting at the root of a certain tree. On seeing him, they went to him and, on arrival, bowed down to him and sat to one side.

The Blessed One gave them a graduated talk....

Then the group of four men...

Then the group of eight men...

Then the group of sixteen men, (thinking,) “Why is that group of eight men taking so long to come?” going up the road, saw the Blessed One sitting at the root of a certain tree. On seeing him, they went to him and, on arrival, bowed

down to him and sat to one side. The Blessed One gave them a graduated talk: a talk on giving, a talk on virtue, a talk on heaven; he proclaimed the drawbacks of, degradation in, & defilement in sensuality, and the rewards of renunciation. Then—when he knew that they were of ready mind, malleable mind, unhindered mind, exultant mind, confident mind—he proclaimed to them the distinctive teaching of the Buddhas: stress, origination, cessation, path. Just as a clean piece of cloth, free from grime, would properly take dye, in the same way, the dustless, stainless Dhamma eye arose for the men as they were sitting right there: *“Whatever is subject to origination is all subject to cessation.”*

Then the men—having seen the Dhamma, having attained the Dhamma, having known the Dhamma, having gained a footing in the Dhamma, having crossed over and beyond uncertainty, having no more perplexity, having gained fearlessness, independence of others with regard to the Teacher’s message—said to the Blessed One, “Magnificent, lord! Magnificent! ... May the Blessed One remember us as lay followers who have gone for refuge from this day forward, for life.”

Then the one man went to Devadatta and, on arrival, said to him, “Sir, I can’t deprive the Blessed One of life. The Blessed One is mighty & powerful.”

“Enough, friend. Don’t you deprive Gotama the contemplative of life. I’ll deprive Gotama the contemplative of life myself.”

At that time, the Blessed One was walking back and forth in the shade of Vulture Peak Mountain. Then Devadatta, having climbed Vulture Peak Mountain, hurled down a giant rock, (thinking,) “With this I’ll deprive Gotama the contemplative of life.” Two mountain peaks, coming together, caught the rock. A stone sliver, flying from it, caused blood to flow from the Blessed One’s foot.

Then the Blessed One, looking up, said to Devadatta, “Worthless man, you have produced much demerit in that you—with a corrupt intention, a murderous intention—have caused the Tathāgata’s blood to flow.”

Then the Blessed One addressed the monks: “Monks, this is the first immediate kamma¹⁵⁵ that Devadatta has accumulated, that he—with a corrupt intention, a murderous intention—has caused the Tathāgata’s blood to flow.”

The monks heard that “Devadatta, they say, is intent on the Blessed One’s murder.” So the monks walked back and forth around the Blessed One’s

dwelling, making a great noise, a shrill noise, repeating chants to protect, barricade, and guard the Blessed One.

The Blessed One heard the great noise, the shrill noise, the sound of chanting, and on hearing it, addressed Ven. Ānanda, “What is that great noise, that shrill noise, that sound of chanting?”

“Lord, the monks have heard that ‘Devadatta, they say, is intent on the Blessed One’s murder.’ So they are walking back and forth around the Blessed One’s dwelling, making a great noise, a shrill noise, repeating chants to protect, barricade, and guard the Blessed One. That, Blessed One, is that great noise, that shrill noise, that sound of chanting.”

“In that case, Ānanda, in my name, call the monks, (saying,) ‘The Teacher calls you, venerable sirs.’”

Responding, “As you say, lord,” to the Blessed One, Ven. Ānanda went to the monks and, on arrival, said to them, “The Teacher calls you, venerable sirs.”

Responding, “As you say, friend,” to Ven. Ānanda, the monks went to the Blessed One and, on arrival, having bowed down to him, sat to one side.

As they were sitting there, the Blessed One said to them, “It’s impossible, monks, that a Tathāgata could be deprived of life by the attack of another. Tathāgatas don’t attain final unbinding through the attack of another....

“Go, monks, each of you to his dwelling. The Tathāgata is not to be protected.” — *Cv 7:3.1–10*

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

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

As she was standing there, one of the devatās exclaimed in the Blessed One’s presence: “What a nāga is Gotama the contemplative! And like a nāga, when

bodily feelings have arisen—painful, fierce, sharp, wracking, repellent, disagreeable—he endures them mindful, alert, & unperturbed!”

Then another devatā exclaimed in the Blessed One’s presence: “What a lion...” “What a thoroughbred...” “What a peerless bull...”

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

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

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

“Five-Veda Brahmins,
living austerely
for one hundred years:
 Their minds
 are not rightly released.
 Lowly by nature,
 they’ve not gone beyond.
Overpowered by craving,
bound up in habits & practices,
performing wretched austerities
for one hundred years:
 Their minds
 are not rightly released.
 Lowly by nature,
 they’ve not gone beyond.
For one fond of conceit,
 there’s no taming;
for one uncentered,

no sagacity.
Though alone in the wilderness,
if one lives heedlessly,
one won't cross over, beyond Māra's sway.
But having abandoned conceit,
well centered within,
with right awareness
 everywhere
 fully released,
alone in the wilderness,
heedfully living,
one will cross over, beyond Māra's sway." — [*SN 1:38*](#)

Then Māra the Evil One went to the Blessed One [as he was lying there] and recited this verse in his presence:

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

The Buddha:

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

Even those pierced in the chest
with an arrow,
their hearts rapidly,
 rapidly
 beating:
Even they with their arrows

are able to sleep.
So why shouldn't I,
with my arrow removed?

I'm not awake with worry,
nor afraid to sleep.
Days & nights
don't oppress me.
I see no threat of decline
in any world at all.
That's why I sleep
with sympathy
for all beings."

Then Māra the Evil One—sad & dejected at realizing, "The Blessed One knows me; the One Well-Gone knows me"—vanished right there. — [SN 4:13](#)

At that time, there was in Rājagaha a fierce, man-killing elephant named Nālāgiri.

Then Devadatta, having entered Rājagaha, went to the elephant stables and said to the elephant trainers, "I say, I am familiar with the king—able to have someone in a low rank established in a high rank and have his meals & wages increased. So, I say, when Gotama the contemplative is walking down this street, let Nālāgiri the elephant out and send him down the street."

The elephant trainers responded, "As you say, sir," to Devadatta.

Then, early in the morning, the Blessed One—having adjusted his under robe and carrying his bowl & outer robe—entered Rājagaha, ¹⁵⁶ along with many monks. Then he walked down that street. The elephant trainers saw the Blessed One walking down that street and, on seeing him, having let Nālāgiri the elephant out, sent him down the street. Nālāgiri the elephant saw the Blessed One coming from afar and, on seeing him, raised his trunk and—his ears & tail bristling—charged the Blessed One.

The monks saw Nālāgiri the elephant coming from afar and, on seeing him, said to the Blessed One, "That's Nālāgiri the elephant—fierce, rough, man-killing—coming down the street! Lord, may the Blessed One turn back! May the One Well-Gone turn back!"

“Come, monks, don’t be afraid. It’s impossible, monks, that a Tathāgata could be deprived of life by the attack of another. Tathāgatas don’t attain final unbinding through the attack of another.”

A second time... A third time, the monks said to the Blessed One, “That’s Nāḷāgiri the elephant—fierce, rough, man-killing—coming down the street! Lord, may the Blessed One turn back! May the One Well-Gone turn back!”

“Come, monks, don’t be afraid. It’s impossible, monks, that a Tathāgata could be deprived of life by the attack of another. Tathāgatas don’t attain final unbinding through the attack of another.”

At that time, people went up to their terraces, upper stories, or onto their roofs and sat watching. There, those who were lacking in conviction & confidence, of little intelligence, said, “Oh, how that handsome contemplative Gotama is about to be trampled by the elephant [nāga]!” But those with conviction and confidence, intelligent, said, “Oh, how the battle of the nāga [the Buddha] ¹⁵⁷ with the nāga [Nāḷāgiri] won’t last long!”

Then the Blessed One suffused Nāḷāgiri the elephant with a heart of goodwill. Nāḷāgiri, suffused with the Blessed One’s goodwill, lowering his trunk, went to the Blessed One. On arrival, he stood in front of the Blessed One.

Then the Blessed One, stroking Nāḷāgiri the elephant’s head with his right hand, addressed him with these verses:

“Elephant, don’t harm a nāga.
Harming a nāga is suffering.
For one who harms a nāga, Elephant,
there’s no good destination beyond here [this world].

Don’t be intoxicated; don’t be heedless.
The heedless don’t go to a good destination.
You should do only that
by which you’ll go to a good destination.”

Then Nāḷāgiri the elephant, taking some dust from the ground at the Blessed One’s feet and sprinkling it on his own head, crouched down and drew back, all the while gazing at the Blessed One. Going to the elephant stable, he stood in his own place. Thus was Nāḷāgiri the elephant tamed.

Then at that time, people would sing this verse:

“Some tame with a rod,
a goad,
& a whip.
Without a rod,
without a knife,
the nāga’s been tamed
by the great seer.”

People criticized & complained & spread it about: “How evil is this Devadatta, and ill-fated! How could he attempt to kill Gotama the contemplative, so mighty, so powerful?”

So Devadatta’s gains & honor diminished, and the Blessed One’s increased.

Now at that time Devadatta, his gains & offerings diminished, ate his meals with his following, having asked and asked for them among households. People criticized & complained & spread it about, “How can these Sakyan-son monks eat their meals having asked and asked for them among households? Who isn’t fond of well prepared things? Who doesn’t like sweet things?”

The monks heard the people criticizing & complaining & spreading it about. Those monks who were modest... criticized & complained & spread it about, “How can Devadatta eat his meals with his following having asked and asked for them among households?”

So they reported the matter to the Blessed One....

“Is it true, as they say, Devadatta, that you eat your meals with your following having asked and asked for them among households?”

“It’s true, O Blessed One.”

Having rebuked him and given a Dhamma talk, he addressed the monks, “Monks, in this case, I will declare meals-for-three among households, in dependence on three reasons: the restraint of shameless individuals, the peaceful dwelling of well-behaved monks, and out of sympathy for families, (thinking,) ‘May monks with evil desires not use factions to split the Saṅgha.’

“In eating a group meal [one to which four or more are invited], one should be dealt with in accordance with the rule.”^{[158](#)}

SCHISM

Then Devadatta went to Kokālika, Kaṭamorakatissaka, Khaṇḍadeviputta, & Samuddadatta and, on arrival, said to them, “Come, friends, let’s cause a schism in Gotama the contemplative’s Saṅgha; let’s break the wheel of his authority.”

When this was said, Kokālika said to Devadatta, “Friend, Gotama the contemplative is mighty & powerful. How could we cause a schism in Gotama the contemplative’s Saṅgha or break the wheel of his authority?”

“Come, friends, we’ll go to Gotama the contemplative and request five points: ‘Lord, the Blessed One speaks in many ways in praise of being modest, content, scrupulous, austere, gracious, self-effacing, & energetic. These five points lead in many ways to being modest, content, scrupulous, austere, gracious, self-effacing, & energetic:

“‘It would be good, lord, if the monks would be wilderness-dwellers as long as they live—anyone who went down to the village would be touched with blame; if they would be almsgoers as long as they live—anyone who accepted a meal invitation would be touched with blame; if they would be cast-off cloth wearers as long as they live—anyone who accepted a householder’s robe would be touched with blame; if they would be tree-root dwellers as long as they live—anyone who went under a roof would be touched with blame; and if they would not eat meat or fish as long as they live—anyone who ate meat or fish would be touched with blame.’

“Gotama the contemplative won’t allow these five points, and we’ll inform the people about them. Friends, it’s possible to cause a schism in Gotama the contemplative’s Saṅgha and break his authority with these five points, because people are impressed by harsh asceticism.”

Then Devadatta went with his following to the Blessed One and, on arrival, having bowed down to him, sat to one side. As he was sitting there, Devadatta said to the Blessed One, “Lord, the Blessed One speaks in many ways in praise of being modest, content, scrupulous, austere, gracious, self-effacing, & energetic. These five points lead in many ways to being modest, content, scrupulous, austere, gracious, self-effacing, & energetic: [and he repeated the five points].”

“Enough, Devadatta, Whoever wants to may be a wilderness-dweller. Whoever wants to may stay in a village. Whoever wants to may be an almsgoer. Whoever wants to may accept meal invitations. Whoever wants to may be a cast-off cloth wearer. Whoever wants to may accept cloth from householders. I have allowed dwelling at the root of a tree for eight months, as well as meat & fish that is pure on three counts: neither seen, heard, nor suspected [that the animal was killed in order to offer its meat to monks].”

Then Devadatta, (thinking,) “The Blessed One doesn’t allow the five points,” thrilled & exultant, got up from his seat together with his following. Bowing to the Blessed One and circumambulating him, keeping him on his right, he left.
— *Cv* 7:3.10–15

“Then again, a person of no integrity is a wilderness dweller.¹⁵⁹ He notices, ‘I am a wilderness dweller, but these other monks are not wilderness dwellers.’ He exalts himself for being a wilderness dweller and disparages others. This is the quality of a person of no integrity.

“But a person of integrity notices, ‘It’s not through being a wilderness dweller that the quality of greed subsides; it’s not through being a wilderness dweller that the quality of aversion... the quality of delusion subsides. Even though one is not a wilderness dweller, if—practicing the Dhamma in line with the Dhamma, practicing masterfully—he is one who follows the Dhamma, he is to be honored for that, praised for that.’ So, giving priority just to the practice, he neither exalts himself for being a wilderness dweller nor disparages others. This is the quality of a person of integrity.

“Then again, a person of no integrity is one who wears robes of cast-off cloth... is an almsgoer... is one who dwells at the root of a tree... is a cemetery dweller... is one who lives in the open air... is one who doesn’t lie down... is one who is content with whatever dwelling is assigned to him... is one who eats only one meal a day. He notices, ‘I am one who eats only one meal a day, but these other monks do not eat only one meal a day.’ He exalts himself for being one who eats only one meal a day and disparages others. This is the quality of a person of no integrity.

“But a person of integrity notices, ‘It’s not through being one who eats only one meal a day that the quality of greed subsides; it’s not through being one who eats only one meal a day that the quality of aversion... the quality of delusion subsides. Even though one is not one who eats only one meal a day, if

—practicing the Dhamma in line with the Dhamma, practicing masterfully—he is one who follows the Dhamma, he is to be honored for that, praised for that.’ So, giving priority just to the practice, he neither exalts himself for being one who eats only one meal a day nor disparages others. This is the quality of a person of integrity.” — [*MN 113*](#)

Then Devadatta entered Rājagaha together with his following and informed the people about the five points: “Friends, having gone to Gotama the contemplative, we requested these five points: ‘Lord, the Blessed One speaks in many ways in praise of being modest, content, scrupulous, austere, gracious, self-effacing, & energetic. These five points lead in many ways to being modest, content, scrupulous, austere, gracious, self-effacing, & energetic: [and he repeated the five points].’” Gotama the contemplative did not allow these five points, but we, having undertaken them, are practicing them.”

The people there who were lacking in conviction and confidence, of little intelligence, said, “These Sakyan-son contemplatives are renunciates, practicing austerities, whereas Gotama the contemplative is intent on abundance.” But those people who had conviction, confidence, wisdom, and intelligence criticized & complained & spread it about, “How can Devadatta attempt to cause a schism in the Saṅgha and to break the wheel of authority?”

The monks heard the people criticizing & complaining & spreading it about. Those monks who were modest... criticized & complained & spread it about, “How can Devadatta attempt to cause a schism in the Saṅgha and to break the wheel of authority?” So they reported the matter to the Blessed One.

“Is it true, Devadatta, that you are attempting to cause a schism in the Saṅgha and break the wheel of authority?”

“It’s true, O Blessed One.”

“Enough, Devadatta. Don’t advocate a schism in the Saṅgha. A schism in the Saṅgha is serious. Whoever splits the unity (of the Saṅgha) produces demerit lasting for an eon, is boiled in hell for an eon. Whoever unifies a split Saṅgha produces Brahmā-merit, rejoices in heaven for an eon. Enough, Devadatta. Don’t advocate a schism in the Saṅgha. A schism in the Saṅgha is serious.”

Then, early in the morning, Ven. Ānanda—having adjusted his under robe and carrying his bowl & outer robe—entered Rājagaha for alms. Devadatta saw Ven. Ānanda going for alms in Rājagaha and, on seeing him, went to him. On

arrival, he said to him, “Friend Ānanda, from today onward I will do the Uposatha and Saṅgha transactions separately from the Blessed One, separately from the Saṅgha of monks.” [160](#)

Then Ven. Ānanda, having gone for alms in Rājagaha, after his meal, returned from his almsround, went to the Blessed One and, on arrival, having bowed down to him, sat to one side. As he was sitting there, he said to the Blessed One, “Just now, lord... I entered Rājagaha for alms. Devadatta saw me going for alms in Rājagaha and, on seeing me, came up to me. On arrival, he said to me, ‘Friend Ānanda, from today onward I will do the Uposatha and Saṅgha transactions separately from the Blessed One, separately from the Saṅgha of monks.’ Today Devadatta will split the Saṅgha.”

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

“Good, for the good, is easy to do.
Good, for the evil, is hard to do.
Evil, for the evil, is easy to do.
Evil, for the noble ones, is hard to do.” — *Cv 7:3.15–17*

Only for his ruin
does renown come to the fool.
It ravages his bright fortune
& rips his head apart.
He would want unwarranted status,
preeminence among monks,
authority among monasteries,
homage from lay families.
‘Let householders & those gone forth
both think that this
was done by me alone.
May I alone determine
what’s a duty, what’s not’:
the resolve of a fool
as they grow—
his desire & pride.
The path to material gain
goes one way,

the way to unbinding,
another.
Realizing this, the monk,
a disciple of the Awakened One,
should not relish offerings,
should cultivate seclusion
instead. — [*Dhp 72-75*](#)

Then Devadatta, on the day of the Uposatha, getting up from his seat, took a bamboo stick [used for drawing lots], (and said,) “I went to Gotama the contemplative and requested five things: ‘Lord, the Blessed One speaks in many ways in praise of being modest... & energetic. These five things lead in many ways to being modest... & energetic. It would be good, lord, if the monks would be wilderness-dwellers as long as they live—anyone who went down to the village would be touched with blame;... and if they would not eat meat or fish as long as they live—anyone who ate meat or fish would be touched with blame. Gotama the contemplative did not allow these five things, but we, having undertaken them, are practicing them. He to whom these five things are agreeable should take a bamboo stick.”

At that time, five hundred new Vajjian-son monks from Vesālī—newly ordained and knowing little of what had been done, (thinking,) “This is Dhamma; this is Vinaya; this is the Teacher’s dispensation”—took bamboo sticks. Then Devadatta, having split the Saṅgha, set out for Gayā Head, taking the five hundred monks.

Then Sāriputta & Moggallāna went to the Blessed One and, on arrival, bowed down to him and sat to one side. As he was sitting there, Ven. Sāriputta said to the Blessed One, “Lord, Devadatta, having split the Saṅgha, has set out for Gayā Head, taking five hundred monks.”

“Don’t you have compassion for those five hundred new monks? Go—before those monks come to ruin.”

Responding, “As you say, lord,” to the Blessed One, Sāriputta & Moggallāna, getting up from their seats, bowed down to the Blessed One, circumambulated him, keeping him to their right, and went to Gayā Head.

At that time, a certain monk was standing not far from the Blessed One, crying. Then the Blessed One said to him, “Why are you crying, monk?”

“The Blessed One’s foremost disciples, Sāriputta & Moggallāna, are going into Devadatta’s presence, approving of his Dhamma.”

“It’s impossible, monk, it cannot happen that Sāriputta & Moggallāna would approve of Devadatta’s Dhamma. On the contrary, they have gone to convince the monks (to return).”

At that time, Devadatta, surrounded by a large assembly, was sitting and teaching the Dhamma. He saw Sāriputta & Moggallāna coming from afar and, on seeing them, addressed the monks, “Monks, see how well I teach the Dhamma? Even Gotama the contemplative’s foremost disciples, Sāriputta & Moggallāna, are coming into my presence, approving of my Dhamma.”

When this was said, Kokālika said to Devadatta, “Friend Devadatta, don’t trust Sāriputta & Moggallāna. Sāriputta & Moggallāna have evil desires and have come under the influence of evil desires.”

“Enough, friend. They are welcome, as they approve of my Dhamma.”

Then Devadatta invited Ven. Sāriputta to sit on half of his seat, “Come, friend Sāriputta, sit here.”

Saying, “Enough, friend,” and taking another seat, Ven. Sāriputta sat to one side. Ven. Moggallāna also took a seat and sat to one side.

Then Devadatta, having instructed, urged, roused, & encouraged the monks with Dhamma talk for most of the night, invited Ven. Sāriputta, (saying,) “Friend Sāriputta, the Saṅgha of monks is free of sleepiness. May a Dhamma talk for the monks come to you. My back is tired; I’m going to stretch it out.

“As you say, friend,” Ven. Sāriputta responded to Devadatta.

Then Devadatta, having folded his outer robe in four, lay down on his right side. Tired, with muddled mindfulness, unalert, he fell asleep in a moment.

Then Ven. Sāriputta taught and exhorted the monks with a Dhamma talk, using the marvel of pointing out (the states in his listeners’ minds).¹⁶¹ Ven. Moggallāna taught and exhorted the monks with a Dhamma talk, using the marvel of supranormal power. As the monks were being taught and exhorted by Ven. Sāriputta, using the marvel of mind-reading, and by Ven. Moggallāna, using the marvel of supranormal power, there arose for them the dustless, stainless Dhamma eye: “*Whatever is subject to origination is all subject to cessation.*”

Then Ven. Sāriputta addressed the monks, “We are going into the Blessed One’s presence. May those who approve of the Blessed One’s Dhamma come.”

So Sāriputta & Moggallāna went to the Bamboo Forest, taking along the five hundred monks.

Then Kokālika woke Devadatta, “Get up, friend Devadatta. Sāriputta & Moggallāna have led the monks away. Didn’t I say, ‘Friend Devadatta, don’t trust Sāriputta & Moggallāna. Sāriputta & Moggallāna have evil desires and have come under the influence of evil desires?’”

Devadatta coughed up hot blood from his mouth right there.

Then Sāriputta & Moggallāna went to the Blessed One and, on arrival, having bowed down to him, sat to one side. As he was sitting there, Ven. Sāriputta said to the Blessed One, “Lord, it would be good if the followers of the schismatic were to be re-accepted [reordained].”

“Enough, Sāriputta, of your advocating the re-acceptance of the followers of the schismatic. In that case, you should have the followers of the schismatic confess a grave offense. And how did Devadatta behave toward you?”

“Lord Blessed One, Devadatta, having instructed, urged, roused, & encouraged the monks with Dhamma talk for most of the night, invited me (saying:) ‘Friend Sāriputta, the Saṅgha of monks is free of sleepiness. May a Dhamma talk for the monks come to you. My back is tired; I’m going to stretch it out.’ That’s how Devadatta behaved.”

Then the Blessed One addressed the monks: “Monks, there was once a great lake in the wilderness, and there were nāgas [elephants] living in dependence on it. Plunging into the lake, they would pull up lotus roots and stalks with their trunks and—having washed them so that they were well washed, having chewed them when they were free of mud—would swallow them. This led to beauty and strength for them, and from that cause there came neither death nor death-like pain.

“But the young calf elephants, imitating the behavior of those nāgas, plunged into the lake and pulled up lotus roots and stalks with their trunks. Without washing them so that they were well washed, they chewed them while they were still muddy and swallowed them. This did not lead to beauty and strength for them, and from that cause there came either death or death-like pain.

“In just the same way, monks, Devadatta, poor wretch, imitating me, will die.

“Whereas a great elephant,

shaking the earth,
eating lotuses,
is vigilant among the rivers,
like a calf eating mud,
the poor wretch, imitating me, will die.

“Monks, conquered by eight non-Dhamma qualities—his mind overwhelmed—Devadatta is doomed to deprivation, doomed to hell, to stay for an eon. Which eight?

“Conquered by gain—his mind overwhelmed—Devadatta is doomed to deprivation, doomed to hell, to stay for an eon.

“Conquered by lack of gain... status... lack of status... honor... lack of honor... having evil ambition... evil friendship—his mind overwhelmed—Devadatta is doomed to deprivation, doomed to hell, to stay for an eon.

“Monks, conquered by these eight non-Dhamma qualities—his mind overwhelmed—Devadatta is doomed to deprivation, doomed to hell, to stay for an eon.

“Monks, it’s good for a monk to keep conquering again & again any arisen material gain. It’s good for a monk to keep conquering again & again any arisen lack of material gain... any arisen status... any arisen lack of status... any arisen offerings... any arisen lack of offerings... any arisen evil ambition... any arisen evil friendship.

“And for what compelling reason should a monk keep conquering again & again any arisen material gain... any arisen evil friendship? Because when one dwells not having conquered any arisen material gain, effluents arise, along with vexations & fevers. But when one dwells having conquered any arisen material gain, those effluents, vexations, & fevers do not exist.

[Similarly with any arisen lack of material gain, any arisen status, any arisen lack of status, any arisen offerings, any arisen lack of offerings, any arisen evil ambition, & any arisen evil friendship.]

“It’s for this compelling reason that a monk should keep conquering again & again any arisen material gain... any arisen evil friendship.

“Therefore, monks, you should train yourselves: ‘We will keep conquering again & again any arisen material gain... any arisen lack of material gain... any arisen status... any arisen lack of status... any arisen offerings... any arisen lack

of offerings... any arisen evil ambition... any arisen evil friendship.' That's how you should train yourselves.

“Monks, conquered by three non-Dhamma qualities—his mind overwhelmed—Devadatta is doomed to deprivation, doomed to hell, to stay for an eon. Which three? Evil ambition, friendship with evil people, and, there being something further to be done, he nevertheless stopped halfway with a lower modicum of distinctive attainment. Conquered by these three non-Dhamma qualities—his mind overwhelmed—Devadatta is doomed to deprivation, doomed to hell, to stay for an eon, incurable.”

May no one in the world
ever be reborn
with evil ambition.
Know that
through that
evil ambition,
his destination's that
of all who have evil ambitions.

I've heard how Devadatta,
—regarded as wise, composed,
incandescent with honor—
in the thrall of heedlessness
assaulted the Tathāgata
and fell to the four-gated, fearful place:
Avīci, unmitigated hell.

Whoever plots against
one free of corruption
who's done no evil deed:
That evil touches him himself,
corrupted in mind,
disrespectful.

Whoever might think
of polluting the ocean
with a pot of poison,
couldn't succeed,
for the mass of water is great.

So it is
when anyone attacks with abuse
the Tathāgata
—rightly-gone,
of peaceful mind—
for abuse doesn't grow on him.
A wise person should make friends,
should associate,
with a person like him—
whose path a monk can pursue
and reach the ending
of suffering & stress. — *Cv 7:3.17–4.8*

Other sectarians tried to use the incidents surrounding Devadatta's attempt at schism to discredit the Buddha. Inadvertently, they gave the Buddha the opportunity to explain the principles behind his treatment of Devadatta, and to win a new follower in the process.

I have heard that the Blessed One was dwelling near Rājagaha in the Bamboo Forest, the Squirrels' Sanctuary.

Then Prince Abhaya went to Nigaṇṭha Nāṭaputta and, on arrival, having bowed down to him, sat to one side. As he was sitting there, Nigaṇṭha Nāṭaputta said to him, "Come, now, prince. Refute the words of Gotama the contemplative, and this admirable report about you will spread afar: 'The words of Gotama the contemplative—so mighty, so powerful—were refuted by Prince Abhaya!'"

"But how, lord, will I refute the words of Gotama the contemplative—so mighty, so powerful?"

"Come now, prince. Go to Gotama the contemplative and, on arrival, say this: 'Lord, would the Tathāgata say words that are unendearing & disagreeable to others?' If Gotama the contemplative, 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, lord, and run-of-the-mill people? For even run-of-the-mill people say words that are unendearing & disagreeable to others.' But if Gotama the contemplative, thus asked, answers, 'The Tathāgata would not say words that are unendearing & disagreeable to others,' then you should say, 'Then how, lord, did you say of

Devadatta that “Devadatta is doomed to deprivation, Devadatta is doomed to hell, Devadatta will stay for an eon, Devadatta is incurable”? For Devadatta was upset & disgruntled at those words of yours.’ When Gotama the contemplative 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 chestnut¹⁶² 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 Gotama the contemplative is asked this two-pronged question by you, he won’t be able to swallow it down or spit it up.”

Responding, “As you say, lord,” to Nigaṇṭha Nāṭaputta, Prince Abhaya got up from his seat, bowed down to Nigaṇṭha Nāṭaputta, circumambulated him, and then 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 glanced up at the sun and thought, “Today is not the time to refute the Blessed One’s words. Tomorrow in my own home I will refute the Blessed One’s words.” So he said to the Blessed One, “Lord, may the Blessed One, together with three others, acquiesce to my offer of tomorrow’s meal.”

The Blessed One acquiesced with silence.

Then Prince Abhaya, understanding the Blessed One’s acquiescence, got up from his seat, bowed down to the Blessed One, circumambulated him, and left.

Then, after the night had passed, early in the morning, the Blessed One—having adjusted his under robe and carrying his bowl & outer robe—went to Prince Abhaya’s residence. On arrival, he sat down on a seat laid out. Prince Abhaya, with his own hand, served & satisfied the Blessed One with fine staple & non-staple foods. Then, when the Blessed One had finished his meal and had rinsed his bowl & hands, Prince Abhaya took a lower seat and sat to one side. As he was sitting there he said to the Blessed One, “Lord, 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, lord, the Nigaṇṭhas are destroyed.”

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

“Just yesterday, lord, I went to Nigaṇṭha Nāṭaputta and... he said to me... ‘Come now, prince. Go to Gotama the contemplative and, on arrival, say this: “Lord, would the Tathāgata say words that are unendearing & disagreeable to others?” ... 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 Gotama the contemplative 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, lord. 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 does not say them.

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

[5] In the case of words that the Tathāgata knows to be factual, true, unbeneficial, but endearing & agreeable to others, he does not 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.”

“Lord, when wise nobles or brahmans, householders or contemplatives, having formulated questions, come to the Tathāgata and ask him, does this line of reasoning appear to his awareness beforehand—‘If those who approach me ask this, I, thus asked, will answer in this way’—or does the Tathāgata come up with the answer on the spot?”

“In that case, prince, I will ask you a counter-question. Answer as you see fit. What do you think? Are you skilled in the parts of a chariot?”

“Yes, lord. I am skilled in the parts of a chariot.”

“And what do you think, prince? When people come & ask you, ‘What is the name of this part of the chariot?’ does this line of reasoning appear to your awareness beforehand—‘If those who approach me ask this, I, thus asked, will answer in this way’—or do you come up with the answer on the spot?”

“Lord, I am renowned for being skilled in the parts of a chariot. All the parts of a chariot are well known to me. I come up with the answer on the spot.”

“In the same way, prince, when wise nobles or brahmans, householders or contemplatives, having formulated questions, come to the Tathāgata and ask him, he comes up with the answer on the spot. Why is that? Because the property of the Dhamma is thoroughly penetrated by the Tathāgata. From his thorough penetration of the property of the Dhamma, he comes up with the answer on the spot.”

When this was said, Prince Abhaya said to the Blessed One: “Magnificent, lord! Magnificent! ... May the Blessed One remember me as a lay follower who has gone to him for refuge from this day forward, for life.” — [MN 58](#)

And what of King Ajātasattu?

I have heard that on one occasion the Blessed One was dwelling near Rājagaha, in Jīvaka Komārabhacca’s mango grove,^{[163](#)} with a large Saṅgha of monks—1,250 monks in all. Now at that time—it being the Uposatha day, the full-moon night of the water-lily season, the fourth month of the Rains—the King of Magadha, Ajātasattu Vedehiputta, was sitting on the roof terrace of his palace surrounded by his ministers. Then he felt inspired to exclaim: “How wonderful is this moonlit night! How beautiful... How lovely... How inspiring... How auspicious is this moonlit night! What contemplative or brahman should we visit tonight who, on being visited, would make our mind clear & serene?”

When this was said, one of the ministers said to the king: “Your majesty, there is Pūraṇa Kassapa, the leader of a community, the leader of a group, the teacher of a group, honored and famous, esteemed as holy by the mass of people. He is aged, long gone forth, advanced in years, in the last phase of life. Your majesty should visit him. Perhaps, if visited by you, he would make your mind clear & serene.”

When this was said, the king remained silent.

Then another minister said to the king: “Your majesty, there is Makkhali Gosāla...” ... “Your majesty, there is Ajita Kesakambalin...” ... “Your majesty, there is Pakudha Kaccāyana...” ... “Your majesty, there is Sañjaya Velatṭhaputta...” ... “Your majesty, there is Nigaṇṭha Nāṭaputta, the leader of a community, the leader of a group, the teacher of a group, honored and famous, esteemed as holy by the mass of people. He is aged, long gone forth, advanced in years, in the last phase of life. Your majesty should visit him. Perhaps, if visited by you, he would make your mind clear & serene.”

When this was said, the king remained silent.

All this time Jīvaka Komārabhacca was sitting silently not far from the king. So the king said to him, “Friend Jīvaka, why are you silent?”

“Your majesty, there is the Blessed One, worthy and rightly self-awakened, staying in my mango grove with a large Saṅgha of monks—1,250 monks in all. Concerning this Blessed One, this admirable report has been spread: ‘Indeed, the Blessed One is worthy & rightly self-awakened, consummate in clear-knowing & conduct, well-gone, an expert with regard to the cosmos, unexcelled trainer of people fit to be tamed, teacher of devas & human beings, awakened, blessed.’ Your majesty should visit him. Perhaps, if visited by you, he would make your mind clear & serene.”

“Then in that case, friend Jīvaka, have the riding elephants prepared.”

Responding, “As you say, your majesty,” having had five hundred female elephants prepared as well as the king’s personal tusker, Jīvaka announced to the king: “Your majesty, your riding elephants are prepared. Do what you think it is now time to do.”

Then the king, having had five hundred of his women mounted on the five hundred female elephants—one on each—and having mounted his own personal tusker, set out from the capital in full royal state, with attendants carrying torches, headed for Jīvaka Komārabhacca’s mango grove. But when the king was not far from the mango grove, he was gripped with fear, trepidation, his hair standing on end. Fearful, agitated, his hair standing on end, he said to Jīvaka Komārabhacca: “Friend Jīvaka, you aren’t deceiving me, are you? You aren’t betraying me, are you? You aren’t turning me over to my enemies, are you? How can there be such a large Saṅgha of monks—1,250 in all—with no sound of sneezing, no sound of coughing, no voices at all?”

“Don’t be afraid, great king. Don’t be afraid. I’m not deceiving you or betraying you or turning you over to your enemies. Go forward, great king, go forward! Those are lamps burning in the pavilion hall.”

Then the king, going as far on his tusker as the ground permitted, dismounted and proceeded on foot to the door of the pavilion hall. On arrival, he asked Jīvaka: “Where, friend Jīvaka, is the Blessed One?”

“That is the Blessed One, great king, sitting against the middle pillar, facing east, surrounded by the Saṅgha of monks.”

Then the king approached the Blessed One and, on reaching him, stood to one side. As he was standing there—surveying the Saṅgha of monks sitting in absolute silence, utterly clear & serene like a lake—he felt inspired to exclaim: “May my son, Prince Udayabhadda, enjoy the same stillness that this Saṅgha of monks now enjoys!”

(The Blessed One said:) “Have you come, great king, together with your affections?”

“Lord, my son, Prince Udayabhadda, is very dear to me. May he enjoy the same stillness that this Saṅgha of monks now enjoys!”

Then, bowing down to the Blessed One and saluting the Saṅgha of monks with his hands palm-to-palm over his heart, he sat to one side. As he was sitting there, he said to the Blessed One: “I would like to ask the Blessed One about a certain issue, if he would give me the opportunity to explain my question.”

“Ask, great king, whatever you like.”

The king asked his question, concerning the fruits of the contemplative life, and the Buddha responded with a long discourse—one of the longest in the Pāli Canon, starting with the most obvious of the fruits of the contemplative life and leading, step by step, to the most noble and refined. His concluding statement:

“Just as if there were a pool of water in a mountain glen—clear, limpid, & unsullied—where a man with good eyesight standing on the bank could see shells, gravel, & 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, & pebbles, and also these shoals of fish swimming about and resting.’ In the same way—with his mind thus concentrated,

purified, & 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 effluents. He discerns, as it has come to be, that *‘This is stress’ ... ‘This is the origination of stress’ ... ‘This is the cessation of stress’ ... ‘This is the 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.’ This, too, great king, is a fruit of the contemplative life, visible here & now, more excellent than the previous ones and more sublime. And as for another visible fruit of the contemplative life, higher and more sublime than this, there is none.”

When this was said, the King of Magadha, Ajātasattu Vedehiputta, said to the Blessed One: “Magnificent, lord! Magnificent! ... May the Blessed One remember me as a lay follower who has gone to him for refuge from this day forward, for life.

“A transgression has overcome me, lord, in that I was so foolish, so muddle-headed, and so unskilled as to kill my father—a righteous man, a righteous king—for the sake of sovereign rulership.¹⁶⁴ May the Blessed One please accept this confession of my transgression as such, so that I may restrain myself in the future.”

“Yes, great king, a transgression overcame you in that you were so foolish, so muddle-headed, and so unskilled as to kill your father—a righteous man, a righteous king—for the sake of sovereign rulership. But because you see your transgression as such and make amends in accordance with the Dhamma, we accept your confession. For it is a cause of growth in the discipline of the noble ones when, seeing a transgression as such, one makes amends in accordance with the Dhamma and exercises restraint in the future.”

When this was said, the King of Magadha, Ajātasattu Vedehiputta, said to the Blessed One: “Well then, lord, we will go now. Many are our duties, many our responsibilities.”

“Then do, great king, what you think it is now time to do.”

So the King of Magadha, Ajātasattu Vedehiputta, delighting and rejoicing in the Blessed One's words, rose from his seat, bowed down to him, and—after circumambulating him—left. Then, not long after he had left, the Blessed One addressed the monks: “The king is wounded, monks. The king is incapacitated. Had he not killed his father—that righteous man, that righteous king—the dustless, stainless Dhamma eye would have arisen to him as he sat in this very seat.”

That is what the Blessed One said. Gratified, the monks delighted in the Blessed One's words. — [*DN2*](#)

Old Age

I have heard that on one occasion the Blessed One was dwelling near Sāvattthī in the Eastern Monastery, the palace of Migāra’s mother. Now on that occasion the Blessed One, on emerging from seclusion in the late afternoon, sat warming his back in the western sun. Then Ven. Ānanda went to the Blessed One and, on arrival, having bowed down to him, massaged the Blessed One’s limbs with his hand and said, “It’s amazing, lord. It’s astounding, how the Blessed One’s complexion is no longer so clear & bright; his limbs are flabby & wrinkled; his back, bent forward; there’s a discernible change in his faculties—the faculty of the eye, the faculty of the ear, the faculty of the nose, the faculty of the tongue, the faculty of the body.”

“That’s the way it is, Ānanda. When young, one is subject to aging; when healthy, subject to illness; when alive, subject to death. The complexion is no longer so clear & bright; the limbs are flabby & wrinkled; the back, bent forward; there’s a discernible change in the faculties—the faculty of the eye, the faculty of the ear, the faculty of the nose, the faculty of the tongue, the faculty of the body.”

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

“I spit on you, wretched old age—
old age that makes for ugliness.
The bodily image, so charming,
is trampled by old age.
Even those who live to a hundred
are headed—all—to an end in death,
which spares no one,
which tramples all.” — [*SN 48:41*](#)

Then Cunda the novice, who had spent the Rains at Pāvā, went to Ven. Ānanda at Sāmagāma and, on arrival, having bowed down to him, sat to one side. As he was sitting there, he said to Ven. Ānanda, “Venerable sir, Nigaṇṭha Nāṭaputta has just died in Pāvā. On his death, the Nigaṇṭhas have split into two factions. They keep arguing, quarreling, & disputing, stabbing one another with

weapons of the mouth: ‘You don’t understand this Dhamma-Vinaya. I understand this Dhamma-Vinaya. How could you understand this Dhamma-Vinaya? You practice wrongly. I practice rightly. I’m consistent. You’re inconsistent. What should be said first, you said last. What should be said last, you said first. What you cogitated so long has been turned inside out. Your position has been overthrown. You’re trapped, so go try to release your position or disentangle yourself if you can!’ Nothing but slaughter, as it were, is being committed among the Nigaṇṭha Nāṭa-sons. Even the lay disciples of Nigaṇṭha Nāṭaputta, dressed in white, seem disenchanted, disgusted, & repelled by the Nigaṇṭha Nāṭa-sons, and at how that poorly proclaimed Dhamma-Vinaya was poorly expounded, not leading out, not conducive to calming, expounded by one who was not rightly self-awakened, its support [now] broken, without an arbiter.”...

When this was said, Ven. Ānanda said to Cunda the novice, “Friend Cunda, there is warrant here for talking to the Blessed One. Let’s go to the Blessed One and, on arrival, report this matter to him.”

“As you say, venerable sir,” Cunda the novice responded to Ven. Ānanda. Then Ven. Ānanda & Cunda the novice went to the Blessed One and, on arrival, having bowed down to him, sat to one side. As they were sitting there, Ven. Ānanda said to the Blessed One, “Lord, Cunda the novice, here, has said that Nigaṇṭha Nāṭaputta has just died in Pāvā.... Even the lay disciples of Nigaṇṭha Nāṭaputta, dressed in white, seem disenchanted, disgusted, & repelled by the Nigaṇṭha Nāṭa-sons, and at how that poorly proclaimed Dhamma-Vinaya was poorly expounded, not leading out, not conducive to calming, expounded by one who was not rightly self-awakened, its support broken, without an arbiter.”

“That’s the way it is, Cunda, with a poorly proclaimed Dhamma-Vinaya, poorly expounded, not leading out, not conducive to calming, expounded by one who is not rightly self-awakened....

“There is the case, Cunda, where a teacher is rightly self-awakened, and his Dhamma-Vinaya, is well proclaimed, well expounded, leading out, conducive to calming, expounded by one who is rightly self-awakened. A disciple of that Dhamma dwells practicing the Dhamma in accordance with the Dhamma, practicing masterfully, living in line with the Dhamma, and acts to conform to it. He is to be told, ‘It’s a gain for you, friend, well gained by you, that—when your teacher is rightly self-awakened, and his Dhamma-Vinaya is well

proclaimed, well expounded, leading out, conducive to calming, expounded by one who is rightly self-awakened—you are one who dwells practicing the Dhamma in accordance with the Dhamma, practicing masterfully, living in line with the Dhamma, and acts to conform to it.’ There, Cunda, the teacher is to be praised, the Dhamma is to be praised, and the disciple is to be thus praised.

“Whoever might say to such a disciple, ‘Yes, friend, practicing the right way, you will succeed in the right way’: The person who praised him, the thing praised, and the person who, being praised, aroused even greater persistence would all produce much merit. Why is that? That’s the way it is, Cunda, with a well proclaimed Dhamma-Vinaya, well expounded, leading out, conducive to calming, expounded by one who is rightly self-awakened.

“Cunda, I am now a teacher who has appeared in the world, worthy & rightly self-awakened. And the Dhamma is well proclaimed, well expounded, leading out, conducive to calming, expounded by one who is rightly self-awakened. My disciples have been instructed in the meaning/goal of the True Dhamma, and the complete holy life has been entirely disclosed to them, made plain, with all its steps collected, complete with miracles, well proclaimed as far as human beings & devas. I am now a teacher who is an elder, of long standing, long gone-forth, senior, attained to old age.

“There are now elder monk disciples of mine who are experienced, trained, mature, attained to security from the yoke, able to teach the True Dhamma, able to trap with the True Dhamma any opposing doctrines that have arisen and—having trapped them—to teach the Dhamma complete with miracles. There are now monk disciples of mine of middle standing. There are now junior monk disciples of mine. There are now elder nun disciples of mine... nun disciples of mine of middle standing... junior nun disciples of mine... male lay disciples of mine, householders wearing white, following the celibate life... male lay disciples of mine, householders wearing white, partaking of sensuality... female lay disciples of mine, householders wearing white, following the celibate life. There are now female lay disciples of mine, householders wearing white, partaking of sensuality; and my holy life has now become powerful, prosperous, detailed, well populated, wide-spread, proclaimed among devas & human beings.

“Cunda, to the extent that I am now a teacher who has appeared in the world, I do not see any other teacher who has attained supremacy in terms of

gains & supremacy in terms of status equal to what I have. And to the extent that my community or group has appeared in the world, I do not see any other community that has attained supremacy in terms of gains & supremacy in terms of status, equal to what the Saṅgha of monks has.

“If one speaking rightly were to say, ‘a well expounded, entirely complete, well proclaimed holy life, consummate in all its aspects, complete in all its aspects, with nothing lacking & nothing in excess,’ he would, speaking rightly, say it of this: ‘a well expounded, entirely complete, well proclaimed holy life, consummate in all its aspects, complete in all its aspects, with nothing lacking & nothing in excess.’” — [*DN 29*](#)

“There are some contemplatives & brahmans with this doctrine, this view: ‘As long as this good man is young, youthful, with fully black hair, endowed with the blessing of youth and the first stage of life, he is endowed with the foremost keenness of discernment. But when this good man becomes aged, old, elderly, advanced in years, having come to the last stage of life, eighty years old, ninety years old, or one hundred years old in this birth, then because of that, his keenness of discernment diminishes. Sāriputta, it shouldn’t be seen that way.

“At this time, I am aged, old, elderly, advanced in years, having come to the last stage of life. My age has come to eighty years.

“Sāriputta, suppose that I had four disciples with a one hundred-year life span, living for one hundred years, and endowed with excellent mindfulness, retention, recall, & keenness of discernment. Just as an archer with a good bow—trained, dexterous, & practiced—could easily shoot a light arrow across the shadow of a palmyra tree, they—endowed with that great an extent of mindfulness, that great an extent of retention, that great an extent of recall, & that keenness of discernment—would ask me one question after another on the four establishings of mindfulness. And I, asked again & again, would answer. Answered, they would remember what I had answered, and they wouldn’t counter-question me about it a second time more. Aside from eating, drinking, chewing, & savoring, aside from urinating & defecating, aside from relieving sleepiness & weariness, there would be no ending of the Tathāgata’s Dhamma teaching, there would be no ending of the Tathāgata’s phrasing of Dhamma statements, there would be no ending of the Tathāgata’s quick-wittedness (in answering) questions; but those four disciples of mine, with their one hundred-

year life span, living for one hundred years, would die with the passing of one hundred years.

“Even if you carried me around on a bed, there would be no alteration in the Tathāgata’s keenness of discernment.

“If, when speaking rightly, one were to say of someone, ‘A being not subject to delusion has appeared in the world for the benefit & happiness of many, out of sympathy for the world, for the welfare, benefit, & happiness of devas & human beings,’ he would rightly be speaking of me.” — [MN 12](#)

It’s not known for sure when Queen Mallikā or the Buddha’s long-time patron, Anāthapiṇḍika, passed away.

Once the Blessed One was dwelling near Sāvattthī in Jeta’s Forest, Anāthapiṇḍika’s monastery. Then King Pasenadi Kosala went to the Blessed One and, on arrival, having bowed down to him, sat to one side. Now, at that time Queen Mallikā died. Then a certain man went to the king and whispered in his ear: “Your majesty, Queen Mallikā has died.” When this was said, King Pasenadi Kosala sat there miserable, sick at heart, his shoulders drooping, his face down, brooding, at a loss for words. Then the Blessed One saw the king sitting there miserable, sick at heart... at a loss for words, and so said to him, “There are these five things, great king, that cannot be gotten by a contemplative, a brahman, a deva, a Māra, a Brahmā, or anyone at all in the world. Which five?

“‘May what is subject to aging not age.’ This is something that cannot be gotten by a contemplative, a brahman, a deva, a Māra, a Brahmā, or anyone at all in the world.

“‘May what is subject to illness not grow ill.’ This is something that cannot be gotten by a contemplative, a brahman, a deva, a Māra, a Brahmā, or anyone at all in the world.

“‘May what is subject to death not die.’ This is something that cannot be gotten by a contemplative, a brahman, a deva, a Māra, a Brahmā, or anyone at all in the world.

“‘May what is subject to ending not end.’ This is something that cannot be gotten by a contemplative, a brahman, a deva, a Māra, a Brahmā, or anyone at all in the world.

“‘May what is subject to destruction not be destroyed.’ This is something that cannot be gotten by a contemplative, a brahman, a deva, a Māra, a Brahmā, or anyone at all in the world....

“Now, it happens to an instructed disciple of the noble ones that something subject to aging ages... that something subject to illness grows ill... that something subject to death dies... that something subject to ending ends... that something subject to destruction is destroyed. With the destruction of what is subject to destruction, he reflects: ‘It doesn’t happen only to me that what is subject to destruction will be destroyed. To the extent that there are beings—past & future, passing away & re-arising—it happens to all of them that what is subject to destruction will be destroyed. And if, with the destruction of what is subject to destruction, I were to sorrow, grieve, lament, beat my breast, & become distraught, food would not agree with me, my body would become unattractive, my affairs would go untended, my enemies would be gratified and my friends unhappy.’ So, with the destruction of what is subject to destruction, he does not sorrow, grieve, or lament, does not beat his breast or become distraught. This is called an instructed disciple of the noble ones who has pulled out the poisoned arrow of sorrow pierced with which the uninstructed run-of-the-mill person torments himself. Sorrowless, arrowless, the disciple of the noble ones is totally unbound right within himself.” —

[AN 5:49](#)

I have heard that on one occasion the Blessed One was dwelling near Sāvattthī, in Jeta’s Forest, Anāthapiṇḍika’s monastery. And on that occasion Anāthapiṇḍika the householder was diseased, in pain, severely ill. Then Anāthapiṇḍika said to one of his men, “Come, my good man. Go to the Blessed One and, on arrival, pay homage to his feet with your head in my name and say ‘Lord, Anāthapiṇḍika the householder is diseased, in pain, severely ill. He pays homage with his head to the Blessed One’s feet.’ Then go to Ven. Sāriputta and, on arrival, pay homage to his feet with your head in my name and say ‘Venerable sir, Anāthapiṇḍika the householder is diseased, in pain, severely ill. He pays homage with his head to your feet.’ Then say: ‘It would be good if Ven. Sāriputta would visit Anāthapiṇḍika’s home, out of sympathy for him.’”

Responding, “As you say, lord,” to Anāthapiṇḍika the householder, the man went to the Blessed One and, on arrival, bowed down to him and sat to one side. As he was sitting there he said, “Lord, Anāthapiṇḍika the householder is diseased, in pain, severely ill. He pays homage with his head to the Blessed

One's feet." Then he went to Ven. Sāriputta and, on arrival, bowed down to him and sat to one side. As he was sitting there he said, 'Venerable sir, Anāthapiṇḍika the householder is diseased, in pain, severely ill. He pays homage with his head to your feet.' Then he said, "It would be good if Ven. Sāriputta would visit Anāthapiṇḍika's home, out of sympathy for him."

Then Ven. Sāriputta—having adjusted his under robe and carrying his bowl & outer robe—went to the home of Anāthapiṇḍika the householder with Ven. Ānanda as his attendant. On arrival, he sat down on a seat laid out and said to Anāthapiṇḍika: "I hope you are getting better, householder. I hope you are comfortable. I hope that your pains are lessening and not increasing. I hope that there are signs of their lessening, and not of their increasing."

[Anāthapiṇḍika:] "I am not getting better, venerable sir. I am not comfortable. My extreme pains are increasing, not lessening. There are signs of their increasing, and not of their lessening. Extreme forces slice through my head, just as if a strong man were slicing my head open with a sharp sword.... Extreme pains have arisen in my head, just as if a strong man were tightening a turban made of tough leather straps around my head.... Extreme forces carve up my stomach cavity, just as if a butcher or his apprentice were to carve up the stomach cavity of an ox.... There is an extreme burning in my body, just as if two strong men, grabbing a weaker man by the arms, were to roast and broil him over a pit of hot embers. I am not getting better, venerable sir. I am not comfortable. My extreme pains are increasing, not lessening. There are signs of their increasing, and not of their lessening."

[Ven. Sāriputta:] "Then, householder, you should train yourself in this way: 'I won't cling to the eye; my consciousness will not be dependent on the eye.' That's how you should train yourself. 'I won't cling to the ear... nose... tongue... body; my consciousness will not be dependent on the body'... 'I won't cling to the intellect; my consciousness will not be dependent on the intellect.' That's how you should train yourself."

"Then, householder, you should train yourself in this way: 'I won't cling to forms... sounds... smells... tastes... tactile sensations; my consciousness will not be dependent on tactile sensations.'... 'I won't cling to ideas; my consciousness will not be dependent on ideas.' That's how you should train yourself."

"Then, householder, you should train yourself in this way: 'I won't cling to eye-consciousness... ear-consciousness... nose-consciousness... tongue-

consciousness... body-consciousness; my consciousness will not be dependent on body-consciousness'... 'I won't cling to intellect-consciousness; my consciousness will not be dependent on intellect-consciousness.' That's how you should train yourself.

"Then, householder, you should train yourself in this way: 'I won't cling to contact at the eye... contact at the ear... contact at the nose... contact at the tongue... contact at the body; my consciousness will not be dependent on contact at the body'... 'I won't cling to contact at the intellect; my consciousness will not be dependent on contact at the intellect.' That's how you should train yourself.

"Then, householder, you should train yourself in this way: 'I won't cling to feeling born of contact at the eye... feeling born of contact at the ear... feeling born of contact at the nose... feeling born of contact at the tongue... feeling born of contact at the body; my consciousness will not be dependent on feeling born of contact at the body'... 'I won't cling to feeling born of contact at the intellect; my consciousness will not be dependent on feeling born of contact at the intellect.' That's how you should train yourself.

"Then, householder, you should train yourself in this way: 'I won't cling to the earth property... liquid property... fire property... wind property... space property; my consciousness will not be dependent on the space property'... 'I won't cling to the consciousness property; my consciousness will not be dependent on the consciousness property.' That's how you should train yourself.

"Then, householder, you should train yourself in this way: 'I won't cling to form... feeling... perception... fabrications; my consciousness will not be dependent on fabrications'... 'I won't cling to consciousness; my consciousness will not be dependent on consciousness.' That's how you should train yourself.

"Then, householder, you should train yourself in this way: 'I won't cling to the dimension of the infinitude of space... the dimension of the infinitude of consciousness... the dimension of nothingness; my consciousness will not be dependent on the dimension of nothingness'... 'I won't cling to the sphere of neither perception nor non-perception; my consciousness will not be dependent on the sphere of neither perception nor non-perception.' That's how you should train yourself.

"Then, householder, you should train yourself in this way: 'I won't cling to this world; my consciousness will not be dependent on this world.... I won't

cling to the world beyond; my consciousness will not be dependent on the world beyond.’ That’s how you should train yourself.

“Then, householder, you should train yourself in this way: ‘I won’t cling to what is seen, heard, sensed, cognized, attained, sought after, pondered by the intellect; my consciousness will not be dependent on that.’ That’s how you should train yourself.”

When this was said, Anāthapiṇḍika wept and shed tears. Ven. Ānanda said to him, “Are you sinking, householder? Are you foundering?”

“No, venerable sir. I’m not sinking, nor am I foundering. It’s just that for a long time I have attended to the Teacher, and to the monks who inspire my heart, but never before have I heard a Dhamma talk like this.”

“This sort of Dhamma talk, householder, is not given to lay people clad in white. This sort of Dhamma talk is given to those gone forth.”

“In that case, Ven. Sāriputta, please let this sort of Dhamma talk be given to lay people clad in white. There are clansmen with little dust in their eyes who are wasting away through not hearing (this) Dhamma. There will be those who will understand it.”

Then Ven. Sāriputta & Ven. Ānanda, having given this instruction to Anāthapiṇḍika the householder, got up from their seats and left. Then, not long after they left, Anāthapiṇḍika the householder died and reappeared in the Tusita [Contented] heaven. Then Anāthapiṇḍika the deva-son, in the far extreme of the night, his extreme radiance lighting up the entirety of Jeta’s Forest, went to the Blessed One and, on arrival, bowed down to him and stood to one side. As he was standing there, he addressed the Blessed One with this verse:

“This blessed Jeta’s Forest,
home to the community of seers,
where there dwells the Dhamma King:
the source of rapture for me.

Action, clear-knowing, & mental qualities, ¹⁶⁵
virtue, the highest (way of) life:
Through this are mortals purified,
not through clan or wealth.
Thus the wise,
seeing their own benefit,

investigating the Dhamma appropriately,
should purify themselves right there.

As for Sāriputta:
any monk who has gone beyond,
at best can only equal him
in discernment, virtue, & calm.”

That is what Anāthapiṇḍika the deva-son said. The Teacher approved. Then Anāthapiṇḍika the deva-son, (knowing,) “The Teacher has approved of me,” bowed down to him, circumambulated him three times, keeping him to his right, and then disappeared right there.

Then when the night had past, The Blessed One addressed the monks: “Last night, monks, a certain deva’s son in the far extreme of the night, his extreme radiance lighting up the entirety of Jeta’s Forest, came to me and, on arrival, bowed down to me and stood to one side. As he was standing there, he addressed me with this verse:

‘This blessed Jeta’s Forest,
home to the community of seers,
where there dwells the Dhamma King:
the source of rapture for me.
Action, clear-knowing, & mental qualities,
virtue, the highest (way of) life:
Through this are mortals purified,
not through clan or wealth.
Thus the wise,
seeing their own benefit,
investigating the Dhamma appropriately,
should purify themselves right there.

As for Sāriputta:
any monk who has gone beyond,
at best can only equal him
in discernment, virtue, & calm.’

“That is what the deva-son said. And (thinking,) ‘The Teacher has approved of me,’ he bowed down to me, circumambulated me three times, and then disappeared right there.”

When this was said, Ven. Ānanda said to the Blessed One, “Lord, that must have been Anāthapiṇḍika the deva-son. Anāthapiṇḍika the householder had supreme confidence in Ven. Sāriputta.”

“Very good, Ānanda. Very good, to the extent that you have deduced what can be arrived at through logic. That *was* Anāthapiṇḍika the deva-son, and no one else.”

That is what the Blessed One said. Gratified, Ven. Ānanda delighted in the Blessed One’s words. — [*MN 143*](#)

As for King Pasenadi, he lived to a ripe old age.

I have heard that on one occasion the Blessed One was dwelling among the Sakyans, near a Sakyan town called Medaḷupa.

Now on that occasion, King Pasenadi Kosala had arrived at Nagaraka on some business or other. Then he addressed Dīgha Kārāyana: “My dear Kārāyana, have some auspicious vehicles yoked. We’ll go to the royal park to see the lovely landscape.”

Responding, “As you say, your majesty,” to King Pasenadi Kosala, having had some auspicious vehicles yoked, Dīgha Kārāyana informed the king, “Your majesty, your auspicious vehicles are yoked. Now is the time for you to do as you see fit.”

Then King Pasenadi Kosala, mounting an auspicious vehicle, set out from Nagaraka with other auspicious vehicles in full royal pomp and proceeded to the park. Going as far by vehicle as the ground permitted, he got down from his vehicle and entered the park on foot.

As he was walking around and exploring the park, King Pasenadi Kosala saw roots of trees that were serene-looking, inspiring serenity, with few noises or sounds of voices, with an air of isolation, private from human beings, and appropriate for seclusion. On seeing them, rapture associated with the Blessed One arose, (as he thought,) “These roots of trees are serene-looking, inspiring serenity, with few noises or sounds of voices, with an air of isolation, private from human beings, and appropriate for seclusion—just like where I attended on the Blessed One, worthy & rightly self-awakened.”

Then the king addressed Dīgha Kārāyana, “My dear Kārāyana, these roots of trees are serene-looking... appropriate for seclusion—just like where I attended

on the Blessed One, worthy & rightly self-awakened. My dear Kārāyana, where is the Blessed One... staying right now?”

“Great king, there is a Sakyan town called Medaḷupa. The Blessed One... is staying there now.”

“And how far is it from Nagaraka to that Sakyan village called Medaḷupa, dear Kārāyana?”

“Not far, great king—three leagues. One could go there in what remains of the day.”

“In that case, dear Kārāyana, have the auspicious vehicles yoked. We’ll go to see the Blessed One, worthy & rightly self-awakened.”

Responding, “As you say, your majesty,” to King Pasenadi Kosala, having had the auspicious vehicles yoked, Dīgha Kārāyana informed the king, “Your Majesty, your auspicious vehicles are yoked. Now is the time for you to do as you see fit.”

Then King Pasenadi Kosala, mounting an auspicious vehicle, set out from Nagaraka with other auspicious vehicles toward the Sakyan village of Medaḷupa. Arriving there in what remained of the day, he set out toward the park. Going as far by vehicle as the ground permitted, he got down from his vehicle and entered the park on foot.

Now at that time several monks were walking back and forth out in the open air. King Pasenadi Kosala went to the monks and, on arrival, said to them, “Venerable sirs, where is the Blessed One, worthy & rightly self-awakened, staying right now? We would like to see the Blessed One, worthy & rightly self-awakened.”

“In that dwelling, great king, with the closed door. Approaching it quietly and unhurriedly, enter the porch, clear your throat, and knock on the door. The Blessed One will open the door for you.”

So right there King Pasenadi Kosala gave his sword & royal turban to Dīgha Kārāyana. The thought occurred to Dīgha Kārāyana, “The great king wishes to be alone now, so I should stay right here.”

Then King Pasenadi Kosala, having gone quietly and unhurriedly to the dwelling with the closed door, entered the porch, cleared his throat, and knocked on the door. The Blessed One opened the door. Entering the dwelling, the king put his head down at the Blessed One’s feet, kissed the Blessed One’s

feet all over, caressing them with his hands, and announced his name: “Lord, I am King Pasenadi Kosala. Lord, I am King Pasenadi Kosala.”

“But, great king, with what purpose in mind are you showing such extreme reverence toward this body and displaying such an offering of friendship?”

“Lord, there are reasons that lead me to infer rightfully with regard to the Blessed One: ‘The Blessed One is worthy & rightly self-awakened; the Dhamma is well expounded by the Blessed One; the Saṅgha of the Blessed One’s disciples has practiced well.’

“Lord Blessed One, there is the case where I see some contemplatives & brahmans, living a limited holy life—ten Rains, twenty Rains, thirty Rains, or forty Rains. And then at a later time they are well bathed & well perfumed, have trimmed their hair & beards, and have put on white clothes, and they go about endowed and provided with the five strings of sensuality. But there is the case where I see monks living the holy life pure and complete for their whole lives—until the last breath. Lord, I don’t envision any other holy life so pure & complete aside from this one. This, lord, is one reason that leads me to infer righteously with regard to the Blessed One: ‘The Blessed One is worthy & rightly self-awakened; the Dhamma is well expounded by the Blessed One; the Saṅgha of the Blessed One’s disciples has practiced well.’

“Then again, kings quarrel with kings, nobles with nobles, brahmans with brahmans, householders with householders, mother with child, child with mother, father with child, child with father, brother with sister, sister with brother, friend with friend. But here I see the monks living harmoniously, cordially, and without dispute, blending like milk & water, looking at one another with eyes of affection. I envision no other assembly so harmonious aside from this one. This too, lord, is a reason....

“Again, lord, I travel around and explore, from monastery to monastery, from park to park. There I see some contemplatives & brahmans who are thin, wretched, unattractive, & pale, their bodies covered with veins, not binding the eye, as it were, for a person to look at them. And the thought occurs to me, ‘Surely these venerable ones lead the holy life dissatisfied, or they have done some hidden evil. That’s why they are thin, wretched, unattractive, & pale, their bodies covered with veins, and why it’s as if they don’t bind the eye, as it were, for a person to look at them.’

“Going to them, I say, ‘Why are you venerable ones thin, wretched, unattractive, & pale, with your bodies covered with veins, not binding the eye,

as it were, for a person to look at you?’ They said to me, ‘We have jaundice, great king.’

“But then I see the monks: joyful, so joyful; exultant, so exultant; looking like they are enjoying themselves, dwelling with their faculties healthy, unconcerned, unruffled, living on the gifts of others, with their minds like wild deer. The thought occurs to me, ‘Surely these venerable ones are discerning grand, successive distinctions in the Blessed One’s dispensation. That’s why they are joyful, so joyful; exultant, so exultant; looking like they are enjoying themselves, dwelling with their faculties healthy, unconcerned, unruffled, living on the gifts of others, with their minds like wild deer.’ This too, lord, is a reason....

“Again, lord, I am a head-anointed noble-warrior king, able to execute those (I have) sentenced to be executed, to fine those (I have) sentenced to be fined, or to banish those (I have) sentenced to be banished. Yet when I am sitting in judgment, they interrupt me in mid-sentence. I can’t have it that: ‘Good sirs, when I am sitting in judgment, don’t interrupt me in mid-sentence. Wait, good sirs, until I finish speaking.’ They still interrupt me in mid-sentence, lord.

“But then I see the monks: On whatever occasion the Blessed One is teaching the Dhamma to an assembly of many hundreds, there is not even the sound of sneezing or throat-clearing from his disciples. Once the Blessed One was teaching the Dhamma to an assembly of many hundreds. There a certain one of the Blessed One’s disciples cleared his throat, upon which one of his fellows in the holy life nudged him with his knee (and said,) ‘Be quiet, venerable sir. Don’t make a sound. The Blessed One, our teacher, is teaching the Dhamma.’ The thought occurred to me, ‘How amazing! How astounding—that this assembly could be so well disciplined without rod or knife!’ I don’t envision any other assembly so well disciplined as this one. This too, lord, is a reason....

“Again, there is the case where I see some noble-warrior-pundits, subtle, masters of the doctrines of others, like hair-splitting marksmen. They prowl about, as it were, shooting philosophical positions to pieces with their dialectic. They hear, ‘Gotama the contemplative, they say, will visit such-and-such village or town.’ They formulate a question: ‘Having gone to Gotama the contemplative, we will ask him this question. If, having been asked by us like this, he answers us like this, we will refute his teaching like this. And, if having

been asked by us like this, he answers us like that, we will refute his teaching like that.’

“They hear, ‘Gotama the contemplative is visiting that village or town.’ They go to him, and he instructs, urges, rouses, & encourages them with a talk on Dhamma. Having been instructed, urged, roused, & encouraged by him with a talk on Dhamma, they don’t even ask him their question, so from where could they refute him? As it turns out, they become his disciples. This too, lord, is a reason....

“There is the case where I see some brahman pundits... householder pundits ... contemplative pundits, subtle, masters of the doctrines of others, like hair-splitting marksmen. They prowl about, as it were, shooting philosophical positions to pieces with their discernment. They hear, ‘Gotama the contemplative, they say, will visit such-and-such village or town.’ They formulate a question: ‘Having gone to Gotama the contemplative, we will ask him this question. If, having been asked by us like this, he answers us like this, we will refute his teaching like this. And, if having been asked by us like this, he answers us like that, we will refute his teaching like that.’

“They hear, ‘Gotama the contemplative is visiting that village or town.’ They go to him, and he instructs, urges, rouses, & encourages them with a talk on Dhamma. Having been instructed, urged, roused, & encouraged by him with a talk on Dhamma, they don’t even ask him their question, so from where could they refute him? As it turns out, they request the opportunity to go forth under the Blessed One from home into homelessness.

“The Blessed One gives them the Going-forth. Having gone forth there—dwelling alone, secluded, heedful, ardent, & resolute—they in no long time reach & remain in the supreme goal of the holy life for which clansmen rightly go forth from home into homelessness, knowing & realizing it for themselves in the here-&-now. They say, ‘How near we were to perishing! How near we were to being lost! Before, though we weren’t contemplatives, we claimed to be contemplatives. Though we weren’t brahmans, we claimed to be brahmans. Though we weren’t arahants, we claimed to be arahants. But now we are contemplatives, now we are brahmans, now we are arahants.’ This too, lord, is a reason...

“Again, there are my building overseers Isidanta & Purāṇa, living on my food, using my vehicles. I am the giver of their livelihood, the bringer of their

prestige. But they don't show such reverence to me as they do to the Blessed One.

“Once, lord, when I was leading the army on a march, wanting to test them, I spent the night (with them) in a cramped rest-house. So my building overseers Isidanta & Purāṇa, having passed most of the night in Dhamma discussion, lay down with their heads in the direction where they had heard the Blessed One was staying and with their feet toward me. The thought occurred to me, ‘How amazing! How astounding! My building overseers Isidanta & Purāṇa live on my food and use my vehicles. I am the giver of their livelihood, the bringer of their prestige. But they don't show such reverence to me as they do to the Blessed One. Surely these honorable men are discerning grand, successive distinctions in the Blessed One's dispensation.’ This too, lord, is a reason....

“Again, lord, the Blessed One is a noble warrior, and I am also a noble warrior. The Blessed One is a Kosalan, and I am also a Kosalan. The Blessed One is an eighty-year-old and I am also an eighty-year-old. That the Blessed One is a noble warrior, and I am also a noble warrior; the Blessed One is a Kosalan, and I am also a Kosalan; the Blessed One is an eighty-year-old and I am also an eighty-year-old: For this reason alone, lord, it is fitting for me to show such extreme reverence and display such an offering of friendship.

“Well then, lord, we will go now. Many are our duties, many our responsibilities.”

“Then do, great king, what you think it is now time to do.”

Then King Pasenadi Kosala got up from his seat and, having bowed down to the Blessed One, circumambulated him, keeping him to his right, and left.

Then, not long after he had left, the Blessed One addressed the monks, “That, monks, was King Pasenadi Kosala. Having spoken monuments to the Dhamma, having gotten up from his seat, he has left. Monks, learn the Monuments to the Dhamma. Master the Monuments to the Dhamma. Remember the Monuments to the Dhamma. The Monuments to the Dhamma are connected to the goal and to the fundamentals of the holy life.”

That is what the Blessed One said. Gratified, the monks delighted in the Blessed One's words. — *MN 89*

It was apparently when the Buddha was old that he gave Ven. Mahā Kassapa, one of his most austere disciples, ¹⁶⁶ the opportunity to explain

why he continued living in austerity despite the fact that he had completed his training: Mahā Kassapa was aiding the Buddha in his efforts to keep the True Dhamma alive after his passing.

On one occasion the Blessed One was dwelling near Rājagaha in the Bamboo Forest, the Squirrels' Sanctuary. Then Ven. Mahā Kassapa went to the Blessed One and, on arrival, having bowed down to him, sat to one side. As he was sitting there the Blessed One said to him, "You are now old, Kassapa. Your robes made of cast-off hemp cloth are heavy for you. So wear robes donated by householders, eat invitational meals, and live close by me."

"Lord, for a long time I have lived in the wilderness and have extolled living in the wilderness. I have been an almsgoer and have extolled being an almsgoer. I have worn cast-off cloth and have extolled wearing cast-off cloth. I have worn only one set of the triple robe and have extolled wearing only one set of the triple robe. I have been modest and have extolled being modest. I have been content and have extolled being content. I have been reclusive and have extolled being reclusive. I have been unentangled and have extolled being unentangled. I have kept my persistence aroused and have extolled having persistence aroused."

"But, Kassapa, what compelling reason do you see that you for a long time have lived in the wilderness and have extolled living in the wilderness... that you have kept your persistence aroused and have extolled having persistence aroused?"

"Lord, I see two compelling reasons that for a long time I have lived in the wilderness and have extolled living in the wilderness... that I have kept my persistence aroused and have extolled having persistence aroused: seeing a pleasant abiding for myself in the here-&-now, and feeling sympathy for later generations: 'Perhaps later generations will take it as an example: "It seems that the disciples of the Awakened One and those who awakened after him lived for a long time in the wilderness and extolled living in the wilderness; were almsgoers and extolled being almsgoers; wore cast-off cloth and extolled wearing cast-off cloth; wore only one set of the triple robe and extolled wearing only one set of the triple robe; were modest and extolled being modest; were content and extolled being content; were reclusive and extolled being reclusive; were unentangled and extolled being unentangled; kept their persistence aroused and extolled having persistence aroused.'""

“Good, Kassapa. Very good. It seems that you are one who practices for the benefit & happiness of many, out of sympathy for the world, for the welfare, benefit, & happiness of devas & human beings. So continue wearing your robes of cast-off hemp cloth, go for alms, and live in the wilderness.” — [*SN 16:5*](#)

The Last Year

We now return to a clear chronology because an entire sutta is devoted to the events of the Buddha's last year.

I have heard that on one occasion the Blessed One was dwelling near Rājagaha on Vulture Peak Mountain. And on that occasion, the King of Magadha, Ajātasattu Vedehiputta, wanted to attack the Vajjians. He said: "I will cut down these Vajjians—so mighty, so powerful! I will destroy these Vajjians! I will bring these Vajjians to ruin—these Vajjians!"

Then he addressed Vassakāra the brahman, the chief minister of Magadha: "Come, brahman. Go to the Blessed One and, on arrival, show reverence with your head to his feet in my name and ask whether he is free from illness & affliction, is carefree, strong, & living in comfort, (saying,) 'Lord, the King of Magadha, Ajātasattu Vedehiputta, shows reverence with his head to the Blessed One's feet and asks whether you are free from illness & affliction, are carefree, strong, & living in comfort.' And then say: 'Lord, the King of Magadha, Ajātasattu Vedehiputta, wants to attack the Vajjians. He says: "I will cut down these Vajjians—so mighty, so powerful! I will destroy these Vajjians! I will bring these Vajjians to ruin—these Vajjians!"' However the Blessed One answers, having grasped it well, report to me. For Tathāgatas do not speak untruthfully."¹⁶⁷

Responding, "As you say, sire," to the King of Magadha, Ajātasattu Vedehiputta, Vassakāra the brahman, the chief minister of Magadha, had auspicious vehicles yoked, got into an auspicious vehicle, left Rājagaha with the auspicious vehicles and drove toward Vulture Peak Mountain. Going in his vehicle as far as the ground permitted, he got down from his vehicle and proceeded on foot to the Blessed One. On arrival, he exchanged courteous greetings with the Blessed One. After an exchange of friendly greetings & courtesies, he sat to one side. As he was sitting there, he told the Blessed One, "Master Gotama,¹⁶⁸ the King of Magadha, Ajātasattu Vedehiputta, shows reverence with his head to Master Gotama's feet and asks whether you are free from illness & affliction, are carefree, strong, & living in comfort. Master

Gotama, the King of Magadha, Ajātasattu Vedehiputta, wants to attack the Vajjians. He says: ‘I will cut down these Vajjians—so mighty, so powerful! I will destroy these Vajjians! I will bring these Vajjians to ruin—these Vajjians!’”

Now on that occasion Ven. Ānanda was standing behind the Blessed One, fanning him. So the Blessed One addressed Ven. Ānanda, “Have you heard, Ānanda, that the Vajjians meet often and meet a great deal?”

“I have heard, lord, that the Vajjians meet often and meet a great deal.”

“As long as the Vajjians meet often and meet a great deal, Ānanda, their growth can be expected, not their decline.

“Have you heard, Ānanda, that the Vajjians meet in harmony, adjourn from their meetings in harmony, and conduct their Vajjian business in harmony?”

“I have heard that, lord....

“As long as the Vajjians meet in harmony, adjourn from their meetings in harmony, and conduct their Vajjian business in harmony, Ānanda, their growth can be expected, not their decline.

“Have you heard, Ānanda, that the Vajjians neither legislate what has not been legislated nor repeal what has been legislated, but proceed having undertaken the ancient Vajjian laws as they have been legislated?”

“I have heard that, lord....

“As long as the Vajjians neither legislate what has not been legislated nor rescind what has been legislated, but proceed having undertaken the ancient Vajjian laws as they have been legislated, Ānanda, their growth can be expected, not their decline.

“Have you heard, Ānanda, that the Vajjians honor, respect, venerate, and do homage to the Vajjian elders of the Vajjis, regarding them as worth listening to?”

“I have heard that, lord....

“As long as the Vajjians honor, respect, venerate, and do homage to the Vajjian elders of the Vajjis, regarding them as worth listening to, Ānanda, their growth can be expected, not their decline.

“Have you heard, Ānanda, that the Vajjians do not roughly drag off women & girls of good families and take them captive?”

“I have heard that, lord....

“As long as the Vajjians do not roughly drag off women & girls of good families and take them captive, Ānanda, their growth can be expected, not their decline.

“Have you heard, Ānanda, that the Vajjians honor, respect, venerate, and do homage to the Vajjian shrines, both inside (the city) and out, and that they do not let the righteous offerings done in the past and given in the past to those shrines fall into decline?”

“I have heard that, lord....

“As long as the Vajjians honor, respect, venerate, and do homage to the Vajjian shrines, both inside (the city) and out, and do not let the righteous offerings done in the past and given in the past to those shrines fall into decline, Ānanda, their growth can be expected, not their decline.

“Have you heard, Ānanda, that righteous protection, watch, and guarding for arahants is well provided by the Vajjians (with the thought,) ‘If there are any arahants who have yet to come to our domain, may they come; and may the arahants who have come to our domain live in comfort’?

“I have heard that, lord....

“As long as righteous protection, watch, and guarding for arahants is well provided by the Vajjians (with the thought,) ‘If there are any arahants who have yet to come to our domain, may they come; and may the arahants who have come to our domain live in comfort,’ Ānanda, their growth can be expected, not their decline.”

Then the Blessed One addressed Vassakāra the brahman, the chief minister of Magadha, “Once, brahman, I was dwelling near Vesālī at the Sāranda Shrine. There I taught the Vajjians these seven conditions that lead to no decline. As long as these seven conditions endure among the Vajjians, and as long as the Vajjians remain steadfast in these seven conditions, the Vajjians’ growth can be expected, not their decline.”

When this was said, Vassakāra the brahman, the chief minister of Magadha, said to the Blessed One, “Master Gotama, even if the Vajjians are endowed with only one of these conditions that lead to no decline, the Vajjians’ growth can be expected, not their decline—to say nothing of all seven. Nothing can be done to the Vajjians by the King of Magadha, Ajātasattu Vedehiputta, through force of arms—except by befriending them and sowing dissension (among them).^{[169](#)}

“Well then, Master Gotama, we will go now. Many are our duties, many our responsibilities.”

“Then do, brahman, what you think it is now time to do.”

Then Vassakāra the brahman, the chief minister of Magadha, delighting in and approving of the Blessed One’s words, got up from his seat and left.

Not long after he had left, the Blessed One addressed Ven. Ānanda: “Go, Ānanda. Have all the monks living in dependence on Rājagaha gather at the assembly hall.”

Responding, “As you say, lord,” to the Blessed One, Ven. Ānanda—having had all the monks living in dependence on Rājagaha gather at the assembly hall—approached the Blessed One. On arrival, having bowed down to him, he stood to one side. As he was standing there, he said to the Blessed One, “The Saṅgha of monks has gathered, lord. May the Blessed One do what he thinks it is now time to do.”

Then the Blessed One, getting up from his seat, went to the assembly hall and, on arrival, sat down on the seat laid out. Seated, he addressed the monks:

“Monks, I will teach you the seven conditions that lead to no decline. Listen & pay close attention. I will speak.”

“As you say, lord,” the monks responded to the Blessed One.

The Blessed One said:

“Monks, as long as the monks meet often, meet a great deal, their growth can be expected, not their decline.

“As long as the monks meet in harmony, adjourn from their meetings in harmony, and conduct Saṅgha business in harmony, their growth can be expected, not their decline.

“As long as the monks neither legislate what has not been legislated nor rescind what has been legislated, but proceed having undertaken the training rules as they have been legislated, their growth can be expected, not their decline.”¹⁷⁰

“As long as the monks honor, respect, venerate, and do homage to the elder monks—those with seniority who have long been ordained, the fathers of the Saṅgha, leaders of the Saṅgha—regarding them as worth listening to, their growth can be expected, not their decline.

“As long as the monks do not come under the sway of any arisen craving that leads to further-becoming, their growth can be expected, not their decline.

“As long as the monks see their own benefit in wilderness dwellings, their growth can be expected, not their decline.

“And as long as the monks each keep firmly in mind: ‘If there are any well-behaved companions in the holy life who have yet to come, may they come; and may the well-behaved companions in the holy life who have come live in comfort,’ their growth can be expected, not their decline.

“As long as these seven conditions endure among the monks, and as long as the monks remain steadfast in these seven conditions, the monks’ growth can be expected, not their decline.”^{[171](#)}

“Monks, I will teach you seven further conditions that lead to no decline. Listen & pay close attention. I will speak.”

“As you say, lord,” the monks responded to the Blessed One.

The Blessed One said:

“Monks, as long as the monks are not infatuated with (construction) work, do not delight in construction work, and are not committed to infatuation with construction work, the monks’ growth can be expected, not their decline.

“As long as the monks are not infatuated with gossip...

“As long as the monks are not infatuated with sleeping...

“As long as the monks are not infatuated with entanglement...

“As long as the monks are not infatuated with evil ambition and have not come under the sway of evil ambitions, the monks’ growth can be expected, not their decline.

“As long as the monks do not have evil friends, evil companions, and evil comrades, the monks’ growth can be expected, not their decline.

“And as long as the monks do not stop half-way with lower distinctions & achievements, the monks’ growth can be expected, not their decline.”^{[172](#)}

“As long as these seven conditions endure among the monks, and as long as the monks remain steadfast in these seven conditions, the monks’ growth can be expected, not their decline.”

“Monks, I will teach you seven further conditions that lead to no decline. Listen & pay close attention. I will speak.”

“As you say, lord,” the monks responded to the Blessed One.

The Blessed One said: “Monks, as long as the monks have conviction... shame... compunction... learning... aroused persistence... established mindfulness... discernment, the monks’ growth can be expected, not their decline.”¹⁷³

“As long as these seven conditions endure among the monks, and as long as the monks remain steadfast in these seven conditions, the monks’ growth can be expected, not their decline.”

“Monks, I will teach you seven further conditions that lead to no decline. Listen & pay close attention. I will speak.”

“As you say, lord,” the monks responded to the Blessed One.

The Blessed One said:

“Monks, as long as the monks develop mindfulness as a factor for awakening... analysis of qualities as a factor for awakening... persistence as a factor for awakening... rapture as a factor for awakening... calm as a factor for awakening... concentration as a factor for awakening... equanimity as a factor for awakening, the monks’ growth can be expected, not their decline.”¹⁷⁴

“As long as these seven conditions endure among the monks, and as long as the monks remain steadfast in these seven conditions, the monks’ growth can be expected, not their decline.”

“Monks, I will teach you seven further conditions that lead to no decline. Listen & pay close attention. I will speak.”

“As you say, lord,” the monks responded to the Blessed One.

The Blessed One said: “Monks, as long as the monks develop the perception of inconstancy... the perception of not-self... the perception of unattractiveness... the perception of drawbacks... the perception of abandoning... the perception of dispassion... the perception of cessation, the monks’ growth can be expected, not their decline.”

“As long as these seven conditions endure among the monks, and as long as the monks remain steadfast in these seven conditions, the monks’ growth can be expected, not their decline.”

“Monks, I will teach you six further¹⁷⁵ conditions that lead to no decline. Listen & pay close attention. I will speak.”

“As you say, lord,” the monks responded to the Blessed One.

The Blessed One said:

“As long as the monks are set on bodily acts of goodwill with regard to their companions in the holy life, to their faces & behind their backs, the monks’ growth can be expected, not their decline.

“As long as the monks are set on verbal acts of goodwill with regard to their companions in the holy life, to their faces & behind their backs....

“As long as the monks are set on mental acts of goodwill with regard to their companions in the holy life, to their faces & behind their backs....

“As long as the monks, whatever righteous gains they may obtain in a righteous way—even if only the alms in their bowls—do not consume them alone, but consume them after sharing them in common with their virtuous companions in the holy life....

“As long as the monks—with reference to the virtues that are untorn, unbroken, unspotted, unsplattered, liberating, praised by the observant, ungrasped at, leading to concentration—dwell with their virtue in tune with that of their companions in the holy life, to their faces & behind their backs....

“And as long as the monks—with reference to the view that is noble, leading outward, that leads those who act in accordance with it to the right ending of suffering & stress—dwell with their view in tune with that of their companions in the holy life, to their faces & behind their backs, the monks’ growth can be expected, not their decline.

“As long as these six conditions endure among the monks, and as long as the monks remain steadfast in these six conditions, the monks’ growth can be expected, not their decline.”^{[176](#)}

While dwelling there near Rājagaha on Vulture Peak Mountain, the Blessed One often gave this Dhamma talk to the monks: “Such is virtue, such is concentration, such is discernment. Concentration nurtured with virtue is of great fruit, great reward. Discernment nurtured with concentration is of great fruit, great reward. The mind nurtured with discernment is rightly released from effluents, i.e., the effluent of sensuality, the effluent of becoming, the effluent of ignorance.”

Then the Blessed One, having stayed near Rājagaha as long as he pleased, said to Ven. Ānanda, “Come, Ānanda, we will head for Ambalaṭṭhikā.”^{[177](#)}

“As you say, lord,” Ven. Ānanda responded to the Blessed One.

Then the Blessed One, together with a large Saṅgha of monks, went to Ambalaṭṭhikā. There he stayed near Ambalaṭṭhikā at the Royal Cottage. While dwelling there near Ambalaṭṭhikā at the Royal Cottage, the Blessed One often gave this Dhamma talk to the monks: “Such is virtue, such is concentration, such is discernment. Concentration nurtured with virtue is of great fruit, great reward. Discernment nurtured with concentration is of great fruit, great reward. The mind nurtured with discernment is rightly released from effluents, i.e., the effluent of sensuality, the effluent of becoming, the effluent of ignorance.”

Then the Blessed One, having stayed near Ambalaṭṭhikā as long as he pleased, said to Ven. Ānanda, “Come, Ānanda, we will head for Nālandā.”

“As you say, lord,” Ven. Ānanda responded to the Blessed One.

Then the Blessed One, together with a large Saṅgha of monks, went to Nālandā. There he stayed near Nālandā at the Pāvādika Mango Grove.

Then Ven. Sāriputta went to the Blessed One¹⁷⁸ and, on arrival, having bowed down to him, sat to one side. As he was sitting there, Ven. Sāriputta said to the Blessed One, “Lord, I have confidence in the Blessed One that there neither has been nor will be nor is currently found a contemplative or brahman whose direct knowledge of self-awakening is greater than that of the Blessed One!”

“Grand is this bull-statement you have spoken, Sāriputta; categorical this lion’s roar you have roared: ‘Lord, I have confidence in the Blessed One that there neither has been nor will be nor is currently found a contemplative or brahman whose direct knowledge of self-awakening is greater than that of the Blessed One!’ So then, Sāriputta, have you encompassed with your awareness the awareness of all the worthy ones, the rightly self-awakened ones that have been in the past and known: ‘Such was their virtue, such their Dhamma, such their discernment, such their (meditative) dwelling, such their release?’”

“No, lord.”

“Then have you encompassed with your awareness the awareness of all the worthy ones, the rightly self-awakened ones that will be in the future and known: ‘Such will be their virtue, such their Dhamma, such their discernment, such their (meditative) dwelling, such their release?’”

“No, lord.”

“Then have you encompassed with your awareness my awareness—the awareness of the worthy one, the rightly self-awakened one in the present—and known: ‘Such is his virtue, such his Dhamma, such his discernment, such his (meditative) dwelling, such his release’?”

“No, lord.”

“Then, Sāriputta, if you don’t have knowledge of the awareness of the worthy ones, the rightly self-awakened ones of the past, future, & present, how is it that just now you spoke this grand bull-statement and roared this categorical lion’s roar: ‘Lord, I have confidence in the Blessed One that there neither has been nor will be nor is currently found a contemplative or brahman whose direct knowledge of self-awakening is greater than that of the Blessed One’?”

“Lord, I don’t have knowledge of the awareness of the worthy ones, the rightly self-awakened ones of the past, future, & present, but I have known the consistency of the Dhamma. It’s as if there were a royal frontier city with strong ramparts, strong walls & arches, and a single gate. In it would be a wise, competent, & intelligent gatekeeper to keep out those he didn’t know and to let in those he did. Walking along the path encircling the city, he wouldn’t see a crack or an opening in the walls big enough for even a cat to slip through. The thought would occur to him: ‘Whatever large creatures enter or leave the city all enter or leave it through this gate.’¹⁷⁹

“In the same way, I have known the consistency of the Dhamma: ‘All those who were worthy ones, the rightly self-awakened ones in the past awoke to the unexcelled right self-awakening after having abandoned the five hindrances—those defilements of awareness that weaken discernment—having well established their minds in the four establishing of mindfulness and having developed, as they have come to be, the seven factors for awakening. All those who will be worthy ones, the rightly self-awakened ones in the future will awaken to the unexcelled right self-awakening after having abandoned the five hindrances—those defilements of awareness that weaken discernment—having well established their minds in the four establishing of mindfulness and having developed, as they have come to be, the seven factors for awakening. The Blessed One who is now the worthy one, the rightly self-awakened one has awakened to the unexcelled right self-awakening after having abandoned the five hindrances—those defilements of awareness that weaken discernment—

having well established his mind in the four establishings of mindfulness and having developed, as they have come to be, the seven factors for awakening.”

While dwelling there near Nāḷandā at the Pāvāḍika Mango Grove, the Blessed One often gave this Dhamma talk to the monks: “Such is virtue, such is concentration, such is discernment. Concentration nurtured with virtue is of great fruit, great reward. Discernment nurtured with concentration is of great fruit, great reward. The mind nurtured with discernment is rightly released from effluents, i.e., the effluent of sensuality, the effluent of becoming, the effluent of ignorance.”

Then the Blessed One, having stayed near Nāḷandā as long as he pleased, said to Ven. Ānanda, “Come, Ānanda, we will head for Pāṭali Village.”

“As you say, lord,” Ven. Ānanda responded to the Blessed One.

Then the Blessed One, together with a large Saṅgha of monks, went to Pāṭali Village.¹⁸⁰ The lay followers of Pāṭali Village heard, “The Blessed One, they say, has reached Pāṭali Village.” 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 said to him, “Lord, may the Blessed One acquiesce to (the use of) the rest-house hall.”

The Blessed One acquiesced with silence. Sensing his acquiescence, the lay followers of Pāṭali Village got up from their seats and, bowing down to him and circumambulating him, went to the rest-house hall. On arrival, they spread it all over with felt rugs, arranged seats, set out a water vessel, and raised an oil lamp. Then they went to the Blessed One and, on arrival, having bowed down to him, stood to one side. As they were standing there, they said to him, “Lord, the rest-house hall has been covered all over with felt rugs, seats have been arranged, a water vessel has been set out, and an oil lamp raised. May the Blessed One do what he thinks it is now time to do.”

So the Blessed One, in the late afternoon¹⁸¹—having adjusted his under robe and carrying his bowl & outer robe—went together with the Saṅgha of monks to the rest-house hall. On arrival, he washed his feet, entered the hall, and sat with his back to the central post, facing east. The Saṅgha of monks washed their feet, entered the hall, and sat with their backs to the western wall, facing east, ranged around the Blessed One.

The lay followers of Pāṭali Village washed their feet, entered the hall, and sat with their backs to the eastern wall, facing west, ranged around the Blessed

One.

Then the Blessed One addressed the lay followers of Pāṭali Village, “Householders, there are these five drawbacks coming from an unvirtuous person’s defect in virtue. Which five?

“There is the case where an unvirtuous person, defective in virtue, by reason of heedlessness undergoes the loss/confiscation of great wealth. This is the first drawback coming from an unvirtuous person’s defect in virtue.

“And further, the bad reputation of the unvirtuous person, defective in virtue, gets spread about. This is the second drawback coming from an unvirtuous person’s defect in virtue.

“And further, whatever assembly the unvirtuous person, defective in virtue, approaches—whether of noble warriors, brahmans, householders, or contemplatives—he/she does so without confidence & abashed. This is the third drawback coming from an unvirtuous person’s defect in virtue.

“And further, the unvirtuous person, defective in virtue, dies confused. This is the fourth drawback coming from an unvirtuous person’s defect in virtue.

“And further, the unvirtuous person, defective in virtue—on the breakup of the body, after death—reappears in a plane of deprivation, a bad destination, a lower realm, hell. This is the fifth drawback coming from an unvirtuous person’s defect in virtue.

“These, householders, are the five drawbacks coming from an unvirtuous person’s defect in virtue.

“Householders, there are these five rewards coming from a virtuous person’s consummation in virtue. Which five?

“There is the case where a virtuous person, consummate in virtue, by reason of heedfulness acquires a great mass of wealth. This is the first reward coming from a virtuous person’s consummation in virtue.

“And further, the fine reputation of the virtuous person, consummate in virtue, gets spread about. This is the second reward coming from a virtuous person’s consummation in virtue.

“And further, whatever assembly the virtuous person, consummate in virtue, approaches—whether of noble warriors, brahmans, householders, or contemplatives—he/she does so with confidence & unabashed. This is the third reward coming from a virtuous person’s consummation in virtue.

“And further, the virtuous person, consummate in virtue, dies unconfused. This is the fourth reward coming from a virtuous person’s consummation in virtue.

“And further, the virtuous person, consummate in virtue—on the breakup of the body, after death—reappears in a good destination, a heavenly world. This is the fifth reward coming from a virtuous person’s consummation in virtue.

“These, householders, are the five rewards coming from a virtuous person’s consummation in virtue.”

Then the Blessed One—having instructed, urged, roused, & encouraged the lay followers of Pāṭali Village for a large part of the night with Dhamma talk—dismissed them, saying, “The night is far gone, householders. Do what you think it is now time to do.”

Responding, “As you say, lord,” to the Blessed One, the lay followers of Pāṭali Village, got up from their seats and, bowing down to him and circumambulating him, left. Then the Blessed One, not long after they had left, entered an empty building.

Now on that occasion, Sunidha & Vassakāra, the chief ministers of Magadha, were building a city at Pāṭali Village to preempt the Vajjians. And on that occasion many devas by the thousands were occupying sites in Pāṭali Village. In the area where devas of great influence occupied sites, there the minds of the king’s royal ministers of great influence were inclined to build their homes. In the area where devas of middling influence occupied sites, there the minds of the king’s royal ministers of middling influence were inclined to build their homes. In the area where devas of low influence occupied sites, there the minds of the king’s royal ministers of low influence were inclined to build their homes.

The Blessed One, with the divine eye—purified and surpassing the human—saw those devas by the thousands occupying sites in Pāṭali Village.

Then, getting up in the last watch of the night, the Blessed One addressed Ven. Ānanda, “Ānanda, who is building a city at Pāṭali Village?”

“Sunidha & Vassakāra, the chief ministers of Magadha, lord, are building a city at Pāṭali Village to preempt the Vajjians.”

“Ānanda, it’s as if they had consulted the devas of the Thirty-three: That’s how Sunidha & Vassakāra, the chief ministers of Magadha, are building a city

at Pāṭali Village to preempt the Vajjians.

“Just now, Ānanda—with the divine eye—purified and surpassing the human—I saw many devas by the thousands occupying sites in Pāṭali Village. In the area where devas of great influence occupy sites, there the minds of the king’s royal ministers of great influence are inclined to build their homes. In the area where devas of middling influence occupy sites, there the minds of the king’s royal ministers of middling influence are inclined to build their homes. In the area where devas of low influence occupy sites, there the minds of the king’s royal ministers of low influence are inclined to build their homes.

“Ānanda, as far as the sphere of the Ariyans extends, as far as merchants’ roads extend, this will be the supreme city: Pāṭaliputta,¹⁸² where the seedpods of the Pāṭali plant break open. There will be three dangers for Pāṭaliputta: from fire, from water, or from the breaking of alliances.”

Then Sunidha & Vassakāra, the chief ministers of Magadha, went to the Blessed One and, on arrival, exchanged courteous greetings with him. After an exchange of friendly greetings & courtesies, they stood to one side. As they were standing there, they said to him, “May Master Gotama acquiesce to our meal today, together with the Saṅgha of monks.” The Blessed One acquiesced with silence.

Then Sunidha & Vassakāra, the chief ministers of Magadha, understanding the Blessed One’s acquiescence, went to their rest-house. On arrival, after having exquisite staple & non-staple food prepared in their rest-house, they announced the time to the Blessed One: “It’s time, Master Gotama. The meal is ready.”

Then, early in the morning, the Blessed One—having adjusted his under robe and carrying his bowl & outer robe—went together with the Saṅgha of monks to the rest-house of Sunidha & Vassakāra, the chief ministers of Magadha. On arrival, he sat down on the seat laid out. Sunidha & Vassakāra, with their own hands, served & satisfied the Saṅgha of monks, with the Buddha at its head, with exquisite staple & non-staple food. Then, when the Blessed One had finished his meal and had rinsed his bowl & hands, Sunidha & Vassakāra, taking a low seat, sat to one side. As they were sitting there, the Blessed One gave his approval with these verses:

In whatever place
a wise person makes his dwelling,

—there providing food
for the virtuous,
the restrained,
leaders of the holy life—
he should dedicate that offering
to the devas there.
They, receiving honor, will honor him;
being respected, will show him respect.
As a result, they will feel sympathy for him,
like that of a mother for her child, her son.
A person with whom the devas sympathize
always meets with auspicious things.

Then the Blessed One, having given his approval to Sunidha & Vassakāra with these verses, got up from his seat and left. And on that occasion, Sunidha & Vassakāra followed right after the Blessed One, (thinking,) “By whichever gate Gotama the contemplative departs today, that will be called the Gotama Gate. And by whichever ford he crosses over the Ganges River, that will be called the Gotama Ford.”

So the gate by which the Blessed One departed was called the Gotama Gate. Then he went to the Ganges River. Now on that occasion the Ganges River was full up to the banks, so that a crow could drink from it. Some people were searching for boats; some were searching for floats; some were binding rafts in hopes of going from this shore to the other. So the Blessed One—just as a strong man might extend his flexed arm or flex his extended arm—disappeared from the near bank of the Ganges River and reappeared on the far bank together with the Saṅgha of monks. He saw that some people were searching for boats; some were searching for floats; some were binding rafts in hopes of going from this shore to the other.

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

Those
who cross the foaming flood,
having made a bridge, avoiding the swamps
—while people are binding rafts—
intelligent people

have already crossed.

Then the Blessed One said to Ven. Ānanda, “Come, Ānanda, we will head for Koṭi Village.”

“As you say, lord,” Ven. Ānanda responded to the Blessed One.

Then the Blessed One, together with a large Saṅgha of monks, went to Koṭi Village. There he stayed near Koṭi Village.

And there he addressed the monks: “It’s through not awakening to or penetrating four noble truths, monks, that we have transmigrated and wandered on for such a long time, you & I. Which four?”

“It’s through not awakening to or penetrating the noble truth of stress that we have transmigrated and wandered on for such a long time, you & I. It’s through not awakening to or penetrating the noble truth of the origination of stress.... It’s through not awakening to or penetrating the noble truth of the cessation of stress.... It’s through not awakening to or penetrating the noble truth of the path of practice leading to cessation of stress that we have transmigrated and wandered on for such a long time, you & I.

“(But now,) this noble truth of stress has been awakened to & penetrated, the noble truth of the origination of stress has been awakened to & penetrated, the noble truth of the cessation of stress has been awakened to & penetrated, the noble truth of the path of practice leading to cessation of stress has been awakened to & penetrated. Craving for becoming has been crushed; the guide to becoming [i.e., clinging] is ended. There now is no further-becoming.”

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

From lack of vision
of the four noble truths,
we have wandered a long time
simply in these births & those.
These are now seen,
the guide to becoming is removed,
crushed is the root of suffering & stress.
There is now no further-becoming.

While dwelling there near Koṭi Village, the Blessed One often gave this Dhamma talk to the monks: “Such is virtue, such is concentration, such is

discernment. Concentration nurtured with virtue is of great fruit, great reward. Discernment nurtured with concentration is of great fruit, great reward. The mind nurtured with discernment is rightly released from effluents, i.e., the effluent of sensuality, the effluent of becoming, the effluent of ignorance.”

Then the Blessed One, having stayed near Koṭi Village as long as he pleased, said to Ven. Ānanda, “Come, Ānanda, we will head for Nādikā.”

“As you say, lord,” Ven. Ānanda responded to the Blessed One.

Then the Blessed One, together with a large Saṅgha of monks, went to Nādikā [Little River]. There he stayed near Nādikā at the Brick Hall.

Then Ven. Ānanda went to the Blessed One and, on arrival, having bowed down to him, sat to one side. As he was sitting there, Ven. Ānanda said to the Blessed One, “Lord, the monk named Sālha has died in Nādikā. What is his destination, what his future state? The nun named Nandā has died in Nādikā. What is her destination, what her future state? The male lay follower named Sudatta has died in Nādikā. What is his destination, what his future state? The female lay follower named Sujātā has died in Nādikā. What is her destination, what her future state? The male lay follower named Kakudha... Kāraḷimbha... Nikaṭa... Kaṭissaha... Tuṭṭha... Santuṭṭha... Bhaṭa... Subhaṭa has died in Nādikā. What is his destination, what his future state?”

“Ānanda, the monk Sālha, with the ending of effluents, dwelt in the effluent-free awareness-release and discernment-release, having directly known and realized them for himself right in the here-and-now. The nun Nandā, with the ending of the five lower fetters,¹⁸³ has spontaneously arisen (in the Pure Abodes,) there to be totally unbound, destined never again to return from that world. Sudatta the male lay follower, with the ending of [the first] three fetters, and with the attenuation of passion, aversion, & delusion, is a once-returner, who—on returning only once more to this world—will put an end to stress. Sujātā the female lay follower, with the ending of [the first] three fetters, is a stream-winner, never again destined for the lower realms, certain, headed for self-awakening. Kakudha the male lay follower... Kāraḷimbha... Nikaṭa... Kaṭissaha... Tuṭṭha... Santuṭṭha... Bhaṭa... Subhaṭa the male lay follower, with the ending of the five lower fetters, have spontaneously arisen (in the Pure Abodes,) there to be totally unbound, destined never again to return from that world.

“Ānanda, more than fifty lay followers who have died in Nādikā, with the ending of the five lower fetters, have spontaneously arisen (in the Pure Abodes,) there to be totally unbound, destined never again to return from that world. Ninety-six lay followers who have died in Nādikā, with the ending of [the first] three fetters, and with the attenuation of passion, aversion, & delusion, are once-returners, who—on returning only once more to this world—will put an end to stress. 510 lay followers who have died in Nādikā, with the ending of [the first] three fetters, are stream-winners, never again destined for the lower realms, certain, headed for self-awakening.

“It’s not amazing, Ānanda, that anyone who has become a human being would die. But if with every death you approach the Tathāgata and ask about this matter, that would be wearisome for him.

“Therefore, Ānanda, I will teach you the Dhamma-discourse called the Dhamma-mirror, endowed with which a disciple of the noble ones, if he/she so desires, may predict for him or herself: ‘Hell is ended for me; animal wombs are ended; the state of the hungry ghosts is ended; planes of deprivation, the bad destinations, the lower realms are ended! I am a stream-winner, never again destined for the lower realms, certain, headed for self-awakening!’

“And what is the Dhamma-mirror Dhamma-discourse, endowed with which a disciple of the noble ones, if he/she so desires, may predict for him or herself: ‘Hell is ended for me; animal wombs are ended; the state of the hungry ghosts is ended; planes of deprivation, the bad destinations, the lower realms are ended! I am a stream-winner, never again destined for the lower realms, certain, headed for self-awakening’?

“There is the case where the disciple of the noble ones is endowed with verified confidence in the Awakened One: ‘Indeed, the Blessed One is worthy & rightly self-awakened, consummate in clear-knowing & conduct, well-gone, an expert with regard to the cosmos, unexcelled trainer of people fit to be tamed, teacher of devas & human beings, awakened, blessed.’

“He/she is endowed with verified confidence in the Dhamma: ‘The Dhamma is well taught by the Blessed One, to be seen here & now, timeless, inviting verification, pertinent, to be experienced by the observant for themselves.’

“He/she is endowed with verified confidence in the Saṅgha: ‘The Saṅgha of the Blessed One’s disciples who have practiced well... who have practiced straightforwardly... who have practiced methodically... who have practiced

masterfully—in other words, the four types of noble disciples when taken as pairs, the eight when taken as individual types¹⁸⁴—they are the Saṅgha of the Blessed One’s disciples: deserving of gifts, deserving of hospitality, deserving of offerings, deserving of respect, the incomparable field of merit for the world.”

“He/she is endowed with virtues that are appealing to the noble ones: untorn, unbroken, unspotted, unsplattered, liberating, praised by the observant, ungrasped at, leading to concentration.

“This, Ānanda, is the Dhamma-mirror Dhamma-discourse, endowed with which a disciple of the noble ones, if he/she so desires, may predict for him or herself: ‘Hell is ended for me; animal wombs are ended; the state of the hungry ghosts is ended; planes of deprivation, the bad destinations, the lower realms are ended! I am a stream-winner, never again destined for the lower realms, certain, headed for self-awakening!’”¹⁸⁵

While dwelling there near Nādikā in the Brick House, the Blessed One often gave this Dhamma talk to the monks: “Such is virtue, such is concentration, such is discernment. Concentration nurtured with virtue is of great fruit, great reward. Discernment nurtured with concentration is of great fruit, great reward. The mind nurtured with discernment is rightly released from effluents, i.e., the effluent of sensuality, the effluent of becoming, the effluent of ignorance.”

Then the Blessed One, having stayed near Nādikā as long as he pleased, said to Ven. Ānanda, “Come, Ānanda, we will head for Vesālī.”

“As you say, lord,” Ven. Ānanda responded to the Blessed One.

Then the Blessed One, together with a large Saṅgha of monks, went to Vesālī. There he stayed near Vesālī in Ambapālī’s grove.

And there he addressed the monks: “Stay mindful, monks, and alert. This is our instruction to you all. And how is a monk mindful? There is the case where a monk remains focused on the body in & of itself—ardent, alert, & mindful—subduing greed & distress with reference to the world. He remains focused on feelings... mind... mental qualities in & of themselves—ardent, alert, & mindful—subduing greed & distress with reference to the world. This is how a monk is mindful.

“And how is a monk alert? When going forward & returning, he makes himself alert; when looking toward & looking away... when bending & extending his limbs... when carrying his outer cloak, his upper robe, & his

bowl... when eating, drinking, chewing, & savoring... when urinating & defecating... when walking, standing, sitting, falling asleep, waking up, talking, & remaining silent, he makes himself alert. This is how a monk is alert.

“Stay mindful, monks, and alert. This is our instruction to you all.”

Then Ambapālī the courtesan¹⁸⁶ heard, “The Blessed One, they say, has arrived at Vesālī and is staying near Vesālī in my mango [*amba*] grove!” Then, having auspicious vehicles yoked, she got into an auspicious vehicle, left Vesālī with the auspicious vehicles and drove toward her own garden [the grove]. Going in her vehicle as far as the ground permitted, she got down from her vehicle and proceeded on foot to the Blessed One. On arrival, having bowed down to him, she sat to one side. As she was sitting there, the Blessed One instructed, urged, roused, & encouraged her with a talk on Dhamma. Then Ambapālī the courtesan—instructed, urged, roused, & encouraged with the Blessed One’s talk on Dhamma—said to him, “Lord, may the Blessed One acquiesce to my meal tomorrow, together with the Saṅgha of monks.” The Blessed One acquiesced with silence.

Then Ambapālī the courtesan, understanding the Blessed One’s acquiescence, got up from her seat and, bowing down to him and circumambulating him, left.

Then the Licchavis of Vesālī heard, “The Blessed One, they say, has arrived at Vesālī and is staying near Vesālī in Ambapālī’s grove!” Then, having auspicious vehicles yoked, the Licchavis got into the auspicious vehicles, and left Vesālī with the auspicious vehicles. Now, some of those Licchavis were dark blue, with dark-blue complexions, dark-blue clothing, & dark-blue ornaments. Some of those Licchavis were yellow, with yellow complexions, yellow clothing, & yellow ornaments. Some of those Licchavis were red, with red complexions, red clothing, & red ornaments. Some of those Licchavis were white, with white complexions, white clothing, & white ornaments.

Then Ambapālī the courtesan, driving axle to axle, wheel to wheel, yoke to yoke, brought those young Licchavis to a halt. So those Licchavis said to her, “Hey, Ambapālī, what are you doing—driving axle to axle, wheel to wheel, yoke to yoke—bringing the young Licchavis to a halt?”

“Because, young masters, I have invited the Blessed One, together with the Saṅgha of monks, for tomorrow’s meal!”

“Give us that meal, Ambapālī, for 100,000!”

“Even if the masters gave me Vesālī with all its revenue, I still wouldn’t give up such a great meal!”

Then the Licchavis snapped their fingers: “How we’ve been defeated by Little Ambapālī! How we’ve been cheated by Little Ambapālī!” [187](#)

Then the Licchavis set out for Ambapālī’s grove. The Blessed One saw them coming from afar and, on seeing them, he said to the monks, “Those monks who have never before seen the devas of the Thirty-three, look at the assembly of Licchavis! Gaze at the assembly of Licchavis! Regard the assembly of Licchavis as like the assembly of the Thirty-three!”

Then the Licchavis, going in their vehicles as far as the ground permitted, got down from their vehicles and proceeded on foot to the Blessed One. On arrival, having bowed down to him, they sat to one side. As they were sitting there, the Blessed One instructed, urged, roused, & encouraged them with a talk on Dhamma. Then the Licchavis—instructed, urged, roused, and encouraged with the Blessed One’s talk on Dhamma—said to him, “Lord, may the Blessed One acquiesce to our meal tomorrow, together with the Saṅgha of monks.”

“Licchavis, I have already acquiesced to Ambapālī the courtesan’s meal tomorrow.”

Then the Licchavis snapped their fingers: “How we’ve been defeated by Little Ambapālī! How we’ve been cheated by Little Ambapālī!”

Then the Licchavis, delighting in and approving of the Blessed One’s words, got up from their seats and, bowing down to him and circumambulating him, left.

Then Ambapālī the courtesan, at the end of the night—after having exquisite staple & non-staple food prepared in her own garden—announced the time to the Blessed One: “It’s time, lord. The meal is ready.”

Then, early in the morning, the Blessed One—having adjusted his under robe and carrying his bowl & outer robe—went together with the Saṅgha of monks to Ambapālī the courtesan’s meal offering. On arrival, he sat down on the seat laid out. Ambapālī the courtesan, with her own hands, served & satisfied the Saṅgha of monks, with the Buddha at its head, with exquisite staple & non-staple food. Then, when the Blessed One had finished his meal and had rinsed his bowl & hands, Ambapālī the courtesan, taking a low seat,

sat to one side. As she was sitting there, she said to the Blessed One, “Lord, I give this garden to the Saṅgha of monks with the Buddha at its head.”

The Blessed One accepted the garden. Then—having instructed, urged, roused, & encouraged Ambapālī the courtesan with a talk on Dhamma—he got up from his seat and left.

While dwelling there near Vesālī in Ambapālī’s grove, the Blessed One often gave this Dhamma talk to the monks: “Such is virtue, such is concentration, such is discernment. Concentration nurtured with virtue is of great fruit, great reward. Discernment nurtured with concentration is of great fruit, great reward. The mind nurtured with discernment is rightly released from effluents, i.e., the effluent of sensuality, the effluent of becoming, the effluent of ignorance.”

Then the Blessed One, having stayed in Ambapālī’s grove as long as he pleased, said to Ven. Ānanda, “Come, Ānanda, we will head for Veḷuva Village.”

“As you say, lord,” Ven. Ānanda responded to the Blessed One.

Then the Blessed One, together with a large Saṅgha of monks, went to Veḷuva Village. There he stayed near Veḷuva Village.

And there he addressed the monks: “Come, monks, enter the Rains around Vesālī with your friends, acquaintances, & eating companions. As for me, I will enter the Rains right here near Veḷuva Village.

Responding, “As you say, lord,” to the Blessed One, the monks entered the Rains around Vesālī with their friends, acquaintances, & eating companions. The Blessed One entered the Rains right there near Veḷuva Village.

Then in the Blessed One, when he had entered the Rains, there arose a severe disease with intense pains & deadly. But the Blessed One endured it—mindful, alert, & not struck down by it. The thought occurred to him, “It would not be proper for me to totally unbind without having addressed my attendants or taken leave of the Saṅgha of monks. Why don’t I, bending back this disease with persistence, keep determining the fabrications of life?” So the Blessed One, bending back the disease with persistence, kept determining the fabrications of life. And his disease calmed down.

Then the Blessed One—having recovered from being ill, not long recovered from the illness—went out of the dwelling and sat down on a seat laid out behind the dwelling. Then Ven. Ānanda went to the Blessed One and, on arrival, having bowed down to him, sat to one side. As he was sitting there, he

said to the Blessed One, “What a happy sight to see the Blessed One’s comfort! What a happy sight to see the Blessed One’s being at ease! Because of the Blessed One’s illness my own body felt as if it were drugged. I lost my bearings. Things were unclear to me. Yet I still took a measure of reassurance in the thought that the Blessed One would not totally unbind as long as he hadn’t given at least some pronouncement concerning the Saṅgha of monks.”

“What more does the Saṅgha of monks want from me, Ānanda? I have taught the Dhamma without making an inside or outside (version).¹⁸⁸ The Tathāgata has no closed fist with regard to teachings.¹⁸⁹ To whomever the thought occurs, ‘I will govern the Saṅgha of monks,’ or ‘The Saṅgha of monks looks to me,’ he should give some pronouncement concerning the Saṅgha of monks. But the thought doesn’t occur to the Tathāgata that ‘I will govern the Saṅgha of monks,’ or ‘The Saṅgha of monks looks to me.’ So why should he give some pronouncement concerning the Saṅgha of monks?

“I am now aged, Ānanda: old, elderly, advanced in years, having come to the last stage of life, 80 years old. Just as an old cart is kept going with the help of bamboo strips, the Tathāgata’s body is kept going with the help of bamboo strips, as it were. When the Tathāgata—not attending to any theme at all, and with the cessation of certain feelings—enters and remains in the theme-less concentration of awareness, that is when his body is more at ease.

“So, Ānanda, you should all live with yourselves as your island, yourselves as your refuge, with no other as your refuge; with the Dhamma as your island, the Dhamma as your refuge, with no other as your refuge. And how does a monk live with himself as his island, himself as his refuge, with no other as his refuge; with the Dhamma as his island, the Dhamma as his refuge, with no other as his refuge? There is the case where a monk remains focused on the body in & of itself—ardent, alert, & mindful—subduing greed & distress with reference to the world. He remains focused on feelings in & of themselves... mind in & of itself... mental qualities in & of themselves—ardent, alert, & mindful—subduing greed & distress with reference to the world. This is how a monk lives with himself as his island, himself as his refuge, with no other as his refuge; with the Dhamma as his island, the Dhamma as his refuge, with no other as his refuge. For those who, now or when I am gone, live with themselves as their island, themselves as their refuge, with no other as their refuge; with the Dhamma as their island, the Dhamma as their refuge, not with another as their

refuge, will be my foremost monks: those who are desirous of training.” —
[DN 16](#)

According to the Commentary, Ven. Sāriputta and Ven. Mahā Moggallāna passed away during the Buddha’s last year. This would have required that, at some point before reaching Kusinārā, the Buddha returned one last time to Sāvattthī.

On one occasion the Blessed One was dwelling near Sāvattthī in Jeta’s Forest, Anāthapiṇḍika’s monastery. Now at that time Ven. Sāriputta was dwelling among the Magadhans in Nālaka village—diseased, in pain, severely ill. Cunda the novice was his attendant. Then, because of that illness, Ven. Sāriputta totally unbound.

So Cunda the novice, taking Ven. Sāriputta’s bowl & robes, went to Ven. Ānanda in Jeta’s Forest, Anāthapiṇḍika’s monastery near Sāvattthī, and, on arrival, having bowed down to him, sat to one side. As he was sitting there he said to Ven. Ānanda: “Venerable sir, Ven. Sāriputta has totally unbound. Here are his bowl & robes.”

“Cunda, my friend, this news is warrant for seeing the Blessed One. Come, let’s go to the Blessed One and report this matter to him.”

“Yes, venerable sir,” Cunda the novice responded to him.

So Ven. Ānanda & Cunda the novice went to the Blessed One and, on arrival, having bowed down to him, sat to one side. As they were sitting there, Ven. Ānanda said to the Blessed One, “Lord, just now Cunda the novice said to me, ‘Venerable sir, Ven. Sāriputta has totally unbound. Here are his bowl & robes.’ It was as if my body were drugged, I lost my bearings, things weren’t clear to me, on hearing that Ven. Sāriputta had totally unbound.”

“But, Ānanda, when he totally unbound, did Sāriputta take the aggregate of virtue along with him? Did he take the aggregate of concentration... discernment... release... the aggregate of knowledge & vision of release along with him?”

“No, lord, when he totally unbound, Ven. Sāriputta didn’t take the aggregate of virtue... concentration... discernment... release... the aggregate of knowledge & vision of release along with him. It’s just that he was my instructor & counselor, one who exhorted, urged, roused, & encouraged me. He was tireless in teaching the Dhamma, a help to his companions in the holy

life. We miss the nourishment of his Dhamma, the wealth of his Dhamma, his help in the Dhamma.”

“But, Ānanda, haven’t I already taught you the state of growing different with regard to all things dear & beloved, the state of becoming separate, the state of becoming otherwise? What else is there to expect? That of anything born, become, fabricated, subject to disintegration, you might say, ‘O, may it not disintegrate’? The possibility doesn’t exist.

“Just as if the largest limb were to fall off of a great tree composed of heartwood, standing firm; in the same way, Sāriputta has totally unbound from this great Saṅgha of monks composed of heartwood, standing firm. What else is there to expect? It’s impossible that one could forbid anything born, existent, fabricated, & subject to disintegration from disintegrating.

“Therefore, Ānanda, each of you should remain with your self as an island, your self as your refuge, without anything else as a refuge. Remain with the Dhamma as an island, the Dhamma as your refuge, without anything else as a refuge.... For those who—now or after I am gone—remain with their self as an island, their self as their refuge, without anything else as a refuge, with the Dhamma as an island, the Dhamma as their refuge, without anything else as a refuge, they will be the foremost of the monks: those who are desirous of training.” — [SN 47:13](#)

On one occasion the Blessed One was dwelling among the Vajjīs at Ukkacelā, on the banks of the Ganges River, together with a large Saṅgha of monks, not long after the total unbinding of Sāriputta & Moggallāna.

Now at that time the Blessed One, surrounded by the Saṅgha of monks, was sitting out in the open. Then the Blessed One, looking out over the silent Saṅgha of monks, addressed them, “This assembly of mine seems as if empty, after the total unbinding of Sāriputta & Moggallāna. In whatever direction Sāriputta & Moggallāna were dwelling, my assembly wasn’t empty, and I had no concern.

“Monks, those Blessed Ones who, in the past, were worthy ones, rightly self-awakened, had foremost pairs of disciples, just as I have had Sāriputta & Moggallāna. Those Blessed Ones who, in the future, will be worthy ones, rightly self-awakened, will have foremost pairs of disciples, just as I have had Sāriputta & Moggallāna.

“It’s amazing, monks, of these disciples—it’s astounding of these disciples—that they acted in line with my dispensation, practiced according to the teachings, were dear and pleasing to the four assemblies, worthy of their respect.

“It’s amazing, monks, of the Tathāgata—it’s astounding of the Tathāgata—that even when such a pair of disciples has attained total unbinding, the Tathāgata has no sorrow or lamentation.

“What else is there to expect? It’s impossible that one could forbid anything born, existent, fabricated, & subject to disintegration from disintegrating.

“Just as if the largest limbs were to fall from a great tree with heartwood, standing firm; in the same way, Sāriputta & Moggallāna have totally unbound from this great Saṅgha of monks with heartwood, standing firm.

“What else is there to expect? It’s impossible that one could forbid anything born, existent, fabricated, & subject to disintegration from disintegrating.

“Therefore, monks, you should remain with your self as an island, your self as your refuge, without anything else as a refuge. Remain with the Dhamma as an island, the Dhamma as your refuge, without anything else as a refuge.... For those who—now or after I am gone—remain with their self as an island, their self as their refuge, without anything else as a refuge, with the Dhamma as an island, the Dhamma as their refuge, without anything else as a refuge, they will be the foremost of the monks: those who are desirous of training.” — SN 47:14

RELINQUISHING THE FABRICATIONS OF LIFE

Then, early in the morning, the Blessed One—having adjusted his under robe and carrying his bowl & outer robe—went into Vesālī for alms. Then, having gone for alms in Vesālī, after the meal, returning from his almsround, he addressed Ven. Ānanda, “Get a sitting cloth, Ānanda. We will go to the Pāvāla Shrine for the day’s abiding.”

Responding, “As you say, lord,” to the Blessed One, Ven. Ānanda followed along behind the Blessed One, carrying the sitting cloth. Then the Blessed One went to the Pāvāla Shrine and, on arrival, sat down on the seat laid out.

Seated, the Blessed One addressed Ven. Ānanda, “Vesālī is refreshing, Ānanda. Refreshing, too, are the Udena shrine, the Gotamaka Shrine, the

Sattamba Shrine, the ManySon Shrine, the Sāranda Shrine, the Pāvāla Shrine. ¹⁹⁰

“Anyone, Ānanda, in whom the four bases of power¹⁹¹ are developed, pursued, given a means of transport, given a grounding, steadied, consolidated, and well undertaken, could—if he wanted—remain for an eon or the remainder of an eon. ¹⁹² In the Tathāgata, Ānanda, the four bases of power are developed, pursued, given a means of transport, given a grounding, steadied, consolidated, and well undertaken. He could—if he wanted—remain for an eon or the remainder of an eon.”

But Ven. Ānanda—even when the Blessed One had given such a blatant sign, such a blatant hint—wasn’t able to understand his meaning. He didn’t beg of him, “Lord, may the Blessed One remain for an eon. May the One Well-Gone remain for an eon—for the benefit of the many, for the happiness of the many, out of sympathy for the world, for the welfare, benefit, & happiness of human beings & devas.” It was as if his mind were possessed by Māra.

A second time... A third time, the Blessed One addressed Ven. Ānanda, “Vesālī is refreshing, Ānanda. Refreshing, too, are the Udena Shrine, the Gotamaka Shrine, the Sattamba Shrine, the ManySon Shrine, the Sāranda Shrine, the Pāvāla Shrine.

“Anyone, Ānanda, in whom the four bases of power are developed, pursued, given a means of transport, given a grounding, steadied, consolidated, and well undertaken, could—if he wanted—remain for an eon or the remainder of an eon. In the Tathāgata, Ānanda, the four bases of power are developed, pursued, given a means of transport, given a grounding, steadied, consolidated, and well undertaken. He could—if he wanted—remain for an eon or the remainder of an eon.”

But Ven. Ānanda—even when the Blessed One had given such a blatant sign, such a blatant hint—wasn’t able to understand his meaning. He didn’t request of him, “Lord, may the Blessed One remain for an eon. May the One Well-Gone remain for an eon—for the benefit of the many, for the happiness of the many, out of sympathy for the world, for the welfare, benefit, & happiness of human beings & devas.” It was as if his mind were possessed by Māra.

Then the Blessed One addressed Ven. Ānanda, “Go, Ānanda. Do what you think it is now time to do.”

Responding, “As you say, lord,” to the Blessed One, Ven. Ānanda got up from his seat and, bowing down to him and circumambulating him, went to sit under a tree not far from the Blessed One.

Then, not long after Ven. Ānanda had left, Māra the Evil One went to the Blessed One and, on arrival, stood to one side. As he was standing there, he said to the Blessed One, “May the Blessed One totally unbind now, lord. May the One Well-Gone totally unbind now, lord. Now is the time for the Blessed One’s total unbinding, lord. After all, these words were said by the Blessed One: ‘Evil One, I will not totally unbind as long as my monk disciples are not yet experienced, trained, attained to confidence, desiring rest from the yoke, learned, maintaining the Dhamma, practicing the Dhamma in line with the Dhamma, practicing masterfully, living in line with the Dhamma; declaring the Dhamma—after having learned it from their own teachers—teaching it, describing it, setting it forth, revealing it, explaining it, making it plain; well refuting, in line with the Dhamma, any opposing teachings that have arisen; teaching the Dhamma with its marvels.’¹⁹³

“But now, lord, the Blessed One’s monk disciples are experienced....

“May the Blessed One totally unbind now, lord. May the One Well-Gone totally unbind now, lord. Now is the time for the Blessed One’s total unbinding, lord. After all, these words were said by the Blessed One: ‘Evil One, I will not totally unbind as long as my nun disciples... my male lay-follower disciples... my female lay-follower disciples are not yet experienced....

“But now, lord, the Blessed One’s female lay-follower disciples are experienced....

“May the Blessed One totally unbind now, lord. May the One Well-Gone totally unbind now, lord. Now is the time for the Blessed One’s total unbinding, lord. After all, these words were said by the Blessed One: ‘Evil One, I will not totally unbind as long as this holy life of mine is not powerful, prosperous, widely-spread, disseminated among many people, well expounded as far as there are human beings & devas.’ But now, lord, the Blessed One’s holy life is powerful, prosperous, widely-spread, disseminated among many people, well expounded as far as there are human beings & devas.

“May the Blessed One totally unbind now, lord. May the One Well-Gone totally unbind now, lord. Now is the time for the Blessed One’s total unbinding, lord.”

When this was said, the Blessed One said to Māra the Most Evil One: “Relax, Evil One. It won’t be long until the Tathāgata’s total unbinding. In three months’ time from now, the Tathāgata will totally unbind.”

Thus at the Pāvāla Shrine—mindful & alert—the Blessed One relinquished the fabrications of life. ¹⁹⁴ And as the Blessed One relinquished the fabrications of life, there was a great earthquake, awesome & hair-raising, and rolls of the deva-drums split (the air).

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

Comparing the incomparable ¹⁹⁵
with coming-into-being,
the sage relinquished
the fabrication of becoming.
Inwardly joyful,
centered,
he split his own
coming-into-being
like a coat of mail. ¹⁹⁶

Then the thought occurred to Ven. Ānanda: “How amazing! How astounding! What a great earthquake! What a very great earthquake, awesome & hair-raising, and rolls of the deva-drums split (the air)! What is the reason, what is the cause, for the appearance of the great earthquake?”

So Ven. Ānanda went to the Blessed One and, on arrival, having bowed down to him, sat to one side. As he was sitting there, he said to the Blessed One, “How amazing, lord! How astounding! What a great earthquake! What a very great earthquake, awesome & hair-raising, and rolls of thunder split (the air)! What, lord, is the reason, what is the cause, for the appearance of the great earthquake?”

“Ānanda, there are these eight reasons, eight causes, for the appearance of a great earthquake. Which eight?

“This great earth, Ānanda, is established on water. The water is established on wind. The wind is standing on space. There comes a time when a great wind blows. The great wind blowing shakes the water. The water, shaken, shakes the

earth. This is the first reason, the first cause, for the appearance of a great earthquake.

“Then, Ānanda, there comes a time when a brahman of power, with mastery of the mind, or a deva of great power, great might, has developed a limited earth-perception and an immeasurable liquid-perception. He makes this earth shake & shiver, quiver & quake. This is the second reason....

“Then, Ānanda, when the bodhisatta, falling from the Tusita group, mindful & alert, descends into his mother’s womb, the earth shakes & shivers, quivers & quakes. This is the third reason....

“Then, Ānanda, when the bodhisatta, mindful & alert, emerges from his mother’s womb, the earth shakes & shivers, quivers & quakes. This is the fourth reason....

“Then, Ānanda, when the Tathāgata awakens to the unexcelled right self-awakening, the earth shakes & shivers, quivers & quakes. This is the fifth reason....

“Then, Ānanda, when the Tathāgata sets rolling the unexcelled Dhamma-wheel, the earth shakes & shivers, quivers & quakes. This is the sixth reason....

“Then, Ānanda, when the Tathāgata, mindful & alert, relinquishes the fabrications of life, the earth shakes & shivers, quivers & quakes. This is the seventh reason....

“Then, Ānanda, when the Tathāgata, by means of the unbinding property with no fuel remaining, totally unbinds, the earth shakes & shivers, quivers & quakes. This is the eighth reason, the eighth cause, for the appearance of a great earthquake.

“These are the eight reasons, the eight causes, for the appearance of a great earthquake.

“Ānanda, there are these eight assemblies. Which eight? A noble-warrior assembly, a brahmans assembly, a householder assembly, a contemplative assembly, a Four Great Kings assembly, a (Devas of the) Thirty-three assembly, a Māra assembly, a Brahmā assembly.

“I can remember approaching many hundreds of noble-warrior assemblies. There—before seating myself, before talking, before engaging in conversation—whatever sort of appearance they had, that was the sort of appearance I had; whatever sort of accent they had, that was the sort of accent I had. And I instructed, urged, roused, & encouraged them with Dhamma talk. While I was

speaking, they didn't know me: 'Who is this who speaks—a deva or a human being?' Having instructed, urged, roused, & encouraged them with Dhamma talk, I disappeared. When I had disappeared, they didn't know me: 'Who is this who disappeared—a deva or a human being?'

"I can remember approaching many hundreds of brahman assemblies... many hundreds of householder assemblies... many hundreds of contemplative assemblies... many hundreds of Four Great King assemblies... many hundreds of (Devas of the) Thirty-three assemblies... many hundreds of Māra assemblies....

"I can remember approaching many hundreds of Brahmā assemblies. There—before seating myself, before talking, before engaging in conversation—whatever sort of appearance they had, that was the sort of appearance I had; whatever sort of accent they had, that was the sort of accent I had. And I instructed, urged, roused, & encouraged them with Dhamma talk. While I was speaking, they didn't know me: 'Who is this person who speaks—a deva or a human being?' Having instructed, urged, roused, & encouraged them with Dhamma talk, I disappeared. When I had disappeared, they didn't know me: 'Who is this who disappeared—a deva or a human being?'

"Ānanda, there are these eight dimensions of (mental) mastery. Which eight?

"Having a single perception of form internally, one sees forms externally as limited, beautiful & ugly. Mastering them, one has the perception, 'I know; I see.' This is the first dimension of (mental) mastery.

"Having a single perception of form internally, one sees forms externally as immeasurable, beautiful & ugly. Mastering them, one has the perception, 'I know; I see.' This is the second dimension of (mental) mastery.

"Having a single formless perception internally, one sees forms externally as limited, beautiful & ugly. Mastering them, one has the perception, 'I know; I see.' This is the third dimension of (mental) mastery.

"Having a single formless perception internally, one sees forms externally as immeasurable, beautiful & ugly. Mastering them, one has the perception, 'I know; I see.' This is the fourth dimension of (mental) mastery.

"Having a single formless perception internally, one sees forms externally as blue, blue in their color, blue in their features, blue in their glow. Just as a flax flower is blue, blue in its color, blue in its features, blue in its glow, or just as

Vārāṇasī muslin, smooth on both sides, is blue, blue in its color, blue in its features, blue in its glow; in the same way, having a single formless perception internally, one sees forms externally as blue, blue in their color, blue in their features, blue in their glow. Mastering them, one has the perception, ‘I know; I see.’ This is the fifth dimension of (mental) mastery.

“Having a single formless perception internally, one sees forms externally as yellow, yellow in their color, yellow in their features, yellow in their glow. Just as a *kaṇṇikāra* flower is yellow, yellow in its color, yellow in its features, yellow in its glow, or just as Vārāṇasī muslin, smooth on both sides, is yellow, yellow in its color, yellow in its features, yellow in its glow; in the same way, having a single formless perception internally, one sees forms externally as yellow, yellow in their color, yellow in their features, yellow in their glow. Mastering them, one has the perception, ‘I know; I see.’ This is the sixth dimension of (mental) mastery.

“Having a single formless perception internally, one sees forms externally as red, red in their color, red in their features, red in their glow. Just as a *bandhu-jīvaka* flower is red, red in its color, red in its features, red in its glow, or just as Vārāṇasī muslin, smooth on both sides, is red, red in its color, red in its features, red in its glow; in the same way, having a single formless perception internally, one sees forms externally as red, red in their color, red in their features, red in their glow. Mastering them, one has the perception, ‘I know; I see.’ This is the seventh dimension of (mental) mastery.

“Having a single formless perception internally, one sees forms externally as white, white in their color, white in their features, white in their glow. Just as the morning star is white, white in its color, white in its features, white in its glow, or just as Vārāṇasī muslin, smooth on both sides, is white, white in its color, white in its features, white in its glow; in the same way, having a single formless perception internally, one sees forms externally as white, white in their color, white in their features, white in their glow. Mastering them, one has the perception, ‘I know; I see.’ This is the eighth dimension of (mental) mastery.

“These, Ānanda, are the eight dimensions of (mental) mastery. ¹⁹⁷

“Ānanda, there are these eight emancipations. Which eight?

“Possessed of form, one sees forms. This is the first emancipation.

“Not percipient of form internally, one sees forms externally. This is the second emancipation.

“One is intent only on the beautiful. This is the third emancipation.

“With the complete transcending of perceptions of (physical) form, with the disappearance of perceptions of resistance, and not heeding perceptions of multiplicity, (perceiving,) ‘Infinite space,’ one enters and remains in the dimension of the infinitude of space. This is the fourth emancipation.

“With the complete transcending of the dimension of the infinitude of space, (perceiving,) ‘Infinite consciousness,’ one enters and remains in the dimension of the infinitude of consciousness. This is the fifth emancipation.

“With the complete transcending of the dimension of the infinitude of consciousness, (perceiving,) ‘There is nothing,’ one enters and remains in the dimension of nothingness. This is the sixth emancipation.

“With the complete transcending of the dimension of nothingness, one enters and remains in the dimension of neither perception nor non-perception. This is the seventh emancipation.

“With the complete transcending of the dimension of neither perception nor non-perception, one enters and remains in the cessation of perception and feeling. This is the eighth emancipation.

“These, Ānanda, are the eight emancipations. [198](#)

“One time, Ānanda, I was dwelling near Uruvelā on the bank of the Nerañjarā River at the Goatherd Banyan, newly awakened. Then Māra the Evil One approached me and, on arrival, stood to one side. As he was standing there, he said to me, ‘May the Blessed One totally unbind now, lord. May the One Well-Gone totally unbind now, lord. Now is the time for the Blessed One’s total unbinding, lord.’

“When this was said, I said to Māra the Evil One, ‘Evil One, I will not totally unbind as long as my monk disciples are not yet experienced, trained, attained to confidence, desiring rest from the yoke, learned, maintaining the Dhamma, practicing the Dhamma in line with the Dhamma, practicing masterfully, living in line with the Dhamma; declaring the Dhamma—after having learned it from their own teachers—teaching it, describing it, setting it forth, revealing it, explaining it, making it plain; well refuting, in line with the Dhamma, any opposing teachings that have arisen; teaching the Dhamma with its marvels.’

“Evil One, I will not totally unbind as long as my nun disciples... my male lay-follower disciples... my female lay-follower disciples are not yet experienced....

“Evil One, I will not totally unbind as long as this holy life of mine is not powerful, prosperous, widely-spread, disseminated among many people, well expounded as far as there are human beings & devas.’

“And just now, Ānanda, (here) at the Pāvāla Shrine, Māra the Evil One approached me and, on arrival, stood to one side. As he was standing here, he said to me, ‘May the Blessed One totally unbind now, lord. May the One Well-Gone totally unbind now, lord. Now is the time for the Blessed One’s total unbinding, lord. After all, these words were said by the Blessed One: “Evil One, I will not totally unbind as long as my monk disciples are not yet experienced... as long as my nun disciples... my male lay-follower disciples... my female lay-follower disciples are not yet experienced... as long as this holy life of mine is not powerful, prosperous, widely-spread, disseminated among many people, well expounded as far as there are human beings & devas.” But now, lord, the Blessed One’s holy life is powerful, prosperous, widely-spread, disseminated among many people, well expounded as far as there are human beings & devas.

“May the Blessed One totally unbind now, lord. May the One Well-Gone totally unbind now, lord. Now is the time for the Blessed One’s total unbinding, lord.’

“When this was said, I said to Māra the Most Evil One: ‘Relax, Evil One. It won’t be long until the Tathāgata’s total unbinding. In three months’ time from now, the Tathāgata will totally unbind.’

“Just now, Ānanda, here at the Pāvāla Shrine—mindful & alert—I relinquished the fabrications of life.”

When this was said, Ven. Ānanda said to the Blessed One, “Lord, may the Blessed One remain for an eon. May the One Well-Gone remain for an eon—for the benefit of the many, for the happiness of the many, out of sympathy for the world, for the welfare, benefit, & happiness of human beings & devas.”

“Enough, now, Ānanda. Don’t beg the Tathāgata. Now is not the time for begging the Tathāgata.”

A second time... A third time, Ven. Ānanda said to the Blessed One, “Lord, may the Blessed One remain for an eon. May the One Well-Gone remain for an

eon—for the benefit of the many, for the happiness of the many, out of sympathy for the world, for the welfare, benefit, & happiness of human beings & devas.”

“Ānanda, do you have conviction in the Tathāgata’s awakening?”

“Yes, lord.”

“Then why, Ānanda, do you harass the Tathāgata up to three times?”

“Face-to-face with the Blessed One have I heard this, face-to-face have I received this: ‘Anyone, Ānanda, in whom the four bases of power are developed, pursued, given a means of transport, given a grounding, steadied, consolidated, and well undertaken, could—if he wanted—remain for an eon or the remainder of an eon. In the Tathāgata, Ānanda, the four bases of power are developed, pursued, given a means of transport, given a grounding, steadied, consolidated, and well undertaken. He could—if he wanted—remain for an eon or the remainder of an eon.’”

“Ānanda, do you have conviction in the Tathāgata’s awakening?”

“Yes, lord.”

“Then the wrongdoing is yours, Ānanda. Yours the mistake, in that—even when the Tathāgata had given such a blatant sign, such a blatant hint—you weren’t able to understand his meaning. You didn’t beg of the Tathāgata, ‘Lord, may the Blessed One remain for an eon. May the One Well-Gone remain for an eon—for the benefit of the many, for the happiness of the many, out of sympathy for the world, for the welfare, benefit, & happiness of human beings & devas.’ If you had begged the Tathāgata two times, the Tathāgata would have refused, but after the third time he would have acquiesced. The wrongdoing is yours, Ānanda. Yours the mistake.

“On one occasion, Ānanda, I was dwelling near Rājagaha, on Vulture Peak Mountain. There I addressed you, ‘Vulture Peak Mountain is refreshing, Ānanda. Anyone, Ānanda, in whom the four bases of power are developed, pursued, given a means of transport, given a grounding, steadied, consolidated, and well undertaken, could—if he wanted—remain for an eon or the remainder of an eon. In the Tathāgata, Ānanda, the four bases of power are developed, pursued, given a means of transport, given a grounding, steadied, consolidated, and well undertaken. He could—if he wanted—remain for an eon or the remainder of an eon.’ But you, Ānanda—even when the Tathāgata had given such a blatant sign, such a blatant hint—weren’t able to understand

his meaning. You didn't beg of the Tathāgata, 'Lord, may the Blessed One remain for an eon. May the One Well-Gone remain for an eon—for the benefit of the many, for the happiness of the many, out of sympathy for the world, for the welfare, benefit, & happiness of human beings & devas.' If you had begged the Tathāgata two times, the Tathāgata would have refused, but after the third time he would have acquiesced. The wrongdoing is yours, Ānanda. Yours the mistake.

"On one occasion, Ānanda, I was dwelling right there near Rājagaha at the Gotama Banyan tree... right there near Rājagaha at Robbers Cliff... right there near Rājagaha in Sattapaṇṇa Cave... right there near Rājagaha at the Black Rock on Isigili Mountain... right there near Rājagaha under the rock overhang at Serpents Water Hole in the Cool Forest... right there near Rājagaha at Tapodā Park... right there near Rājagaha at the Bamboo Forest, the Squirrels' Feeding Ground... right there near Rājagaha at Jivaka's Mango Grove... right there near Rājagaha at the Maddakucchi Deer Reserve. There, too, I addressed you, 'Rājagaha is refreshing, Ānanda. Refreshing, too, are Vulture Peak Mountain, the Gotama Banyan tree, Robbers Cliff, Sattapaṇṇa Cave, the Black Rock on Isigili Mountain, the rock overhang at Serpents Water Hole in the Cool Forest, Tapodā Park, the Bamboo Forest, the Squirrels' Feeding Ground, Jivaka's Mango Grove, the Maddakucchi Deer Park. Anyone, Ānanda, in whom the four bases of power are developed, pursued, given a means of transport, given a grounding, steadied, consolidated, and well undertaken, could—if he wanted—remain for an eon or the remainder of an eon. In the Tathāgata, Ānanda, the four bases of power are developed, pursued, given a means of transport, given a grounding, steadied, consolidated, and well undertaken. He could—if he wanted—remain for an eon or the remainder of an eon.' But you, Ānanda—even when the Tathāgata had given such a blatant sign, such a blatant hint—weren't able to understand his meaning. You didn't beg of the Tathāgata, 'Lord, may the Blessed One remain for an eon. May the One Well-Gone remain for an eon—for the benefit of the many, for the happiness of the many, out of sympathy for the world, for the welfare, benefit, & happiness of human beings & devas.' If you had begged the Tathāgata two times, the Tathāgata would have refused, but after the third time he would have acquiesced. The wrongdoing is yours, Ānanda. Yours the mistake.

"On one occasion, Ānanda, I was dwelling right here in Vesālī at the Udena Shrine... the Gotamaka Shrine... the Sattamba Shrine... the ManySon

Shrine... the Sāranda Shrine...

“And just now, Ānanda, (here) at Pāvāla Shrine, I addressed you today: ‘Vesālī is refreshing, Ānanda. Refreshing, too, are the Udena Shrine, the Gotamaka Shrine, the Sattamba Shrine, the ManySon Shrine, the Sāranda Shrine, the Pāvāla Shrine. Anyone, Ānanda, in whom the four bases of power are developed, pursued, given a means of transport, given a grounding, steadied, consolidated, and well undertaken, could—if he wanted—remain for an eon or the remainder of an eon. In the Tathāgata, Ānanda, the four bases of power are developed, pursued, given a means of transport, given a grounding, steadied, consolidated, and well undertaken. He could—if he wanted—remain for an eon or the remainder of an eon.’ But you, Ānanda—even when the Tathāgata had given such a blatant sign, such a blatant hint—weren’t able to understand his meaning. You didn’t beg of the Tathāgata, ‘Lord, may the Blessed One remain for an eon. May the One Well-Gone remain for an eon—for the benefit of the many, for the happiness of the many, out of sympathy for the world, for the welfare, benefit, & happiness of human beings & devas.’ If you had begged the Tathāgata two times, the Tathāgata would have refused, but after the third time he would have acquiesced. The wrongdoing is yours, Ānanda. Yours the mistake.

“But then, Ānanda, haven’t I—cautioning—pointed out the state of growing different with regard to all things dear & beloved, the state of becoming separate, the state of becoming otherwise? What else is there to expect? That of anything born, become, fabricated, subject to disintegration, you might say, ‘O, may it not disintegrate?’ The possibility doesn’t exist. And that is what the Tathāgata has gotten rid of, vomited up, released, abandoned, forfeited. It was with the fabrications of life relinquished that this categorical statement was spoken: ‘It won’t be long until the Tathāgata’s total unbinding. In three months’ time from now, the Tathāgata will totally unbind.’ For the Tathāgata, for the sake of life, to rescind that: The possibility doesn’t exist.

“Come, now, Ānanda. We will head for the Gabled Hall in the Great Forest.”

“As you say, lord,” Ven. Ānanda responded to the Blessed One.

Then the Blessed One together with Ven. Ānanda went to the Great Forest and to the Gabled Hall. On arrival, the Blessed One said to Ven. Ānanda, “Go, Ānanda. Have all the monks living in dependence on Vesālī gather at the assembly hall.”

Responding, “As you say, lord,” to the Blessed One, Ven. Ānanda—having had all the monks living in dependence on Vesālī gather at the assembly hall—approached the Blessed One. On arrival, having bowed down to him, he stood to one side. As he was standing there, he said to the Blessed One, “The Saṅgha of monks has gathered, lord. May the Blessed One do what he thinks it is now time to do.”

Then the Blessed One went to the assembly hall and, on arrival, sat down on the seat laid out. Seated, he addressed the monks: “Monks, the qualities I have taught, having known them directly: You should grasp them thoroughly, cultivate them, develop them, & pursue them so that this holy life may long endure & remain steadfast for the benefit, welfare, & happiness of the multitude, out of sympathy for the world, for the benefit, welfare, & happiness of human beings & devas. And which are the qualities I have taught... for the benefit, welfare, & happiness of human beings & devas? The four establishings of mindfulness, the four right exertions, the four bases of power, the five faculties, the five strengths, the seven factors for awakening, the noble eightfold path. ¹⁹⁹ These are the qualities I have taught, having known them directly, that you should grasp thoroughly, cultivate, develop, & pursue so that this holy life may long endure & remain steadfast for the benefit, welfare, & happiness of the multitude, out of sympathy for the world, for the benefit, welfare, & happiness of human beings & devas.”

Then the Blessed One addressed the monks, ‘I exhort you, monks: All fabrications are subject to decay. Reach consummation through heedfulness. ²⁰⁰ It won’t be long until the Tathāgata’s total unbinding. In three months’ time from now, the Tathāgata will totally unbind.”

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

Young & old
wise & foolish
rich & poor:
All end up dying.
As a potter’s clay vessels
large & small
fired & unfired
all end up broken,

so too life
heads to death.

Then the Teacher said further:

Ripe my age, little the life
 remaining to me.
Leaving you, I will go,
having made my refuge
 for myself.
Be heedful, monks,
 mindful, virtuous.
With your resolves well centered,
 look after your minds.
He who, in this
Dhamma & Vinaya,
remains heedful,
leaving the wandering-on
 through birth,
will make an end
 of stress.

Then, early in the morning, the Blessed One—having adjusted his under robe and carrying his bowl & outer robe—went into Vesālī for alms. Having gone for alms in Vesālī, after the meal, returning from his almsround, gazing on Vesālī with an elephant’s look [i.e., turning his whole body to look back], he addressed Ven. Ānanda: “Ānanda, this is the Tathāgata’s last look at Vesālī. Come, Ānanda, we will head for Bhaṇḍa Village.

“As you say, lord,” Ven. Ānanda responded to the Blessed One.

Then the Blessed One, together with a large Saṅgha of monks, went to Bhaṇḍa Village. There the Blessed One stayed near Bhaṇḍa Village.

And there he addressed the monks, “It’s through not awakening to or penetrating four qualities, monks, that we have transmigrated and wandered on for such a long time, you & I. Which four?

“It’s through not awakening to or penetrating noble virtue that we have transmigrated and wandered on for such a long time, you & I. It’s through not awakening to or penetrating noble concentration... It’s through not awakening

to or penetrating noble discernment... It's through not awakening to or penetrating noble release that we have transmigrated and wandered on for such a long time, you & I.

“(But now,) this noble virtue has been awakened to & penetrated, noble concentration has been awakened to & penetrated, noble discernment has been awakened to & penetrated, noble release has been awakened to & penetrated. Craving for becoming has been crushed, the guide to becoming [i.e., clinging] is ended. There now is no further-becoming.”

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

Virtue, concentration, discernment,
and unexcelled release:
These qualities have been awakened to
by Gotama, the prestigious.
Directly knowing this, he shows it to the monks—
the Awakened One,
the teacher who has made an ending of stress,
the One with Eyes,
totally unbound.

While dwelling there at Bhaṇḍa Village, the Blessed One often gave this Dhamma talk to the monks: “Such is virtue, such is concentration, such is discernment. Concentration nurtured with virtue is of great fruit, great reward. Discernment nurtured with concentration is of great fruit, great reward. The mind nurtured with discernment is rightly released from effluents, i.e., the effluent of sensuality, the effluent of becoming, the effluent of ignorance.”

Then the Blessed One, having stayed near Bhaṇḍa Village as long as he pleased, said to Ven. Ānanda, “Come, Ānanda, we will head for Hatthi Village, Amba Village, Jambu Village, to Bhoganagara.”

“As you say, lord,” Ven. Ānanda responded to the Blessed One.

Then the Blessed One, together with a large Saṅgha of monks, went to Bhoganagara. There the Blessed One stayed near Bhoganagara at the Ānanda Shrine.

THE FOUR GREAT STANDARDS

There the Blessed One addressed the monks, “Monks, I will teach you four great standards. Listen and pay careful attention.”

“As you say, lord,” the monks responded to him.

The Blessed One said, “There is the case where a monk says this: ‘Face-to-face with the Blessed One have I heard this, face-to-face have I received this: This is the Dhamma, this is the Vinaya, this is the Teacher’s instruction.’ His statement is neither to be approved nor scorned. Without approval or scorn, take careful note of his words and make them stand against the suttas and tally them against the Vinaya. If, on making them stand against the suttas and tallying them against the Vinaya, you find that they don’t stand with the suttas or tally with the Vinaya, you may conclude: ‘This is not the word of the Blessed One; this monk has misunderstood it’—and you should reject it. But if, on making them stand against the suttas and tallying them against the Vinaya, you find that they stand with the suttas and tally with the Vinaya, you may conclude: ‘This is the word of the Blessed One; this monk has understood it rightly.’

“Then there is the case where a monk says this: ‘In a monastery over there dwells a Saṅgha with well known leading elders. Face-to-face with that Saṅgha I have heard this, face-to-face have I received this: This is the Dhamma, this is the Vinaya, this is the Teacher’s instruction’...

“Then there is the case where a monk says this: ‘In a monastery over there dwell many learned elder monks, well versed in the tradition, who have memorized the Dhamma, the Vinaya, & the Mātikās. Face-to-face with those elders I have heard this, face-to-face have I received this: This is the Dhamma, this is the Vinaya, this is the Teacher’s instruction’...

“Then there is the case where a monk says this: ‘In a monastery over there dwells a learned elder monk, well versed in the tradition, who has memorized the Dhamma, the Vinaya, & the Mātikās. Face-to-face with that elder I have heard this, face-to-face have I received this: This is the Dhamma, this is the Vinaya, this is the Teacher’s instruction.’ His statement is neither to be approved nor scorned. Without approval or scorn, take careful note of his words and make them stand against the suttas and tally them against the Vinaya. If, on making them stand against the suttas and tallying them against the Vinaya, you find that they don’t stand with the suttas or tally with the

Vinaya, you may conclude: ‘This is not the word of the Blessed One; this monk has misunderstood it’—and you should reject it. But if, on making them stand against the suttas and tallying them against the Vinaya, you find that they stand with the suttas and tally with the Vinaya, you may conclude: ‘This is the word of the Blessed One; this monk has understood it rightly.’

“Monks, remember these four great standards.”

While dwelling there near Bhoganagara at the Ānanda Shrine, the Blessed One often gave this Dhamma talk to the monks: “Such is virtue, such is concentration, such is discernment. Concentration nurtured with virtue is of great fruit, great reward. Discernment nurtured with concentration is of great fruit, great reward. The mind nurtured with discernment is rightly released from effluents, i.e., the effluent of sensuality, the effluent of becoming, the effluent of ignorance.”

Then the Blessed One, having stayed near Bhoganagara at the Ānanda Shrine as long as he pleased, said to Ven. Ānanda, “Come, Ānanda, we will head for Pāvā.”

“As you say, lord,” Ven. Ānanda responded to the Blessed One.

Then the Blessed One, together with a large Saṅgha of monks, went to Pāvā. There the Blessed One stayed near Pāvā in the mango grove of Cunda the silversmith.

Cunda the silversmith heard, “The Blessed One, they say, on reaching Pāvā, is staying near Pāvā in my mango grove.”

So Cunda 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 instructed, urged, roused, & encouraged him with Dhamma talk. Then Cunda—instructed, urged, roused, & encouraged by the Blessed One’s Dhamma talk—said to him, “Lord, may the Blessed One acquiesce to my meal tomorrow, together with the Saṅgha of monks.”

The Blessed One acquiesced with silence.

Then Cunda, understanding the Blessed One’s acquiescence, got up from his seat and, bowing down to him and circumambulating him, left.

THE LAST DAY

Then, at the end of the night, after having exquisite staple & non-staple food—including a large amount of pig-delicacy²⁰¹—prepared in his own home, Cunda announced the time to the Blessed One: “It’s time, lord. The meal is ready.”

Then, early in the morning, the Blessed One—having adjusted his under robe and carrying his bowl & outer robe—went together with the Saṅgha of monks to Cunda’s home. On arrival, he sat down on the seat laid out. Seated, he said to Cunda, “Cunda, serve me with the pig-delicacy you have had prepared, and the Saṅgha of monks with the other staple & non-staple food you have had prepared.”

Responding, “As you say, lord,” to the Blessed One, Cunda served the Blessed One with the pig-delicacy he had had prepared, and the Saṅgha of monks with the other staple & non-staple food he had had prepared. Then the Blessed One said to him, “Cunda, bury the remaining pig-delicacy in a pit. I don’t see anyone in the cosmos with its devas, Māras, & Brahmās, in this generation with its contemplatives & brahmans, its royalty & common people, in whom, when it was ingested, it would go to a healthy change, aside from the Tathāgata.”

Responding, “As you say, lord,” to the Blessed One, Cunda buried the remaining pig-delicacy in a pit, 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—after instructing, urging, rousing, & encouraging him with Dhamma talk—got up from his seat and left.

Then in the Blessed One, after he had eaten Cunda’s meal, there arose a severe disease accompanied with (the passing of) blood, with intense pains & deadly. But the Blessed One endured it—mindful, alert, & not struck down by it.

Then he addressed Ven. Ānanda, “Ānanda, we will go to Kusinārā.”

“As you say, lord,” Ven. Ānanda responded to the Blessed One.

I have heard that,
on eating Cunda the silversmith’s meal,
the enlightened one was touched by illness—
fierce, deadly.

After he had eaten the pig-delicacy,
a fierce sickness arose in the Teacher.
After being purged of it,
the Blessed One said,
“To the city of Kusinārā
I will go.”²⁰²

Then the Blessed One, going down from the road, went to a certain tree and, on arrival, said to Ven. Ānanda, “Ānanda, please arrange my outer robe folded in four. I am tired. I will sit down.”

Responding, “As you say, lord,” to the Blessed One, Ven. Ānanda arranged the outer robe folded in four. The Blessed One sat down on the seat laid out.

Seated, he said to Ven. Ānanda, “Ānanda, please fetch me some water. I am thirsty. I will drink.”

When this was said, Ven. Ānanda said to the Blessed One, “Lord, just now five hundred carts have passed through. The meager river—cut by the wheels—flows turbid & disturbed. But the Kakudha River is not far away, with pristine water, pleasing water, cool water, pellucid water,²⁰³ with restful banks, refreshing. There the Blessed One will drink potable water and cool his limbs.”

A second time, the Blessed One said to Ven. Ānanda, “Ānanda, please fetch me some water. I am thirsty. I will drink.”

A second time, Ven. Ānanda said to the Blessed One, “Lord, just now five hundred carts have passed through. The meager water—cut by the wheels—flows turbid & disturbed. But the Kakudha River is not far away, with pristine water, pleasing water, cool water, pellucid water, with restful banks, refreshing. There the Blessed One will drink potable water and cool his limbs.”

A third time, the Blessed One said to Ven. Ānanda, “Ānanda, please fetch me some water. I am thirsty. I will drink.”

Responding, “As you say, lord,” to the Blessed One, Ven. Ānanda—taking a bowl—went to the river. And the meager river that, cut by the wheels, had been flowing turbid & disturbed, on his approach flowed pristine, clear, & undisturbed. The thought occurred to him, “How amazing! How astounding!—the great power & great might of the Tathāgata!—in that this meager river that, cut by the wheels, was flowing turbid & disturbed, on my approach flowed pristine, clear, & undisturbed!” Fetching water with the bowl, he went to the

Blessed One and, on arrival, said, “How amazing, lord! How astounding!—the great power & great might of the Tathāgata!—in that this meager river that, cut by the wheels, was flowing turbid & disturbed, on my approach flowed pristine, clear, & undisturbed! Drink the water, O Blessed One! Drink the water, O One Well-Gone!”

Then the Blessed One drank the water.²⁰⁴

Now on that occasion Pukkusa Mallaputta, a disciple of Āḷāra Kālāma was traveling on the road from Kusinārā to Pāvā. He saw the Blessed One sitting at the root of a tree and, on seeing him, approached him. On arrival, having bowed down to him, he sat to one side. As he was sitting there, he said to the Blessed One, “It’s amazing, lord. It’s astounding: the peaceful abiding by which those gone-forth abide. Once, Āḷāra Kālāma, while traveling, went down from the road and sat not far away at the root of a tree for the day’s abiding. Then five hundred carts passed by right near him. Then a certain man, coming along right behind those hundreds of carts, approached Āḷāra Kālāma and, on arrival, said to him, ‘Lord, did you see five hundred carts going past?’ ‘No, friend, I didn’t.’ ‘But did you hear the sound?’ ‘No, friend, I didn’t.’ ‘But were you asleep?’ ‘No, friend, I wasn’t asleep.’ ‘But were you conscious?’ ‘Yes, friend.’ ‘Then, lord, being conscious & awake when five hundred carts passed by right near you, you neither saw them nor heard a sound. And yet your outer robe is covered with (their) dust!’ ‘Yes, friend.’ Then the thought occurred to that man, ‘How amazing! How astounding: the peaceful abiding by which those gone-forth abide—in that, being conscious & awake when five hundred carts passed by right near, he would neither see them nor hear a sound!’²⁰⁵ Having proclaimed immense conviction in Āḷāra Kālāma, he then left.”

“What do you think, Pukkusa? Which is more difficult to do, more difficult to master: one who, being conscious & awake when five hundred carts passed by right near, would neither see them nor hear a sound; or one who, being conscious & awake when the rain-deva was raining, the rain-deva was pouring, lightning-streaks were shooting out, and a thunderbolt split (the air), would neither see them nor hear a sound?”

“Lord, what would five hundred carts amount to—or six hundred carts, or seven hundred carts, or eight hundred carts, or nine hundred carts, or one thousand carts... or 100,000 carts? That would be more difficult to do, more difficult to master: one who, being conscious & awake when the rain-deva was

raining, the rain-deva was pouring, lightning-streaks were shooting out, and a thunderbolt split (the air), would neither see them nor hear a sound.”

“One time, Pukkusa, I was dwelling near Ātumā in a threshing barn. And on that occasion, when the rain-deva was raining, the rain-deva was pouring, lightning-streaks were shooting out, and a thunderbolt split (the air) not far from the threshing barn, two farmers—brothers—were killed, along with four oxen.

“Then a large crowd of people came out of Ātumā to where the two farmers—brothers—were killed, along with the four oxen. And on that occasion I, having come out of the threshing-barn, was doing walking meditation in front of the door to the threshing barn. A certain man from the great crowd of people approached me and, on arrival, having bowed down to me, stood to one side. As he was standing there, I said to him, ‘Why, friend, has this great crowd of people gathered?’

“Just now, lord—when the rain-deva was raining, the rain-deva was pouring, lightning-streaks were shooting out, and a thunderbolt split (the air)—two farmers—brothers—were killed, along with four oxen. That’s why this great crowd of people has gathered. But you, lord: Where were you?’

“I was right here, friend.’

“But did you see anything?’

“No, friend, I didn’t.”

“But did you hear the sound?’

“No, friend, I didn’t.’

“But were you asleep?’

“No, friend, I wasn’t asleep.’

“But were you conscious?’

“Yes, friend.’

“Then, lord, being conscious & awake when the rain-deva was raining, the rain-deva was pouring, lightning-streaks were shooting out, and a thunderbolt split (the air), you neither saw anything nor heard a sound?’

“Yes, friend.’

“Then the thought occurred to that man, ‘How amazing! How astounding: the peaceful abiding by which those gone-forth abide—in that, when the rain-deva was raining, the rain-deva was pouring, lightning-streaks were shooting

out, and a thunderbolt split (the air), he would neither see them nor hear a sound!’ Having proclaimed immense conviction in me, he circumambulated me and then left.”

When this was said, Pukkusa Mallaputta said to the Blessed One, “The conviction I had in Ālāra Kālāma I winnow before a high wind or wash away in the swift current of a river. Magnificent, lord! Magnificent! ... May the Blessed One remember me as a lay follower who has gone to him for refuge from this day forward, for life.”

Then Pukkusa Mallaputta addressed a certain man, “Come now, I say. Fetch me a pair of gold-colored robes, ready to wear.”

Responding, “As you say, lord,” to Pukkusa Mallaputta, the man fetched the pair of gold-colored robes, ready to wear. Then Pukkusa Mallaputta presented the pair of gold-colored robes, ready to wear, to the Blessed One, (saying,) “May the Blessed One accept from me this pair of gold-colored robes, ready to wear, out of sympathy.”

“Very well, then, Pukkusa. Clothe me with one, and Ānanda with the other.”

Responding, “As you say, lord,” to the Blessed One, Pukkusa Mallaputta clothed the Blessed One with one, and Ven. Ānanda with the other.

Then the Blessed One instructed, urged, roused, and encouraged Pukkusa Mallaputta with Dhamma talk. Then Pukkusa Mallaputta—instructed, urged, roused, and encouraged with the Blessed One’s Dhamma talk—got up from his seat and, bowing down to the Blessed One and circumambulating him, left.

Then not long after Pukkusa Mallaputta had left, Ven. Ānanda placed the pair of gold-colored robes, ready to wear, against the Blessed One’s body. Placed against the Blessed One’s body, their iridescence seemed as if destroyed.

Then Ven. Ānanda said, “It’s amazing, lord. It’s astounding—how clear & bright the color of the Tathāgata’s skin! When this pair of gold-colored robes, ready to wear, is placed against the Blessed One’s body, their iridescence seems as if destroyed!”

“So it is, Ānanda. There are two times when the color of the Tathāgata’s skin is especially clear & bright. Which two? The night on which the Tathāgata awakens to the unexcelled self-awakening and the night on which the Tathāgata totally unbinds by means of the unbinding property with no fuel remaining. These are the two times when the color of the Tathāgata’s skin is especially clear & bright. Today, in the last watch of the night, between the twin

Sal trees in Upavattana, the Mallans' Sal Forest near Kusinārā, the Tathāgata's total unbinding will occur.

"Come, Ānanda, we will head for Kakudha River."

"As you say, lord," Ven. Ānanda responded to the Blessed One.

Pukkusa offered a pair of gold-colored robes,
clothed in which,
the Teacher of golden complexion
shone brightly.

Then the Blessed One, together with the large Saṅgha of monks, went to the Kakudha River and, after arriving at the Kakudha River, going down, bathing, drinking, & coming back out, went to a mango grove. On arrival, the Blessed One said to Ven. Cundaka, "Cundaka, please arrange my outer robe folded in four. I am tired. I will lie down."

Responding, "As you say, lord," to the Blessed One, Ven. Cundaka arranged the outer robe folded in four. The Blessed One, lying on his right side, took up the lion's posture, placing one foot on top of the other—mindful, alert, and attending to the perception of getting up. Ven. Cundaka sat in front of him.

The Awakened One,
—having gone to the little Kakudha river
with its pristine, pleasing water, clear—
the Teacher, seeming very tired,
the Tathāgata, unequalled in the world
went down, bathed, drank, & came out.
Honored, surrounded,
in the midst of the group of monks,
the Blessed One, Teacher,
proceeding here in the Dhamma,
the great seer,
went to the mango grove.
He addressed the monk named Cundaka,
"Spread it out, folded in four
for me to lie down."
Ordered by the One of developed mind,
Cundaka quickly set it out, folded in four.
The Teacher lay down, seeming very tired,

and Cundaka sat down there before him.

Then the Blessed One addressed Ven. Ānanda, “Ānanda, if anyone tries to incite remorse in Cunda the silversmith, saying, ‘It’s no gain for you, friend Cunda, it’s ill done by you, that the Tathāgata, having eaten your last alms, totally unbound,’ then Cunda’s remorse should be allayed (in this way): ‘It’s a gain for you, friend Cunda, it’s well done by you, that the Tathāgata, having eaten your last alms, totally unbound. Face-to-face with the Blessed One have I heard it, face-to-face have I learned it, “These two alms are equal to each other in fruit, equal to each other in result, of much greater fruit & reward than any other alms. Which two? The alms that, after having eaten it, the Tathāgata awakens to the unexcelled right self-awakening. And the alms that, after having eaten it, the Tathāgata unbinds by means of the unbinding property with no fuel remaining. These are the two alms that are equal to each other in fruit, equal to each other in result, of much greater fruit & reward than any other alms. Venerable²⁰⁶ Cunda the silversmith has accumulated kamma that leads to long life. Venerable Cunda the silversmith has accumulated kamma that leads to beauty. Venerable Cunda the silversmith has accumulated kamma that leads to happiness. Venerable Cunda the silversmith has accumulated kamma that leads to heaven. Venerable Cunda the silversmith has accumulated kamma that leads to rank. Venerable Cunda the silversmith has accumulated kamma that leads to sovereignty.” In this way, Ānanda, Cunda the silversmith’s remorse should be allayed.”

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

For a person giving,
merit increases.
For one self-restraining,
no animosity is amassed.
One who is skillful
leaves evil behind
and—from the ending of
passion,
aversion,
delusion—
totally unbinds.

Then the Blessed One said to Ven. Ānanda: “Come, Ānanda, we will head for the far shore of the Hiraññavati River, for Upavattana, the Mallans’ Sal Forest near Kusinārā.”

“As you say, lord,” Ven. Ānanda responded to the Blessed One.

Then the Blessed One with a large Saṅgha of monks went to the far shore of the Hiraññavati River, to Upavattana, the Mallans’ Sal Forest near Kusinārā. On arrival, he said to Ven. Ānanda, “Ānanda, please prepare a bed for me between the twin Sal trees, with its head to the north. I am tired and will lie down.”

Responding, “As you say, lord,” to the Blessed One, Ven. Ānanda prepared a bed between the twin Sal trees, with its head to the north. Then the Blessed One lay down on his right side in the lion’s sleeping posture, with one foot on top of the other, mindful & alert. ²⁰⁷

Now on that occasion the twin Sal trees were in full bloom, even though it was not the time for flowering. They showered, strewed, & sprinkled on the Tathāgata’s body in homage to him. Heavenly coral-tree blossoms fell from the sky, showering, strewing, & sprinkling the Tathāgata’s body in homage to him. Heavenly sandalwood powder fell from the sky, showering, strewing, & sprinkling the Tathāgata’s body in homage to him. Heavenly music was playing in the sky, in homage to the Tathāgata. Heavenly songs were sung in the sky, in homage to the Tathāgata.

Then the Blessed One said to Ven. Ānanda, “Ānanda, the twin Sal trees are in full bloom, even though it’s not the flowering season. They shower, strew, & sprinkle on the Tathāgata’s body in homage to him. Heavenly coral-tree blossoms are falling from the sky.... Heavenly sandalwood powder is falling from the sky.... Heavenly music is playing in the sky.... Heavenly songs are sung in the sky, in homage to the Tathāgata. But it is not to this extent that a Tathāgata is worshipped, honored, respected, venerated, or paid homage to. Rather, the monk, nun, male lay follower, or female lay follower who keeps practicing the Dhamma in accordance with the Dhamma, who keeps practicing masterfully, who lives in accordance with the Dhamma: That is the person who worships, honors, respects, venerates, & pays homage to the Tathāgata with the highest homage. So you should train yourselves: ‘We will keep practicing the Dhamma in accordance with the Dhamma, we will keep practicing masterfully, we will live in accordance with the Dhamma.’ ²⁰⁸ That’s how you should train yourselves.”

Now on that occasion Ven. Upavāṇa was standing in front of the Blessed One, fanning him. Then the Blessed One dismissed him, saying, “Go away, monk. Don’t stand in front of me.” Then the thought occurred to Ven. Ānanda, “For a long time, now, this Ven. Upavāṇa has been an attendant to the Blessed One, staying near him and traveling with him. But now, in his final hour, he dismisses him, saying, ‘Go away, monk. Don’t stand in front of me.’ Now what is the reason, what is the cause, why the Blessed One dismisses him, saying, ‘Go away, monk. Don’t stand in front of me?’”

Then Ven. Ānanda said to the Blessed One, “For a long time, now, this Ven. Upavāṇa has been an attendant to the Blessed One, staying near him and traveling with him. But now, in his final hour, he dismisses him, saying, ‘Go away, monk. Don’t stand in front of me.’ Now what is the reason, what is the cause, why the Blessed One dismisses him, saying, ‘Go away, monk. Don’t stand in front of me?’”

“Ānanda, most of the devatās from ten world-systems have gathered in order to see the Tathāgata. For twelve leagues all around Upavattana, the Mallans’ Sal Forest near Kusinārā, there is not the space even of the tip of a horse-tail hair that is not occupied by eminent devatās. The devatās, Ānanda, are complaining, ‘We have come a long distance to see the Tathāgata.²⁰⁹ Only once in a long, long time does a Tathāgata—worthy & rightly self-awakened—arise in the world. Tonight, in the last watch of the night, the total unbinding of the Tathāgata will occur. And this eminent monk is standing in front of the Blessed One, blocking the way. We aren’t getting to see the Blessed One in his final hour.’”

“But, lord, what is the state of the devatās the Blessed One is paying attention to?”

“Ānanda, there are devatās who perceive space to be earth. Tearing at their hair, they are weeping. Uplifting their arms, they are weeping. As if their feet were cut out from under them,²¹⁰ they fall down and roll back & forth, crying, ‘All too soon, the Blessed One will totally unbind! All too soon, the One Well-Gone will totally unbind! All too soon, the One with Eyes [alternate reading: the Eye] will disappear from the world!’ Then there are devatās who perceive earth to be earth. Tearing at their hair, they are weeping. Uplifting their arms, they are weeping. As if their feet were cut out from under them, they fall down and roll back & forth, crying, ‘All too soon, the Blessed One will totally unbind!’

All too soon, the One Well-Gone will totally unbind! All too soon, the One with Eyes will disappear from the world!’ But those devatās who are free from passion acquiesce, mindful & alert: ‘Inconstant are fabrications. What else is there to expect?’”

“In the past, lord, the monks in all directions, after ending the Rains residence, came to see the Tathāgata. Thus we got to see & attend to the monks who inspire the heart. But now, after the Blessed One is gone, we won’t get to see or attend to the monks who inspire the heart.”

“Ānanda, there are these four places that merit being seen by a clansman with conviction, that merit his feelings of urgency & dismay [*saṁvega*]. Which four? ‘Here the Tathāgata was born’ is a place that merits being seen by a clansman with conviction, that merits his feelings of urgency & dismay. ‘Here the Tathāgata awakened to the unexcelled right self-awakening’... ‘Here the Tathāgata set rolling the unexcelled wheel of Dhamma’... ‘Here the Tathāgata totally unbound in the property of unbinding with no fuel remaining’ is a place that merits being seen by a clansman with conviction, that merits his feelings of urgency & dismay. These are the four places that merit being seen by a clansman with conviction, that merit his feelings of urgency & dismay. They will come out of conviction, Ānanda—monks, nuns, male lay followers, & female lay followers—to the spots where ‘Here the Tathāgata was born,’ ‘Here the Tathāgata awakened to the unexcelled right self-awakening,’ ‘Here the Tathāgata set rolling the unexcelled wheel of Dhamma,’ ‘Here the Tathāgata totally unbound in the property of unbinding with no fuel remaining.’ And anyone who dies while making a pilgrimage to these shrines with a bright, confident mind will—on the breakup of the body, after death—reappear in a good destination, a heavenly world.”

“Lord, what course should we follow with regard to womenfolk?”

“Not-seeing, Ānanda.”

“But when there is seeing, lord, what course should be followed?”

“Not-addressing, Ānanda.”

“But when we are addressed, what course should be followed?”

“Mindfulness should be established, Ānanda.”

“And, lord, what course should we follow with regard to the Tathāgata’s body?”

“You are not to be concerned about the Tathāgata’s funeral. Please, Ānanda, strive for the true goal, be committed to the true goal, dwell heedful, ardent, & resolute for the sake of the true goal. There are wise nobles, wise brahmins, & wise householders who are highly confident in the Tathāgata. They will conduct the Tathāgata’s funeral.”

“But, lord, what course should be followed with regard to the Tathāgata’s body?”

“The course they follow with regard to a wheel-turning monarch’s²¹¹ body, Ānanda, is the course that should be followed with regard to the Tathāgata’s body.”

“And what, lord, is the course they follow with regard to a wheel-turning monarch’s body?”

“Ānanda, they wrap the wheel-turning monarch’s body in new linen cloth. Having wrapped it in new linen cloth, they wrap it in teased cotton-wool. Having wrapped it in teased cotton-wool, they wrap it in new linen cloth. Having done this five hundred times, they place the body in an iron oil vat, cover it with an iron lid, make a pyre composed totally of perfumed substances, and cremate the body. Then they build a burial mound for the wheel-turning monarch at a great four-way intersection. That is the course that they follow with regard to a wheel-turning monarch’s body. The course they follow with regard to a wheel-turning monarch’s body, Ānanda, is the course that should be followed with regard to the Tathāgata’s body. A burial mound for the Tathāgata is to be built at a great four-way intersection. And those who offer a garland, a scent, or a perfume powder there, or bow down there, or brighten their minds there: That will be for their long-term welfare & happiness.

“There are these four who are worthy of a burial mound. Which four? A Tathāgata, worthy & rightly self-awakened, is worthy of a burial mound. A Private Buddha... a disciple of a Tathāgata... a wheel-turning monarch is worthy of a burial mound.

“And for what reason is a Tathāgata, worthy & rightly self-awakened, worthy of a burial mound? (At the thought,) ‘This is the burial mound of a Tathāgata, worthy & rightly self-awakened,’ many people will brighten their minds. Having brightened their minds there, then—on the breakup of the body, after death—they will reappear in a good destination, a heavenly world. It is for this

reason that a Tathāgata, worthy & rightly self-awakened, is worthy of a burial mound.

“And for what reason is a Private Buddha worthy of a burial mound? (At the thought,) ‘This is the burial mound of a Private Buddha,’ many people will brighten their minds. Having brightened their minds there, then—on the breakup of the body, after death—they will reappear in a good destination, a heavenly world....

“And for what reason is a disciple of a Tathāgata worthy of a burial mound? (At the thought,) ‘This is the burial mound of a disciple of a Tathāgata,’ many people will brighten their minds. Having brightened their minds there, then—on the breakup of the body, after death—they will reappear in a good destination, a heavenly world....

“And for what reason is a wheel-turning monarch worthy of a burial mound? (At the thought,) ‘This is the burial mound of a wheel-turning monarch,’ many people will brighten their minds. Having brightened their minds there, then—on the breakup of the body, after death—they will reappear in a good destination, a heavenly world. It is for this reason that a wheel-turning monarch is worthy of a burial mound.

“These are the four who are worthy of a burial mound.”

Then Ven. Ānanda, going into a (nearby) building, stood leaning against the doorjamb, weeping: “Here I am, still in training, with work left to do, and the total unbinding of my teacher is about to occur—the teacher who has had such sympathy for me!”

Then the Blessed One said to the monks, “Monks, where is Ānanda?”

“Lord, Ven. Ānanda, having gone into that building, stands leaning against the doorjamb, weeping: ‘Here I am, still in training, with work left to do, and the total unbinding of my teacher is about to occur—the teacher who has had such sympathy for me!’”

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

Responding, “As you say, lord,” to the Blessed One, the monk went to Ven. Ānanda. On arrival, he said, “The Teacher calls you, my friend.”

Responding, “As you say, my friend,” to the monk, Ven. Ānanda 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, “Enough, Ānanda. Don’t grieve.

Don't lament. Haven't I already taught you the state of growing different with regard to all things dear & beloved, the state of becoming separate, the state of becoming otherwise? What else is there to expect? That of anything born, become, fabricated, subject to disintegration, you might say, 'O, may it not disintegrate'? The possibility doesn't exist.

"For a long time, Ānanda, you have waited on the Tathāgata with bodily acts of goodwill—helpful, happy, whole-hearted, without limit; with verbal acts of goodwill... with mental acts of goodwill—helpful, happy, whole-hearted, without limit. You are one who has made merit. Commit yourself to exertion, and soon you will be without effluents."

Then the Blessed One addressed the monks, "Monks, those Blessed Ones who, in the past, were worthy ones, rightly self-awakened, had foremost attendants, just as I have had Ānanda. Those Blessed Ones who, in the future, will be worthy ones, rightly self-awakened, will have foremost attendants, just as I have had Ānanda. Ānanda is wise. He knows, 'This is the time to approach to see the Tathāgata. This is the time for monks, this the time for nuns, this the time for male lay followers, this the time for female lay followers, this the time for kings & their ministers, this the time for sectarians, this the time for the followers of sectarians.

"There are these four amazing & astounding qualities in Ānanda. If a group of monks approaches to see Ānanda, they are gratified at the sight of him. If he speaks Dhamma to them, they are gratified with what he says. Before they are sated, he falls silent. If a group of nuns approaches to see Ānanda... If a group of male lay followers approaches to see Ānanda... If a group of female lay followers approaches to see Ānanda, they are gratified at the sight of him. If he speaks Dhamma to them, they are gratified with what he says. Before they are sated, he falls silent. These are the four amazing & astounding qualities in Ānanda. There are these four amazing & astounding qualities in a wheel-turning monarch. If a group of noble warriors approaches to see him... If a group of brahmans approaches to see him... If a group of householders approaches to see him... If a group of contemplatives approaches to see him, they are gratified at the sight of him. If he speaks to them, they are gratified with what he says. Before they are sated, he falls silent. In the same way, monks, there are these four amazing & astounding qualities in Ānanda. If a group of monks... a group of nuns... a group of male lay followers... a group of female lay followers approaches to see Ānanda, they are gratified at the sight of him. If

he speaks Dhamma to them, they are gratified with what he says. Before they are sated, he falls silent. These are the four amazing & astounding qualities in Ānanda.”

When this was said, Ven. Ānanda said to the Blessed One, “Lord, may the Blessed One not totally unbind in this little town, this dusty town, this branch township. There are other great cities: Campā, Rājagaha, Sāvattihī, Sāketa, Kosambī, Vārāṇasī. May the Blessed One totally unbind there. In those cities there are many wealthy noble warriors, brahmins, & householders who have high confidence in the Tathāgata. They will conduct the Tathāgata’s funeral.”

“Don’t say that, Ānanda. Don’t say that: ‘this little town, this dusty town, this branch township.’ In the past, Ānanda, a king named Mahā Sudassana was a wheel-turning monarch, a righteous king ruling righteously, who was a conqueror of the four directions, a stabilizer of his country, endowed with the seven treasures. This Kusinārā was his capital city, named Kusāvati: twelve leagues long from east to west, seven leagues wide from north to south. Kusāvati was powerful, rich, & well populated, crowded with people & prosperous. Just as the capital city of the devas named Ālakamandā is powerful, rich, & well populated, crowded with yakkhas & prosperous; in the same way, Kusāvati was powerful, rich, & well populated, crowded with people & prosperous. By day or by night, it was never lacking in ten sounds: the sound of elephants, the sound of horses, the sound of carts, the sound of drums, the sound of tabors, the sound of lutes, the sound of songs, the sound of cymbals, the sound of gongs, with cries of ‘Eat! Drink! Snack!’ as the tenth.

“Now, Ānanda, go into Kusinārā and announce to the Kusinārā Mallans, ‘Tonight, Vāsīṭṭhas, in the last watch of the night, the total unbinding of the Tathāgata will occur. Come out, Vāsīṭṭhas! Come out, Vāsīṭṭhas! Don’t later regret that “The Tathāgata’s total unbinding occurred within the borders of our very own town, but we didn’t get to see him in his final hour!”’”

Responding, “As you say, lord,” to the Blessed One, Ven. Ānanda—having adjusted his under robe and carrying his bowl & outer robe—went unaccompanied into Kusinārā. Now at that time the Kusinārā Mallans had met for some business in their reception hall. Ven. Ānanda went to the reception hall and, on arrival, announced to them, “Tonight, Vāsīṭṭhas, in the last watch of the night, the total unbinding of the Tathāgata will occur. Come out, Vāsīṭṭhas! Come out, Vāsīṭṭhas! Don’t later regret that ‘The Tathāgata’s total unbinding occurred within the borders of our very own town, but we didn’t get

to see him in his final hour!” When they heard Ven. Ānanda, the Mallans together with their sons, daughters, & wives were shocked, saddened, their minds overflowing with sorrow. Some of them wept, tearing at their hair; they wept, uplifting their arms. As if their feet were cut out from under them, they fell down and rolled back & forth, crying, “All too soon, the Blessed One will totally unbind! All too soon, the One Well-Gone will totally unbind! All too soon, the One with Eyes will disappear from the world!”

Then the Mallans together with their sons, daughters, & wives—shocked, saddened, their minds overflowing with sorrow—went to Ven. Ānanda at Upavattana, the Mallans’ Sal Forest near Kusinārā. The thought occurred to Ven. Ānanda, “If I let the Mallans pay reverence to the Blessed One one by one, the night will be over before they have finished paying reverence. What if I were to have them pay reverence to the Blessed One arranging them family by family, announcing, ‘Lord, the Mallan named so-&-so, together with his children & wives, servants & retainers, bows down with his head at the Blessed One’s feet.’”²¹² So Ven. Ānanda, arranging the Mallans family by family, had them pay reverence to the Blessed One, (saying,) “Lord, the Mallan named so-&-so, together with his children & wives, servants & retainers, bows down with his head at the Blessed One’s feet.”

In this way Ven. Ānanda got the Mallans to pay reverence to the Blessed One within the first watch of the night.

Now on that occasion a wanderer named Subhadda was dwelling near Kusinārā. He heard, “Tonight, in the last watch of the night, the total unbinding of Gotama the contemplative will take place.” Then the thought occurred to him: “I have heard the old elder wanderers, teachers of teachers, saying that only once in a long, long time do Tathāgatas—worthy ones, rightly self-awakened—appear in the world. Tonight, in the last watch of the night, the total unbinding of Gotama the contemplative will occur. Now there is a doubt that has arisen in me, but I have confidence in Gotama the contemplative that he can teach me the Dhamma in such a way that I might abandon that doubt.”

So he went to Upavattana, the Mallans’ Sal Forest and, on arrival, said to Ven. Ānanda, “I have heard the old elder wanderers, teachers of teachers, saying that only once in a long, long time do Tathāgatas—worthy ones, rightly self-awakened—appear in the world. Tonight, in the last watch of the night, the total unbinding of Gotama the contemplative will occur. Now there is a doubt that has arisen in me, but I have confidence in Gotama the contemplative that

he can teach me the Dhamma in such a way that I might abandon that doubt. It would be good, Ven. Ānanda, if you would let me see him.”

When this was said, Ven. Ānanda said to him, “Enough, friend Subhadda. Don’t bother the Blessed One. The Blessed One is tired.”

For a second time... For a third time, Subhadda the wanderer said to Ven. Ānanda, “...It would be good, Ven. Ānanda, if you would let me see him.”

For a third time, Ven. Ānanda said to him, “Enough, friend Subhadda. Don’t bother the Blessed One. The Blessed One is tired.”

Now, the Blessed One heard the exchange between Ven. Ānanda & Subhadda the wanderer, and so he said to Ven. Ānanda, “Enough, Ānanda. Don’t stand in his way. Let him see the Tathāgata. Whatever he asks me will all be for the sake of knowledge and not to be bothersome. And whatever I answer when asked, he will quickly understand.”

So Ven. Ānanda said to Subhadda the wanderer, “Go ahead, friend Subhadda. The Blessed One gives you his leave.”

Then Subhadda went to the Blessed One and exchanged courteous greetings with him. After an exchange of friendly greetings & courtesies, he sat to one side. As he was sitting there, he said to the Blessed One, “Master Gotama, these contemplatives & brahmans, each with his group, each with his community, each the teacher of his group, an honored leader, well regarded by people at large—i.e., Pūraṇa Kassapa, Makkhali Gosāla, Ajita Kesakambalin, Pakudha Kaccāyana, Sañjaya Velatṭhaputta, & the Nigaṇṭha Nāṭaputta: Do they all have direct knowledge as they themselves claim, or do they all not have direct knowledge, or do some of them have direct knowledge and some of them not?”

“Enough, Subhadda. Put this question aside: ‘Do they all have direct knowledge as they themselves claim, or do they all not have direct knowledge, or do some of them have direct knowledge and some of them not?’ I will teach you the Dhamma, Subhadda. Listen, and pay close attention. I will speak.”

“As you say, lord,” Subhadda responded to the Blessed One.

The Blessed One said, “In any doctrine & discipline where the noble eightfold path is not ascertained, no contemplative of the first... second... third... fourth order [stream-winner, once-returner, non-returner, or arahant] is ascertained. But in any doctrine & discipline where the noble eightfold path is ascertained, contemplatives of the first... second... third... fourth order are ascertained. The noble eightfold path is ascertained in this doctrine &

discipline, and right here there are contemplatives of the first... second... third... fourth order. Other teachings are empty of knowledgeable contemplatives. And if the monks dwell rightly, this world will not be empty of arahants.

At age twenty-nine I went forth, Subhadda,
seeking what might be skillful,
and since my Going-forth, Subhadda,
more than fifty years have passed.
Outside of the realm
of methodical Dhamma,
there is no contemplative.

“There is no contemplative of the second order; there is no contemplative of the third order; there is no contemplative of the fourth order. Other teachings are empty of knowledgeable contemplatives. And if the monks dwell rightly, this world will not be empty of arahants.”

Then Subhadda the wanderer said, “Magnificent, lord! Magnificent! ... I go to the Blessed One for refuge, to the Dhamma, and to the Saṅgha of monks. Let me obtain the Going-forth in the Blessed One’s presence, let me obtain the Acceptance.”

“Anyone, Subhadda, who has previously belonged to another sect and who desires the Going-forth & Acceptance into this Dhamma & Vinaya, must first undergo probation for four months. If, at the end of four months, the monks feel so moved, they give him the Going-forth & accept him into the monk’s state. But I know distinctions among individuals in this matter.”

“Lord, if that is so, I am willing to undergo probation for four years. If, at the end of four years, the monks feel so moved, let them give me the Going-forth & accept me into the monk’s state.”

Then the Blessed One said to Ven. Ānanda, “Very well then, Ānanda, give Subhadda the Going-forth.”

“As you say, lord,” Ven. Ānanda responded to the Blessed One.

Then Subhadda said to Ven. Ānanda, “It’s a gain for you, Ānanda, a great gain, that you have been anointed here, face-to-face with the Teacher, with the pupil’s anointing.”²¹³

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

Then the Blessed One said to Ven. Ānanda, “Now, if the thought occurs to any of you—‘The teaching has lost its arbitrator; we are without a Teacher’—do not view it in that way. Whatever Dhamma & Vinaya I have pointed out & legislated for you, that will be your Teacher after my passing.

“At present, the monks address one another as ‘friend,’ but after my passing they are not to address one another that way. The more senior monks are to address the newer monks by their name or clan or as ‘friend.’ The newer monks are to address the more senior monks as ‘venerable’ or ‘sir.’

“After my passing, the Saṅgha—if it wants—may rescind the lesser & minor training rules. [214](#)

“After my passing, the monk Channa should be given the Brahmā-penalty.”

“What, lord, is the Brahmā-penalty?”

“The monk Channa may say what he wants, Ānanda, but he is not to be spoken to, instructed, or admonished by the monks.” [215](#)

Then the Blessed One addressed the monks, “If even a single monk has any doubt or perplexity concerning the Buddha, Dhamma, or Saṅgha, the path or the practice, ask. Don't later regret that ‘The Teacher was face-to-face with us, but we didn't bring ourselves to ask a counter-question in his presence.’”

When this was said, the monks were silent.

A second time, the Blessed One said, “If even one of the monks has any doubt or perplexity concerning the Buddha, Dhamma, or Saṅgha, the path or the practice, ask. Don't later regret that ‘The Teacher was face-to-face with us, but we didn't bring ourselves to ask a counter-question in his presence.’”

A second time, the monks were silent.

A third time, the Blessed One said, “If even one of the monks has any doubt or perplexity concerning the Buddha, Dhamma, or Saṅgha, the path or the practice, ask. Don’t later regret that ‘The Teacher was face-to-face with us, but we didn’t bring ourselves to ask a counter-question in his presence.’”

A third time, the monks were silent.

Then the Blessed One addressed the monks, “Now, if it’s simply out of respect for the Teacher that you don’t ask, let a companion inform a companion.”

When this was said, the monks were silent.

Then Ven. Ānanda said to the Blessed One, “It’s amazing, lord. It’s astounding. I have confidence in this Saṅgha of monks that there is not even a single monk in this Saṅgha of monks who has any doubt or perplexity concerning the Buddha, Dhamma, or Saṅgha, the path or the practice.”

“You, Ānanda, speak out of confidence, whereas there is knowledge in the Tathāgata that there is not even a single monk in this Saṅgha of monks who has any doubt or perplexity concerning the Buddha, Dhamma, or Saṅgha, the path or the practice. Of these five hundred monks, the most backward is a stream-winner, never again destined for the lower realms, certain, headed for self-awakening.”

Then the Blessed One addressed the monks, “Now, then, monks, I exhort you: All fabrications are subject to ending & decay. Reach consummation through heedfulness.” That was the Tathāgata’s last statement.

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

Then Ven. Ānanda said to Ven. Anuruddha, “Ven. Anuruddha,²¹⁶ the Blessed One is totally unbound.”

“No, friend Ānanda. The Blessed One isn’t totally unbound. He has entered the cessation of perception & feeling.”

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

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

When the Blessed One totally unbound, simultaneously with the total unbinding, there was a great earthquake, awesome & hair-raising, and rolls of the deva-drums split (the air).²¹⁷

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

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

When the Blessed One totally unbound, simultaneously with the total unbinding, Sakka the deva-king uttered this verse:

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

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

He had no in-&-out breathing,
the firm-minded one, the one who was Such,
imperturbable
& intent on peace:
the sage completing his span.
With heart unbowed
he endured the pain.
Like a flame's unbinding

was the liberation
of awareness.

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

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

When the Blessed One totally unbound, simultaneously with the total unbinding, some of the monks present who were not without passion wept, uplifting their arms. As if their feet were cut out from under them, they fell down and rolled back & forth, crying, “All too soon has the Blessed One totally unbound! All too soon has the One Well-Gone totally unbound! All too soon has the One with Eyes disappeared from the world!” But those monks who were free from passion acquiesced, mindful & alert: “Inconstant are fabrications. What else is there to expect?”

Then Ven. Anuruddha addressed the monks, “Enough, friends. Don’t grieve. Don’t lament. Hasn’t the Blessed One already taught the state of growing different with regard to all things dear & beloved, the state of becoming separate, the state of becoming otherwise? What else is there to expect?²¹⁸ That of anything born, become, fabricated, subject to disintegration, you might say, ‘O, may it not disintegrate?’ The possibility doesn’t exist.

“The devatās, friends, are complaining.”

[Ven. Ānanda:] “But, Ven. Anuruddha, what is the state of the devatās you are paying attention to?”

“Friend Ānanda, there are devatās who perceive space to be earth. Tearing at their hair, they are weeping. Uplifting their arms, they are weeping. As if their feet were cut out from under them, they fall down and roll back & forth, crying, ‘All too soon has the Blessed One totally unbound! All too soon has the One Well-Gone totally unbound! All too soon, has the One with Eyes disappeared from the world!’ Then there are devatās who perceive earth to be

earth. Tearing at their hair, they are weeping. Uplifting their arms, they are weeping. As if their feet were cut out from under them, they fall down and roll back & forth, crying, ‘All too soon has the Blessed One totally unbound! All too soon has the One Well-Gone totally unbound! All too soon has the One with Eyes disappeared from the world!’ But those devatās who are free from passion²¹⁹ acquiesce, mindful & alert: ‘Inconstant are fabrications. What else is there to expect?’”

Then Ven. Anuruddha & Ven. Ānanda spent the remainder of the night in Dhamma talk.

FROM BODY TO RELICS

Then Ven. Anuruddha said to Ven. Ānanda, “Go, friend Ānanda. Entering Kusinārā, announce to the Kusinārā Mallans, ‘The Blessed One, Vāsiṭṭhas, has totally unbound. Now is the time for you to do as you see fit.’”

Responding, “As you say, sir,” to Ven. Anuruddha, Ven. Ānanda in the early morning—having adjusted his under robe and carrying his bowl & outer robe—went unaccompanied into Kusinārā. Now at that time the Kusinārā Mallans had met for some business in their reception hall. Ven. Ānanda went to the reception hall and, on arrival, announced to them, “The Blessed One, Vāsiṭṭhas, has totally unbound. Now is the time for you to do as you see fit.”

When they heard Ven. Ānanda, the Mallans together with their sons, daughters, & wives were shocked, saddened, their minds overflowing with sorrow. Some of them wept, tearing at their hair; they wept, uplifting their arms. As if their feet were cut out from under them, they fell down and rolled back & forth, crying, “All too soon has the Blessed One totally unbound! All too soon has the One Well-Gone totally unbound! All too soon has the One with Eyes disappeared from the world!”

Then the Kusinārā Mallans ordered their men, “In that case, I say, gather scents, garlands, & all the musical instruments in Kusinārā!” Then, taking scents, garlands, & all the musical instruments in Kusinārā, along with five hundred pairs of cloth, the Kusinārā Mallans went to the Blessed One’s body in Upavattana, the Mallans’ Sal Forest near Kusinārā. On arrival, they spent the entire day in worshipping, honoring, respecting, & venerating the Blessed One’s body with dances, songs, music, garlands, & scents, in making cloth canopies and arranging floral wreaths. Then the thought occurred to them, “It’s

too late today to cremate the Blessed One's body. We'll cremate the Blessed One's body tomorrow." And so they spent the second day, the third day, the fourth day, the fifth day, the sixth day in worshipping, honoring, respecting, & venerating the Blessed One's body with dances, songs, music, garlands, & scents, in making cloth canopies and arranging floral wreaths.

Then on the seventh day the thought occurred to them, "Worshipping, honoring, respecting, & venerating to the Blessed One's body with dances, songs, music, garlands, & scents, let's carry it to the south, around the outside of the town, and cremate it to the south of the town."

Then eight leading Mallans, having bathed their heads and wearing new linen cloth, thinking, "We'll lift up the Blessed One's body," were unable to lift it. So the Kusinārā Mallans asked Ven. Anuruddha, "What is the reason, Ven. Anuruddha, what is the cause, why these eight leading Mallans, having bathed their heads and wearing new linen cloth, thinking, 'We'll lift up the Blessed One's body,' are unable to lift it?"

"Your intention, Vāsiṭṭhas, is one thing. The devas' intention is another."

"But what, Ven. Anuruddha, is the devas' intention?"

"Your intention, Vāsiṭṭhas, is, 'Worshipping, honoring, respecting, & venerating the Blessed One's body with dances, songs, music, garlands, & scents, let's carry it to the south, around the outside of the town, and cremate it to the south of the town.' The devas' intention is, 'Worshipping, honoring, respecting, & venerating the Blessed One's body with heavenly dances, songs, music, garlands, & scents, let's carry it to the north of the town, enter the town through the north gate, carry it through the middle of the town and out the east gate to the Mallans' shrine called Makuṭa-bandhana, to cremate it there.'"

"Then let it be, venerable sir, in line with the devas' intention."

Now on that occasion Kusinārā—even to its rubbish heaps & cesspools—was strewn knee-deep in coral-tree flowers. So the devas & the Kusinārā Mallans, worshipping, honoring, respecting, & venerating the Blessed One's body with heavenly & human dances, songs, music, garlands, & scents, carried it to the north of the town, entered the town through the north gate, carried it through the middle of the town and out the east gate to the Mallans' shrine called Makuṭa-bandhana. There they set it down.

Then the Kusinārā Mallans said to Ven. Ānanda, "Venerable sir, what course should we follow with regard to the Tathāgata's body?"

“The course they follow with regard to a wheel-turning monarch’s body, Vāsiṭṭhas, is the course that should be followed with regard to the Tathāgata’s body.”

“And what, venerable sir, is the course they follow with regard to a wheel-turning monarch’s body?”

“Vāsiṭṭhas, they wrap the wheel-turning monarch’s body in new linen cloth. Having wrapped it in new linen cloth, they wrap it in teased cotton-wool. Having wrapped it in teased cotton-wool, they wrap it in new linen cloth. Having done this five hundred times, they place the body in an iron oil vat, cover it with an iron lid, make a pyre composed totally of perfumed substances, and cremate the body. Then they build a burial mound for the wheel-turning monarch at a great four-way intersection. That is the course that they follow with regard to the wheel-turning monarch’s body. The course they follow with regard to a wheel-turning monarch’s body, Vāsiṭṭhas, is the course that should be followed with regard to the Tathāgata’s body. A burial mound for the Tathāgata is to be built at a great, four-way intersection. And those who offer a garland, a scent, or a perfume powder there, or bow down there, or brighten their minds there: That will be for their long-term welfare & happiness.”

So the Kusinārā Mallans ordered their men, “In that case, I say, gather the Mallans’ teased cotton-wool.”

Then they wrapped the Blessed One’s body in new linen cloth. Having wrapped it in new linen cloth, they wrapped it in teased cotton-wool. Having wrapped it in teased cotton-wool, they wrapped it in new linen cloth. Having done this five hundred times, they placed the body in an iron oil vat, covered it with an iron lid, made a pyre composed totally of perfumed substances, and set the body on the pyre.

Now on that occasion Ven. Mahā Kassapa was traveling on the highway from Pāvā to Kusinārā with a large Saṅgha of monks, approximately five hundred monks in all. Leaving the road, he sat down at the root of a tree. Meanwhile, a certain Ājīvakan ascetic, carrying a coral-tree flower from Kusinārā, was traveling on the highway to Pāvā. Ven. Mahā Kassapa saw the Ājīvakan ascetic coming from afar and, on seeing him, said to him, “Do you know our teacher, friend?”

“Yes, friend, I know him. Seven days ago Gotama the contemplative totally unbound. That’s how I got this coral-tree flower.”

With that, some of the monks present who were not without passion wept, uplifting their arms. As if their feet were cut out from under them, they fell down and rolled back & forth, crying, “All too soon has the Blessed One totally unbound! All too soon has the One Well-Gone totally unbound! All too soon has the One with Eyes disappeared from the world!” But those monks who were free from passion acquiesced, mindful & alert: “Inconstant are fabrications. What else is there to expect?”

Now at that time a monk named Subhadda,²²⁰ who had gone forth when old, was sitting among the group. He said to the monks, “Enough, friends. Don’t grieve. Don’t lament. We’re well rid of the Great Contemplative. We’ve been tyrannized by (his saying,) ‘This is allowable. This is not allowable.’ But now we will do what we want to do, and not do what we don’t want to do.”²²¹

Then Ven. Mahā Kassapa addressed the monks, “Enough, friends. Don’t grieve. Don’t lament. Hasn’t the Blessed One already taught the state of growing different with regard to all things dear & beloved, the state of becoming separate, the state of becoming otherwise? What else, friends, is there to expect? That of anything born, become, fabricated, subject to disintegration, you might say, ‘O, may it not disintegrate’? The possibility doesn’t exist.

Then four leading Mallans, having bathed their heads and wearing new linen cloth, thinking, “We’ll ignite the Blessed One’s pyre,” were unable to ignite it. So the Kusinārā Mallans asked Ven. Anuruddha, “What is the reason, Ven. Anuruddha, what is the cause, why these four leading Mallans, having bathed their heads and wearing new linen cloth, thinking, ‘We’ll ignite the Blessed One’s pyre,’ are unable to ignite it?”

“Your intention, Vāsiṭṭhas, is one thing. The devas’ intention is another.”

“But what, Ven. Anuruddha, is the devas’ intention?”

“The devas’ intention, Vāsiṭṭhas, is, ‘This Ven. Mahā Kassapa is traveling on the highway from Pāvā to Kusinārā with a large Saṅgha of monks, approximately five hundred monks in all. The Blessed One’s pyre will not catch fire until Ven. Mahā Kassapa has worshipped the Blessed One’s feet with his bathed head.’”

“Then let it be, venerable sir, in line with the devas’ intention.”

So Ven. Mahā Kassapa went to the Blessed One’s pyre at Makuṭa-bandhana, the Mallans’ memorial near Kusinārā. On arrival, arranging his robe over one

shoulder, he placed his hands palm-to-palm over his heart, circumambulated the pyre three times, uncovered the Blessed One's feet,²²² and worshipped them with his head. And the five hundred monks, arranging their robes over one shoulder, placed their hands palm-to-palm over their hearts, circumambulated the pyre three times, and worshipped the Blessed One's feet with their heads.

As soon as it had been worshipped by Ven. Mahā Kassapa and the five hundred monks, the Blessed One's pyre caught fire of its own accord. In the burning of the Blessed One's body, no cinder or ash of the outer skin, inner skin, flesh, tendons, or oil of the joints could be discerned. Only the bone-relics²²³ remained. Just as in the burning of ghee or oil, no cinder or ash can be discerned; in the same way, in the burning of the Blessed One's body, no cinder or ash of the outer skin, inner skin, flesh, tendons, or oil of the joints could be discerned. Only the bone-relics remained. And of the five hundred twin-wrappings, only two were burnt: the innermost & the outermost.

When the Blessed One's body was consumed, a cascade of water falling from the sky extinguished the Blessed One's pyre. Water shooting up from a Sal tree as well extinguished the Blessed One's pyre. The Kusinārā Mallans, with all kinds of scented water, extinguished the Blessed One's pyre. Then for seven days the Kusinārā Mallans kept the bone-relics in their reception hall—setting them round with a lattice of spears surrounded by ramparts of bows—worshipping, honoring, respecting, & venerating them with dances, songs, music, garlands, & scents.

Then the King of Magadha, Ajātasattu Vedehiputta, heard, “The Blessed One, they say, has totally unbound in Kusinārā.” So he sent an envoy to the Kusinārā Mallans: “The Blessed One was a noble warrior. I, too, am a noble warrior. I deserve a share of the Blessed One's bone-relics. I, too, will build a burial mound and hold a ceremony for them.”

The Licchavis of Vesālī heard, “The Blessed One, they say, has totally unbound in Kusinārā.” So they sent an envoy to the Kusinārā Mallans: “The Blessed One was a noble warrior. We, too, are noble warriors. We deserve a share of the Blessed One's bone-relics. We, too, will build a burial mound and hold a ceremony for them.”

The Sakyans of Kapilavatthu heard, “The Blessed One, they say, has totally unbound in Kusinārā.” So they sent an envoy to the Kusinārā Mallans: “The

Blessed One was the greatest of our relatives. We deserve a share of the Blessed One's bone-relics. We, too, will build a burial mound and hold a ceremony for them."

The Thulayans of Allakappa... The Koliyans of Rāmagāma heard, "The Blessed One, they say, has totally unbound in Kusinārā." So they sent an envoy to the Kusinārā Mallans: "The Blessed One was a noble warrior. We, too, are noble warriors. We deserve a share of the Blessed One's bone-relics. We, too, will build a burial mound and hold a ceremony for them."

The brahman of Veṭṭha Island heard, "The Blessed One, they say, has totally unbound in Kusinārā." So he sent an envoy to the Kusinārā Mallans: "The Blessed One was a noble warrior. I am a brahman. I deserve a share of the Blessed One's bone-relics. I, too, will build a burial mound and hold a ceremony for them."

The Pāvā Mallans heard, "The Blessed One, they say, has totally unbound in Kusinārā." So they sent an envoy to the Kusinārā Mallans: "The Blessed One was a noble warrior. We, too, are noble warriors. We deserve a share of the Blessed One's bone-relics. We, too, will build a burial mound and hold a ceremony for them."

When this was said, the Kusinārā Mallans said to the groups & factions, "The Blessed One totally unbound within the borders of our own town. We will not give up a share of the Blessed One's bone-relics."

When this was said, Doṇa the brahman addressed the groups & factions,

"Listen, good sirs,
to a word from me.
Our Awakened One was a teacher
of forbearance.
It's not good for there to be combat
over the sharing of the relics
of the highest person.
Let us, masters, unite in concord,
on friendly terms,
and make eight shares.
Let there be
burial mounds
in the various directions,

many people made confident
in the One with Eyes.”

“In that case, brahman, you yourself divide the Blessed One’s bone-relics into eight equal shares.”

Responding, “As you say, good sirs,” to the groups & factions, Doṇa the brahman divided the Blessed One’s bone-relics into eight equal shares and then said to the groups & factions, “Good sirs, give me this urn. I will build a burial mound and hold a ceremony for the urn.” They gave him the urn.

Then the Moriyans of Pipphalivana heard, “The Blessed One, they say, has totally unbound in Kusinārā.” So they sent an envoy to the Kusinārā Mallans: “The Blessed One was a noble warrior. We, too, are noble warriors. We deserve a share of the Blessed One’s bone-relics. We, too, will build a burial mound and hold a ceremony for them.”

“There is no (remaining) share of the Blessed One’s bone-relics. They have been divided. Take the ashes from here.” They took the ashes from there.

Then the King of Magadha, Ajātasattu Vedehiputta, built a burial mound and held a ceremony for the Blessed One’s relics in Rājagaha.

The Licchavis of Vesālī built a burial mound and held a ceremony for the Blessed One’s relics in Vesālī.

The Sakyans of Kapilavatthu built a burial mound and held a ceremony for the Blessed One’s relics in Kapilavatthu.

The Thulayans of Allakappa built a burial mound and held a ceremony for the Blessed One’s relics in Allakappa.

The Koliyans of Rāmagāma built a burial mound and held a ceremony for the Blessed One’s relics in Rāmagāma.

The brahman of Veṭṭha Island built a burial mound and held a ceremony for the Blessed One’s relics on Veṭṭha Island.

The Pāvā Mallans built a burial mound and held a ceremony for the Blessed One’s relics in Pāvā.

The Kusinārā Mallans built a burial mound and held a ceremony for the Blessed One’s relics in Kusinārā.

Doṇa the brahman built a burial mound and held a ceremony for the urn.

The Moriyans of Pipphalivana built a burial mound and held a ceremony for the embers in Pipphalivana.

Thus there were eight burial mounds for the bone-relics, a ninth for the urn,
and a tenth for the embers.

That is how it was in the past.

Eight portions were the relics
of the One with Eyes,
the highest, the foremost of men:
seven honored in Jambudīpa,
and one in Rāmagāma
honored by kings of the nāgas.

One tooth
the devas of the Thirty-three worship;
one is honored in Gandhārapura;
one in the realm of the king of Kāliṅga;
another is honored by kings of the nāgas.

These, with their splendor,
their excellent gifts,
embellish this wealth-bearing earth.

Thus the relics of the One with Eyes
are honored by those honored
by those who are honored.

He is worshiped by deva kings,
nāga kings, human kings,
and likewise is worshiped
by the most excellent people.

So pay homage to him,
with hands palm-to-palm
over the heart,
for the Awakened are rarely encountered

in the course of one hundred eons.²²⁴ — *DN 16*

The First Council to the Present

THE GROUP RECITATION

Here the narrative of Ven. Mahā Kassapa returning to pay his final respects to the Buddha, touched on in the preceding chapter, continues from Ven. Mahā Kassapa's perspective. And here we begin a new phase in the institutional history of the Saṅgha, as its more reliable members try to establish the authority of the Dhamma and Vinaya in the Buddha's absence. Their actions show the extent to which members of the Saṅgha should be prepared to go in keeping the Buddha's third major accomplishment alive.

Then Ven. Mahā Kassapa addressed the monks, "Friends, just recently I was traveling on the highway from Pāvā to Kusinārā with a large Saṅgha of monks, approximately five hundred monks in all. Then, coming down from the highway, I sat down at the root of a tree. Meanwhile, a certain Ājīvakan ascetic, carrying a coral-tree flower from Kusinārā, was traveling on the highway to Pāvā. I saw the Ājīvakan ascetic coming from afar and, on seeing him, said to him, 'Do you know our teacher, friend?'

"Yes, friend, I know him. Seven days ago Gotama the contemplative totally unbound. That's how I got this coral-tree flower.'

"With that, some of the monks present who were not without passion wept, uplifting their arms. As if their feet were cut out from under them, they fell down and rolled back & forth, crying, 'All too soon, the Blessed One has been totally unbound! All too soon, the One Well-Gone has been totally unbound! All too soon, the One with Eyes has disappeared from the world!' But those monks who had gone beyond passion acquiesced, mindful and alert, (thinking,) 'Fabrications are inconstant. What else is there to expect?'

"Then I said to the monks, 'Enough, friends. Don't grieve; don't lament. Friends, hasn't the Blessed One already taught you the state of growing different with regard to all things dear & beloved, the state of becoming separate, the state of becoming otherwise? What else, friends, is there to

expect? That of anything born, become, fabricated, subject to disintegration, you might say, “O, may it not disintegrate”? The possibility doesn’t exist.’

“Now at that time a monk named Subhadda, who had gone forth when old, was sitting among the group. He said to the monks, ‘Enough, friends, don’t grieve; don’t lament. We’re well rid of the Great Contemplative. We’ve been tyrannized by (his saying,) “This is allowable for you; this isn’t allowable for you.” But now we will do what we want to do, and not what we don’t want to do.’

“Friends, let’s recite the Dhamma & Vinaya together before non-Dhamma shines out and Dhamma is obscured, and non-Vinaya shines out and Vinaya is obscured; before the speakers of non-Dhamma are strong and the speakers of Dhamma are weak, and speakers of non-Vinaya are strong and speakers of Vinaya are weak.”

[The other monks:] “In that case, venerable sir, may the elder gather the monks.”

Then Ven. Mahā Kassapa gathered one fewer than five hundred arahants. The monks said to him, “Venerable sir, Ven. Ānanda here, even though he’s still in training, couldn’t be biased by desire, aversion, delusion, or fear, and he has mastered much Dhamma & Vinaya in the Blessed One’s presence. That being the case, may the elder also invite Ven. Ānanda.” So Ven. Mahā Kassapa invited Ven. Ānanda.

The thought occurred to the elder monks, “Where should we recite the Dhamma & Vinaya?” The thought occurred to them, “Rājagaha has a large territory and many lodgings. Why don’t we, entering the Rains at Rājagaha, recite the Dhamma & Vinaya there, while no other monks should go there for the Rains.”

Then Ven. Mahā Kassapa informed the monks: “Friends, may the Saṅgha listen to me. If the Saṅgha is ready, it should designate these five hundred monks, entering the Rains at Rājagaha, to recite the Dhamma & Vinaya, while no other monks should enter the Rains at Rājagaha. That is the motion.

“Friends, may the Saṅgha listen to me. The Saṅgha is designating these five hundred monks, entering the Rains at Rājagaha, to recite the Dhamma & Vinaya, while no other monks should enter the Rains at Rājagaha.

“He to whom the designation of these five hundred monks, entering the Rains at Rājagaha, to recite the Dhamma & Vinaya—while no other monks

should enter the Rains at Rājagaha—is agreeable should remain silent. He to whom it is not agreeable should speak.

“These five hundred monks, entering the Rains at Rājagaha, have been designated by the Saṅgha to recite the Dhamma & Vinaya, while no other monks should enter the Rains at Rājagaha. This is agreeable to the Saṅgha, therefore it is silent. Thus do I hold it.”

Then the elder monks went to Rājagaha to recite the Dhamma & Vinaya. Then the thought occurred to them, “Friends, the restoration of things (buildings) that are old and broken has been praised by the Blessed One. Let’s restore the old and broken buildings in the first month, and in the middle month, having assembled, recite the Dhamma & Vinaya.” So they restored the old and broken buildings in the first month.

Then Ven. Ānanda, (thinking,) “Tomorrow is the assembly. It wouldn’t be fitting for me, being one in training, to go to the assembly,” spent most of the night with mindfulness immersed in the body. When the night had passed, in the early morning, (thinking,) “I’ll lie down,” he inclined his body. His head had not touched the pillow, but his feet were off the ground, and there, in between, his mind—through lack of clinging/sustenance—was released from effluents.

Then Ven. Ānanda, being an arahant, went to the assembly.

Ven. Mahā Kassapa informed the Saṅgha: “Friends, may the Saṅgha listen to me. If the Saṅgha is ready, I would question Upāli about the Vinaya.”

Ven. Upāli informed the Saṅgha: “Venerable sirs, may the Saṅgha listen to me. If the Saṅgha is ready, I, being questioned by Ven. Mahā Kassapa about the Vinaya, will answer.”

Then Ven. Mahā Kassapa said to Ven. Upāli, “Friend Upāli, where was the first *pārājika* legislated?”

“At Vesāli, venerable sir.”

“With reference to whom?”

“With reference to Sudinna, the native of Kalanda.”

“With reference to what topic?”

“Sexual intercourse.”

Then Ven. Mahā Kassapa asked Ven. Upāli about the topic of the first *pārājika*, about its origin story, about the individual, about its declaration, about its amendments, and about its [derived] offenses & non-offenses....

By this procedure he questioned him about both Vinayas [those for monks and nuns]. Questioned again & again, Ven. Upāli answered.

Then Ven. Mahā Kassapa informed the Saṅgha: “Friends, may the Saṅgha listen to me. If the Saṅgha is ready, I would question Ānanda about the Dhamma.”

Ven. Ānanda informed the Saṅgha: “Venerable sirs, may the Saṅgha listen to me. If the Saṅgha is ready, I, being questioned by Ven. Mahā Kassapa about the Dhamma, will answer.”

Then Ven. Mahā Kassapa said to Ven. Ānanda, “Friend Ānanda, where was the Brahmajāla (Sutta) spoken?”

“Venerable sir, between Rājagaha & Nālandā, in the royal rest house at Ambalatthikā Park.”

“With reference to whom?”

“Suppiya the wanderer & Brahmadaṭṭa the young brahman.”

Then Ven. Mahā Kassapa questioned Ven. Ānanda about the origin story of the Brahmajāla and about the individual....

By this procedure he questioned him about the five Nikāyas. Questioned again & again, Ven. Ānanda answered.

THE LESSER & MINOR TRAINING RULES

Then Ven. Ānanda said to the elder monks, “Venerable sirs, the Blessed One said this to me at the time of his total unbinding, ‘After my passing, Ānanda, the Saṅgha—if it wants—may rescind the lesser & minor training rules.’

“But, friend Ānanda, did you ask the Blessed One, ‘But which, lord, are the lesser & minor training rules?’?”

“Venerable sirs, I didn’t ask the Blessed One, ‘But which, lord, are the lesser & minor training rules?’”

Some of the elder monks said, “Aside from the four pārājikas, the rest are lesser & minor training rules.”

Some of the elder monks said, “Aside from the four pārājikas & the thirteen saṅghadisesas...” “Aside from the four pārājikas, the thirteen saṅghadisesas, & the two aniyatas...” “Aside from the four pārājikas, the thirteen saṅghadisesas, the two aniyatas, & the thirty nissaggiya pācittiyas...” “Aside from the four pārājikas, the thirteen saṅghadisesas, the two aniyatas, the thirty

nissaggiya pācittiyas, & the ninety-two pācittiyas...” “Aside from the four pārājikas, the thirteen saṅghadisesas, the two aniyatas, the thirty nissaggiya pācittiyas, the ninety-two pācittiyas, & the four pāṭidesaniyas, the rest are lesser & minor training rules.”²²⁵

Then Ven. Mahā Kassapa informed the Saṅgha: “Friends, may the Saṅgha listen to me. There are training rules of ours that have gone to the householders, and the householders know them: ‘This is allowable for you Sakyan-son contemplatives; this is not allowable.’ If we rescind the lesser & minor training rules, there will be those who say, ‘The training rules were legislated by the Blessed One for his disciples only until the time of the smoke (from his cremation). As long as their teacher remained, they trained under the training rules. Now that their teacher is totally unbound, they don’t train under the training rules.’

“If the Saṅgha is ready, it should not legislate what was not legislated, and not rescind what was legislated. It should proceed, having undertaken the training rules as they were legislated.”²²⁶ This is the motion.

“Friends, may the Saṅgha listen to me. There are training rules of ours that have gone to the householders, and the householders know them: ‘This is allowable for you Sakyan-son contemplatives; this is not allowable.’ If we rescind the lesser & minor training rules, there will be those who say, ‘The training rules were legislated by the Blessed One for his disciples only until the time of the smoke. As long as their teacher remained, they trained under the training rules. Now that their teacher is totally unbound, they don’t train under the training rules.’ The Saṅgha does not legislate what has not been legislated, does not rescind what has been legislated. It proceeds, having undertaken the training rules as they were legislated.

“He to whom the not-legislation of what was not legislated, the not-rescinding of what was legislated, and proceeding having undertaken the training rules as they were legislated is agreeable should remain silent. He to whom it is not agreeable should speak.

“The Saṅgha does not legislate what has not been legislated, does not rescind what has been legislated. It proceeds, having undertaken the training rules as they were legislated. This is agreeable to the Saṅgha, therefore it is silent. Thus do I hold it.”

Then the elder monks said to Ven. Ānanda, “Friend Ānanda, this was a wrongdoing²²⁷ on your part: that you didn’t ask the Blessed One, ‘But which, lord, are the lesser & minor training rules?’ Confess the wrongdoing.”

“Venerable sirs, it was through lack of mindfulness that I didn’t ask the Blessed One, ‘But which, lord, are the lesser & minor training rules?’ I don’t see that as a wrongdoing, but I confess it out of conviction in you.”

“Friend Ānanda, this, too, was a wrongdoing on your part: that you stepped on the Blessed One’s rains bathing cloth while sewing it. Confess the wrongdoing.”

“Venerable sirs, it was not out of disrespect that I stepped on the Blessed One’s rains bathing cloth while sewing it. I don’t see that as a wrongdoing, but I confess it out of conviction in you.”

“Friend Ānanda, this, too, was a wrongdoing on your part: that you had women pay homage to the Blessed One’s body first as they were crying, smearing his body with their tears. Confess the wrongdoing.”

“Venerable sirs, (thinking,) ‘May they not be here at the wrong time [night],’ I had women pay homage to the Blessed One’s body first. I don’t see that as a wrongdoing, but I confess it out of conviction in you.”

“Friend Ānanda, this, too, was a wrongdoing on your part: that even when the Blessed One had given such a blatant sign, such a blatant hint, you didn’t beg of him, ‘May the Blessed One remain for an eon. May the One Well-Gone remain for an eon—for the benefit of the many, for the happiness of the many, out of sympathy for the world, for the welfare, benefit, & happiness of human beings & devas.’ Confess the wrongdoing.”

“Venerable sirs, it was with my mind possessed by Māra that I didn’t beg of the Blessed One, ‘May the Blessed One remain for an eon. May the One Well-Gone remain for an eon—for the benefit of the many, for the happiness of the many, out of sympathy for the world, for the welfare, benefit, & happiness of human beings & devas.’ I don’t see that as a wrongdoing, but I confess it out of conviction in you.”

“Friend Ānanda, this, too, was a wrongdoing on your part: that you made an effort for the Going-forth of women in the Dhamma & Vinaya made known by the Blessed One. Confess the wrongdoing.”

“Venerable sirs, (thinking,) ‘Mahāpajāpatī Gotamī was the Blessed One’s aunt, foster mother, nurse, giver of milk. When the Blessed One’s mother

passed away, she gave him milk,’ I made an effort for the Going-forth of women in the Dhamma & Vinaya made known by the Blessed One. I don’t see that as a wrongdoing, but I confess it out of conviction in you.”

Now at that time Ven. Purāṇa was on a walking tour in the Southern Mountains, along with a large Saṅgha of approximately five hundred monks in all. Having stayed in the Southern Mountains for as long as he liked while the Dhamma & Vinaya were being recited by the elder monks, Ven. Purāṇa went to Rājagaha, to the Bamboo Forest, the Squirrels’ Feeding Ground, and went to the elder monks. On arrival, having exchanged courteous greetings with them, he sat to one side.

As he was sitting there, the elder monks said to Ven. Purāṇa, “Friend Purāṇa, the Dhamma & Vinaya have been recited by the elders. Accept it as recited.”

“The Dhamma & Vinaya have been well recited by the elder monks, but I will remember what I have heard and learned face-to-face with the Blessed One.”²²⁸

THE BRAHMĀ-PUNISHMENT

Then Ven. Ānanda said to the elder monks, “At the time of his total unbinding, the Blessed One said to me, ‘In that case, Ānanda, after my passing, the monk Channa should be given the Brahmā punishment.’”

“But, friend Ānanda, did you ask the Blessed One what the Brahmā punishment is?”

“Venerable sirs, I *did* ask the Blessed One what the Brahmā punishment is. (He said,) ‘The monk Channa may say what he wants, Ānanda, but he is not to be spoken to, instructed, or admonished by the monks.’”

“In that case, friend Ānanda, give the monk Channa the Brahmā punishment yourself.”

“Venerable sirs, how could I give the monk Channa the Brahmā punishment? He is fierce & rough.”

“In that case, go together with many monks.”

Responding, “As you say, venerable sirs,” to the elder monks, having gone by boat to Kosambī along with a large Saṅgha of approximately five hundred

monks, having gotten off the up-stream-going boat, Ven. Ānanda sat down at the foot of a certain tree not far from King Udena's park.

At that time, King Udena was enjoying himself in the park, along with his harem. King Udena's harem heard that "They say that our teacher, Master Ānanda, is sitting at the root of a certain tree not far from the park."

Then King Udena's harem said to him, "Your majesty, they say that our teacher, Master Ānanda, is sitting at the root of a certain tree not far from the park. We would like to see Master Ānanda."

"In that case, you may see Ānanda the contemplative."

So King Udena's harem went to Ven. Ānanda and, on arrival, having bowed down to him, sat to one side. As they were sitting there, Ven. Ānanda instructed, urged, roused, & encouraged them with a Dhamma talk. Having been instructed, urged, roused, & encouraged with a Dhamma talk by Ven. Ānanda, they offered him five hundred upper robes.

Then King Udena's harem, delighting in and approving of Ven. Ānanda's words, got up from their seats and, having bowed to him, circumambulated him, keeping him on their right, and went to King Udena.

King Udena saw his harem coming from afar and, on seeing them, said, "Did you see Ānanda the contemplative?"

"We saw Master Ānanda, your majesty."

"And did you give him something?"

"We gave him five hundred upper robes, your majesty."

King Udena criticized & complained & spread it about, "How could Ānanda the contemplative accept so many robes? Is he going to do business in cloth? Is he going to open a shop?"

Then King Udena went to Ven. Ānanda and, on arrival, exchanged courteous greetings with him. After an exchange of friendly greetings & courtesies, he sat to one side. As he was sitting there, he said to Ven. Ānanda, "Did my harem come, Master Ānanda?"

"They came, great king."

"And did they give something to Master Ānanda?"

"They gave me five hundred upper robes, great king."

"But what will Master Ānanda do with so many robes?"

"Great king, I'll share them with those monks who have worn-out robes."

“But what will you all do with the old, worn-out robes, Master Ānanda?”

“We’ll make canopies, great king.”

“But what will you do with the old, worn-out canopies, Master Ānanda?”

“We’ll make bolster covers, great king.”

“But what will you do with the old, worn-out bolster covers, Master Ānanda?”

“We’ll make floor coverings, great king.”

“But what will you do with the old, worn-out floor coverings, Master Ānanda?”

“We’ll make foot-wiping cloths, great king.”

“But what will you do with the old, worn-out foot-wiping cloths, Master Ānanda?”

“We’ll make dust-rags, great king.”

“But what will you do with the old, worn-out dust-rags, Master Ānanda?”

“Having pounded them and trampled them together with clay, we’ll spread it on as plaster, great king.”

Then King Udena, (thinking,) “*All* these Sakyan-son monks, it seems, use things appropriately—they don’t let things go to waste,” offered Ven. Ānanda another five hundred upper robes.

And so it was that the first robes-אלms of a thousand robes arose for Ven. Ānanda.

Then Ven. Ānanda went to Ghosita’s monastery and, on arrival, sat down on a seat laid out. Then Ven. Channa went to Ven. Ānanda and, on arrival, having bowed down to him, sat to one side. As he was sitting there, Ven. Ānanda said to him, “Friend Channa, the Saṅgha has ordered the Brahmā-punishment for you.”

“But what, venerable sir, is the Brahmā-punishment?”

“Friend Channa Bhikkhu, you may say what you want, but you are not to be spoken to, instructed, or admonished by the monks.”

(Saying,) “Ven. Ānanda, isn’t it the same as being killed that I am not to be spoken to, instructed, or admonished by the monks?” he fell down in a faint right there.

Then Ven. Channa—troubled, shamed, & horrified by the Brahmā-punishment, dwelling alone, secluded, heedful, ardent, & resolute—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. Channa became another one of the arahants.

“Then Ven. Channa, having attained arahantship, went to Ven. Ānanda and, on arrival, said to him, “Ven. Ānanda, now rescind the Brahmā-punishment for me.”

“Friend Channa, from the moment you realized arahantship, the Brahmā-punishment was rescinded.” — *Cv 11:1–15*

The following discourse presents a picture of life in the early Buddhist Saṅgha shortly after the Buddha’s passing away. On the one hand, it shows the relationship between the Saṅgha and the political powers that be: The monks are polite and courteous to political functionaries, but the existence of this discourse shows that they had no qualms about depicting those functionaries as a little dense. On the other hand, it shows that early Buddhist practice had no room for many practices that developed in later Buddhist traditions, such as appointed lineage holders, elected ecclesiastical heads, or the use of mental defilements as a basis for concentration practice.

I have heard that on one occasion Ven. Ānanda was dwelling near Rājagaha in the Bamboo Forest, the Squirrels’ Sanctuary, not long after the Blessed One’s total unbinding.

Now at that time the King of Magadha, Ajātasattu Vedehiputta, suspicious of King Pajjota, was having Rājagaha fortified.

Then in the early morning, Ven. Ānanda—having adjusted his under robe and carrying his bowl & outer robe—went into Rājagaha for alms. The thought occurred to him, “It’s too early to go for alms in Rājagaha. What if I were to go to the brahman Moggallāna the Guardsman at his construction site?” So he went to Moggallāna the Guardsman at his construction site. Moggallāna the Guardsman saw him coming from afar and, on seeing him, said to him, “Come, Master Ānanda. Welcome, Master Ānanda. It has been a long time since Master Ānanda has found the time to come here. Sit down, Master Ānanda. Here is a seat laid out for you.”

So Ven. Ānanda sat down on the seat laid out. Moggallāna the Guardsman, taking a lower seat, sat to one side.

As he was sitting there, he said to Ven. Ānanda: “Master Ānanda, is there any one monk endowed in each & every way with the qualities with which Master Gotama—worthy & rightly self-awakened—was endowed?”

“No, brahman, there isn’t any one monk endowed in each & every way with the qualities with which the Blessed One—worthy & rightly self-awakened—was endowed. For the Blessed One was the arouser of the unarisen path, the begetter of the unbegotten path, the expounder of the unexpounded path, the knower of the path, the expert with regard to the path, adept at the path. And now his disciples follow the path and become endowed with it after him.”

And then Ven. Ānanda’s discussion with Moggallāna the Guardsman was interrupted in mid-course, for the brahman Vassakāra, the Magadhan administrator, on an inspection tour of the construction sites in Rājagaha, went to Ven. Ānanda at Moggallāna the Guardsman’s construction site. On arrival, he exchanged courteous greetings with Ven. Ānanda. After an exchange of friendly greetings & courtesies, he sat to one side. As he was sitting there, he said to Ven. Ānanda, “Just now, Master Ānanda, for what discussion were you sitting together when you were interrupted in mid-course?”

“Just now, brahman, Moggallāna the Guardsman said to me, ‘Master Ānanda, is there any one monk endowed in each & every way with the qualities with which Master Gotama—worthy & rightly self-awakened—was endowed?’ And when this was said, I said to him, ‘No, brahman, there isn’t any one monk endowed in each & every way with the qualities with which the Blessed One—worthy & rightly self-awakened—was endowed. For the Blessed One was the arouser of the unarisen path, the begetter of the unbegotten path, the expounder of the unexpounded path, the knower of the path, the expert with regard to the path, adept at the path. And now his disciples follow the path and become endowed with it after him.’ This was my discussion with the brahman Moggallāna the Guardsman that was interrupted in mid-course when you arrived.”

“Master Ānanda, is there any one monk appointed by Master Gotama (with the words), ‘He will be your arbitrator after I am gone,’ to whom you now turn?”

“No, brahman. There isn’t any one monk appointed by the Blessed One—the one who knows, the one who sees, worthy & rightly self-awakened—(with

the words), ‘He will be your arbitrator after I am gone,’ to whom we now turn.”

“Then is there any one monk authorized by the Saṅgha and appointed by a large body of elder monks (with the words), ‘He will be our arbitrator after the Blessed One is gone,’ to whom you now turn?”

“No, brahman. There isn’t any one monk authorized by the Saṅgha and appointed by a large body of elder monks (with the words), ‘He will be our arbitrator after the Blessed One is gone,’ to whom we now turn.”

“Being thus without an arbitrator, Master Ānanda, what is the reason for your concord?”

“It’s not the case, brahman, that we’re without an arbitrator. We have an arbitrator. The Dhamma is our arbitrator.”

“... How, Master Ānanda, is the meaning of what you have said to be understood?”

“Brahman, there is a training rule laid down by the Blessed One—the one who knows, the one who sees, worthy & rightly self-awakened—a Pāṭimokkha that has been expounded. On the Uposatha day, all of us who live dependent on a single township gather together in one place. Having gathered together, we invite the one to whom it falls [to recite the Pāṭimokkha]. If, while he is reciting, a monk remembers an offense or transgression, we deal with him in accordance with the Dhamma, in accordance with what has been instructed. We’re not the ones who deal with that venerable one. Rather, the Dhamma is what deals with us.”

“Is there, Master Ānanda, any one monk you now honor, respect, revere, & venerate, on whom—honoring & respecting—you live in dependence?”

“Yes, brahman, there is a monk we now honor, respect, revere, & venerate, on whom—honoring & respecting—we live in dependence.”

“When asked, ‘Master Ānanda, is there any one monk appointed by Master Gotama [with the words], ‘He will be your arbitrator after I am gone,’ to whom you now turn?’ you said, ‘No, brahman. There isn’t any one monk appointed by the Blessed One... to whom we now turn.’

“When asked, ‘Then is there any one monk authorized by the Saṅgha... to whom you now turn?’ you said, ‘No, brahman. There isn’t any one monk authorized by the Saṅgha... to whom we now turn.’

“When asked, ‘Is there, Master Ānanda, any one monk you now honor, respect, revere, & venerate, on whom—honoring & respecting—you live in

dependence?’ you said, ‘Yes, brahman, there is a monk we now honor, respect, revere, & venerate, on whom—honoring & respecting—we live in dependence.’ Now how is the meaning of what you have said to be understood?”

“Brahman, there are ten inspiring qualities expounded by the Blessed One, the one who knows, the one who sees, worthy & rightly self-awakened. In whoever among us those ten qualities are found, we now honor, respect, revere, & venerate him; honoring & respecting him, we live in dependence on him. Which ten?

[1] “There is the case where a monk is virtuous. He dwells restrained in accordance with the Pāṭimokkha, consummate in his behavior & sphere of activity. He trains himself, having undertaken the training rules, seeing danger in the slightest faults.

[2] “He has heard much, has retained what he has heard, has stored what he has heard. Whatever teachings are admirable in the beginning, admirable in the middle, admirable in the end, that—in their meaning & expression—proclaim the holy life entirely perfect & pure: Those he has listened to often, retained, discussed, accumulated, examined with his mind, and well penetrated in terms of his views.

[3] “He is content with robes, almsfood, lodgings, & medicinal requisites for curing the sick.

[4] “He attains—whenever he wants, without strain, without difficulty—the four jhānas that are heightened mental states, pleasant abidings in the here-&-now.

[5] “He experiences manifold supranormal powers.... He exercises influence with his body even as far as the Brahmā worlds.

[6] “He hears—by means of the divine ear-element, purified & surpassing the human—both kinds of sounds: divine & human, whether near or far.

[7] “He knows the awareness of other beings, other individuals, having encompassed it with his own awareness....

[8] “He recollects his manifold past lives....

[9] “He sees—by means of the divine eye, purified & surpassing the human—beings passing away and re-appearing...

[10] “Through the ending of effluents, he remains in the effluent-free awareness-release & discernment-release, having known and made them manifest for himself right in the here-&-now.

“These, brahman, are the ten inspiring qualities expounded by the Blessed One—the one who knows, the one who sees, worthy & rightly self-awakened. In whoever among us these ten qualities are found, we now honor, respect, revere, & venerate him; honoring & respecting him, we live in dependence on him.”

When this was said, the brahman Vassakāra, the Magadhan administrator, turned to General Upananda and said, “What do you think, general? Do these venerable ones honor what should be honored, respect what should be respected, revere what should be revered, venerate what should be venerated? Of course they honor what should be honored, respect what should be respected, revere what should be revered, venerate what should be venerated. For if they did not honor, respect, revere, or venerate a person like this, then what sort of person would they honor, respect, revere, & venerate; on what sort of person, honor & respecting, would they live in dependence?”

Then the brahman Vassakāra, the Magadhan administrator, said to Ven. Ānanda, “But where are you dwelling now, Master Ānanda?”

“I am now dwelling at the Bamboo Forest, brahman.”

“I trust, Master Ānanda, that the Bamboo Forest is delightful, with few noises or sounds of voices, with an air of isolation, private from human beings, and appropriate for seclusion.”

“Certainly, brahman, the Bamboo Forest is delightful, with few noises or sounds of voices, with an air of isolation, private from human beings, and appropriate for seclusion because of guardians & protectors like yourself.”

“Certainly, Master Ānanda, the Bamboo Forest is delightful, with few noises or sounds of voices, with an air of isolation, private from human beings, and appropriate for seclusion because of venerable ones who are endowed with mental absorption [*jhāna*], who make mental absorption their habit. You venerable ones are both endowed with mental absorption & make mental absorption your habit.

“Once, Ven. Ānanda, Master Gotama was dwelling near Vesālī in the Gabled Pavilion in the Great Forest. I went to him at the Gabled Pavilion in the Great Forest, and there he spoke in a variety of ways on mental absorption. Master Gotama was both endowed with mental absorption & made mental absorption his habit. In fact, he praised mental absorption of every sort.”

“It wasn’t the case, brahman, that the Blessed One praised mental absorption of every sort, nor did he criticize mental absorption of every sort. And which sort of mental absorption did he not praise? There is the case where a certain person dwells with his awareness overcome by sensual passion, seized with sensual passion. He does not discern the escape, as it has come to be, 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...

“He dwells with his awareness overcome by uncertainty, seized with uncertainty. He does not discern the escape, as it has come to be, 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 mental absorption that the Blessed One did not praise.

“And which sort of mental absorption did he praise? There is the case where a monk—quite secluded from sensuality, secluded from unskillful qualities—enters and remains in the first jhāna: rapture & pleasure born of seclusion, accompanied by directed thought & evaluation. With the stilling of directed thoughts & evaluations, he enters and 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 and 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 and remains in the fourth jhāna: purity of equanimity & mindfulness, neither pleasure nor pain. This is the sort of mental absorption that the Blessed One praised.”

“It would seem, Ven. Ānanda, that Master Gotama criticized the mental absorption that deserves criticism, and praised that which deserves praise.

“Well, now, Master Ānanda, I must be going. Many are my duties, many the things I must do.”

“Then do, brahman, what you think it is now time to do.”

So the brahman Vassakāra, the Magadhan administrator, delighting & rejoicing in Ven. Ānanda’s words, got up from his seat & left.

Then, not long after he had left, Moggallāna the Guardsman said to Ven. Ānanda, “Master Ānanda, you still haven’t answered what I asked you.”

“Didn’t I just tell you, brahman? There isn’t any one monk endowed in each & every way with the qualities with which the Blessed One—worthy & rightly self-awakened—was endowed. For the Blessed One was the arouser of the unarisen path, the begetter of the unbegotten path, the expounder of the unexpounded path, the knower of the path, the expert with regard to the path, adept at the path. And now his disciples follow the path and become endowed with it after him.” — [MN 108](#)

THE SURVIVAL OF THE DHAMMA & VINAYA

Even though the Buddha has totally unbound, his words remain to encourage all of us in later generations to take advantage of the Dhamma and Vinaya he worked so hard to establish, and—for the sake of others—to help keep the Dhamma alive.

On one occasion the Blessed One was dwelling near Sāvattthī in Jeta’s Forest, Anāthapiṇḍika’s monastery. Then Ven. Mahā Kassapa went to the Blessed One and, on arrival, having bowed down to him, sat to one side. As he was sitting there he said to the Blessed One, “What is the cause, lord, what is the reason, why before there were fewer training rules and yet more monks established in final gnosis, whereas now there are more training rules and yet fewer monks established in final gnosis?”

“That’s the way it is, Kassapa. When beings are degenerating and the True Dhamma is disappearing, there are more training rules and yet fewer monks established in final gnosis. There is no disappearance of the True Dhamma as long as a counterfeit of the True Dhamma has not arisen in the world, but there is the disappearance of the True Dhamma when a counterfeit of the True Dhamma has arisen in the world. Just as there is no disappearance of gold as long as a counterfeit of gold has not arisen in the world, but there is the disappearance of gold when a counterfeit of gold has arisen in the world, in the same way, there is no disappearance of the True Dhamma as long as a counterfeit of the True Dhamma has not arisen in the world, but there is the disappearance of the True Dhamma when a counterfeit of the True Dhamma has arisen in the world. [229](#)

“It’s not the earth property that makes the True Dhamma disappear. It’s not the water property... the fire property... the wind property that makes the True Dhamma disappear.²³⁰ It’s worthless people who arise right here [within the Saṅgha] who make the True Dhamma disappear. The True Dhamma doesn’t disappear the way a ship sinks all at once.

“These five downward-leading qualities tend to the confusion and disappearance of the True Dhamma. Which five? There is the case where the monks, nuns, male lay followers, & female lay followers live without respect, without deference, for the Teacher. They live without respect, without deference, for the Dhamma... for the Saṅgha... for the training... for concentration. These are the five downward-leading qualities that tend to the confusion and disappearance of the True Dhamma.

“But these five qualities tend to the stability, the non-confusion, the non-disappearance of the True Dhamma. Which five? There is the case where the monks, nuns, male lay followers, & female lay followers live with respect, with deference, for the Teacher. They live with respect, with deference, for the Dhamma... for the Saṅgha... for the training... for concentration. These are the five qualities that tend to the stability, the non-confusion, the non-disappearance of the True Dhamma.” — [*SN 16:13*](#)

Given the fact that the world now contains many versions of counterfeit Dhamma, by the Buddha’s standards the True Dhamma—in the sense that it is universally recognized among the Buddha’s followers to be True Dhamma—has disappeared. However, the Dhamma and Vinaya are still available, and it’s still possible to take advantage of them to practice for the end of suffering and stress. In fact, it’s through practicing in line with them that the Buddha’s accomplishments are kept alive in the world.

“Monks, these five future dangers, unarisen at present, will arise in the future. Be alert to them and, being alert, work to get rid of them. Which five?

“There will be, in the course of the future, monks desirous of fine robes. They, desirous of fine robes, will neglect the practice of wearing cast-off cloth; will neglect isolated forest & wilderness dwellings; will move to towns, cities, & royal capitals, taking up residence there. For the sake of a robe they will do many kinds of unseemly, inappropriate things.

“This, monks, is the first future danger, unarisen at present, that will arise in the future. Be alert to it and, being alert, work to get rid of it.

“And further, in the course of the future there will be monks desirous of fine food. They, desirous of fine food, will neglect the practice of going for alms; will neglect isolated forest & wilderness dwellings; will move to towns, cities, & royal capitals, taking up residence there and searching out the tip-top tastes with the tip of the tongue. For the sake of food they will do many kinds of unseemly, inappropriate things.

“This, monks, is the second future danger, unarisen at present, that will arise in the future. Be alert to it and, being alert, work to get rid of it.

“And further, in the course of the future there will be monks desirous of fine lodgings. They, desirous of fine lodgings, will neglect the practice of living in the wilds; will neglect isolated forest & wilderness dwellings; will move to towns, cities, & royal capitals, taking up residence there. For the sake of lodgings they will do many kinds of unseemly, inappropriate things.

“This, monks, is the third future danger, unarisen at present, that will arise in the future. Be alert to it and, being alert, work to get rid of it.

“And further, in the course of the future there will be monks who will live in close association with nuns, female trainees, & female novices. As they interact with nuns, female trainees, & female novices, they can be expected either to lead the holy life dissatisfied or to fall into one of the defiling offenses, leaving the training, returning to a lower way of life.

“This, monks, is the fourth future danger, unarisen at present, that will arise in the future. Be alert to it and, being alert, work to get rid of it.

“And further, in the course of the future there will be monks who will live in close association with monastery attendants & novices. As they interact with monastery attendants & novices, they can be expected to live committed to many kinds of stored-up possessions and to making large boundary posts for fields & crops.

“This, monks, is the fifth future danger, unarisen at present, that will arise in the future. Be alert to it and, being alert, work to get rid of it.

“These, monks, are the five future dangers, unarisen at present, that will arise in the future. Be alert to them and, being alert, work to get rid of them.”

— [AN 5:80](#)

“Monks, there once was a time when the Dasārahas had a large drum called ‘Summoner.’ Whenever Summoner was split, the Dasārahas inserted another peg in it, until the time came when Summoner’s original wooden body had disappeared and only a conglomeration of pegs remained.

“In the same way, in the course of the future there will be monks who won’t listen when discourses that are words of the Tathāgata—deep, deep in their meaning, transcendent, connected with emptiness—are being recited. They won’t lend ear, won’t set their hearts on knowing them, won’t regard these teachings as worth grasping or mastering. But they will listen when discourses that are literary works—the works of poets, elegant in sound, elegant in rhetoric, the work of outsiders, words of disciples—are recited. They will lend ear and set their hearts on knowing them. They will regard these teachings as worth grasping & mastering.

“In this way the disappearance of the discourses that are words of the Tathāgata—deep, deep in their meaning, transcendent, connected with emptiness—will come about.

“Thus you should train yourselves: ‘We will listen when discourses that are words of the Tathāgata—deep, deep in their meaning, transcendent, connected with emptiness—are being recited. We will lend ear, will set our hearts on knowing them, will regard these teachings as worth grasping & mastering.’ That’s how you should train yourselves.” — [SN 20:7](#)

“And if the monks dwell rightly, this world will not be empty of arahants.” — [DN 16](#)

Glossary

Abhidhamma: (1) In the discourses of the Pāli Canon, this term simply means “higher Dhamma,” and a systematic attempt to define the Buddha’s teachings and understand their interrelationships. (2) A later collection of treatises collating lists of categories drawn from the teachings in the discourses, added to the Canon several centuries after the Buddha’s life.

Ājīvaka: A contemplative sectarian who espouses the doctrine that action is either non-existent or ineffectual.

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

Āsava: Effluent; fermentation. Three qualities—sensuality, becoming, and ignorance—that “flow out” of the mind and create the flood of the round of death and rebirth. In some texts, views are added as an additional āsava.

Asura: A member of a race of beings who, like the Titans in Greek mythology, battled the devas for sovereignty in heaven and lost.

Avijjā: Ignorance; lack of skill.

Bhikkhu: Monk.

Bhikkhunī: Nun.

Bodhi: Awakening.

Bodhisatta: “A being (striving) for awakening;” the term used to describe the Buddha before he actually became Buddha, from his first aspiration to Buddhahood until the time of his full awakening. Sanskrit form: *Bodhisattva*.

Brahman: In common usage, a brahman is a member of the priestly caste, which claimed to be the highest caste in India, based on birth. In a

specifically Buddhist usage, “brahman” can also mean an arahant, conveying the point that excellence is based, not on birth or race, but on the qualities attained in the mind.

Brahmā: An inhabitant of the heavenly realms of form or formlessness.

Deva (-tā): Literally, “shining one.” An inhabitant of the terrestrial or heavenly realms higher than the human.

Dhamma: (1) Event; action; (2) a phenomenon in and of itself; (3) mental quality; (4) doctrine, teaching. The True Dhamma is the Dhamma as taught by the Buddha, free from the admixture of conflicting teachings. Sanskrit form: *Dharma*.

Dukkha: Suffering; stress; pain.

Gandhabba: Celestial musician, the lowest level of the celestial devas, often portrayed as tricksters who are obsessed with sex.

Gotama: The Buddha’s clan name.

Iddhipāda: Base of power. The Canon describes the four bases of power as qualities that can be dominant in the practice of concentration: desire, persistence, intent, and discrimination.

Jhāna: Mental absorption. A state of strong concentration focused on a single sensation or mental notion. This term is derived from the verb *jhāyati*, which means to burn with a steady, still flame. In the context of the bodhisatta’s austerities, this denotes the painful trance that comes from stifling one’s in-and-out breathing. In the context of the noble eightfold path, it denotes the four absorptions that begin with non-sensual pleasure and culminated in purity of mindfulness and equanimity.

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

Khandha: Aggregate. Physical and mental phenomena as they are directly experienced; the raw material for a sense of self: *rūpa*—physical form; *vedanā*—feelings of pleasure, pain, or neither pleasure nor pain; *saññā*—perception, mental label; *saṅkhāra*—fabrication, thought construct; and *viññāṇa*—sensory consciousness, the act of taking note of sense data and ideas as they make contact with the senses. Sanskrit form: *Skandha*.

Mātikā: A list of Dhamma topics—such as the seven lists that comprise the thirty-seven Wings to Awakening—that formed the basis for the Abhidhamma.

Māra: The personification of temptation, mortality, and all forces, within and without, that create obstacles to release from saṃsāra.

Nāga: 1) A magical serpent, technically classed as a common animal, but possessing many of the powers of a deva, including the ability to take on human shape. 2) A large elephant. 3) A large man. Sometimes this term is used metaphorically, in the sense of “Great One,” to indicate an arahant.

Nibbāna: Literally, the “unbinding” of the mind from passion, aversion, and delusion, and from the entire round of death and rebirth. As this term also denotes the extinguishing of a fire, it carries connotations of stilling, cooling, and peace. “Total nibbāna” in some contexts denotes the experience of awakening; in others, the final passing away of an arahant. Sanskrit form: *Nirvāṇa*.

Nigaṇṭha: Literally, “one without ties.” An ascetic in the Jain religion.

Nikāya: A large group. The suttas in the Pāli Canon are organized into five such groups, the first four being generally considered the earliest records of the Buddha’s teachings on Dhamma. The fifth group, although it contains many collections regarded as later, contains other collections that are considered early as well.

Pāli: The oldest complete extant Canon of the Buddha’s teachings and—by extension—the language in which it was composed.

Papañca: Objectification. A type of thinking that begins with the assumption “I am the thinker,” and then develops perceptions and needs based around that assumption. Frequently cited in the suttas as a source of conflict.

Pārājika: The most serious offense in the Vinaya. Any monk who commits this offense is automatically no longer a monk and cannot reordain in this lifetime.

Pāṭimokkha: Basic code of monastic discipline, composed of 227 rules for monks and 311 for nuns.

Pavāraṇā: Invitation. A monastic ceremony marking the end of the Rains residence on the full moon in October. During the ceremony, each monk invites his fellow monks to accuse him of any offenses they may have suspected him of having committed.

Sakya: The Buddha's family name.

Samāsāra: Transmigration; the process of wandering through repeated states of becoming, with their attendant death and rebirth.

Sarivvega: A sense of dismay or terror over the meaninglessness and futility of life as it is ordinarily lived, combined with a strong sense of urgency in looking for a way out.

Saṅgha: On the conventional (*sammatti*) level, this term denotes the communities of Buddhist monks and nuns. On the ideal (*ariya*) level, it denotes those followers of the Buddha, lay or ordained, who have attained at least stream-entry.

Saṅghādisesa: The second most serious category of offense in the Vinaya. Any monk who commits this offense must undergo a penance of six days. If he hides the offense from his fellow monks, then when he is found out he must also undergo an added probation for as many days as he hid it.

Sutta: Discourse. Sanskrit form: *Sūtra*.

Tādin: "Such," an adjective to describe one who has attained the goal. It indicates that the person's state is indefinable but not subject to change or influences of any sort.

Tathāgata: Literally, "one who has become authentic (*tatha-āgata*) or is truly gone (*tathā-gata*):" an epithet used in ancient India for a person who has attained the highest religious goal. In Buddhism, it usually denotes the Buddha, although occasionally it also denotes any of his arahant disciples.

Upādāna: Clinging; the act of taking sustenance. There are four types of clinging: to sensuality, to views, to habits and practices, and to doctrines

of the self.

Uposatha: Observance day, coinciding with the full moon, new moon, and half-moons. Lay Buddhists often observe the eight precepts on this day. Monks recite the Pāṭimokkha on the full-moon and new-moon Uposathas.

Vinaya: The monastic discipline, whose rules and traditions comprise six volumes in printed text.

Yakkha: Spirit. A lower level of deva—sometimes friendly to human beings, sometimes not—often dwelling in trees or other wild places.

Further Reading

The following books contain discussions of the relationship between the Buddha's quest for awakening and the form and content of his teachings:

[*Refuge*](#)

[*The Wings to Awakening*](#)

[*Skill in Questions*](#)

[*Buddhist Romanticism*](#), and

The Buddhist Religions, fifth edition.

[*Udāna: Exclamations*](#) provides a good introduction to the Buddha's skill as an extemporaneous poet.

[*The Buddha Smiles*](#) contains many delightful examples of his sense of humor.

Endnotes

1. The location of Kapilavatthu has been identified as the village of Piprāhwa, in northern India, just a few miles from the border of Nepal. In 1898 a reliquary was discovered in the stupa at that site, with an inscription stating that it contained the Buddha's relics.

2. Here the word 'boil' (*gaṇḍa*) refers to the skin condition.

3. "Fabrication" is a translation of the Pāli term, *saṅkhāra*. In the context of meditation, [MN 44](#) states that the three types of fabrication are experienced in the present moment as follows: bodily = the in-and-out breath, verbal = directed thought and evaluation, and mental = perceptions and feelings. AN 4:232, when discussing the results of actions leading to rebirth, identifies bodily, verbal, and mental fabrications as bodily, verbal, and mental actions in general. It is useful to contemplate the relationships between these two levels of meaning.

4. In other words, not allowing oneself to rest content merely with the skillful qualities developed on the path. Contentment, of course, is a virtue on the path, but as [AN 4:28](#) shows, it is a quality to be developed around the material requisites of life. As this discourse shows, it is not to be applied to mental qualities. [MN 2](#) makes a similar point: One should endure pains and harsh words but not the presence of unskillful states in the mind.

5. Māra, the personification of temptation and death.

6. The highest equanimity that can be attained through jhāna.

7. 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.

8. To the fore (*parimukham*): An Abhidhamma text, Vibhaṅga 12:1, defines this term as meaning “the tip of the nose or the sign of the mouth.” However, the term appears as part of a stock phrase describing a person engaged in meditation even for themes that have nothing to do with the body at all, such as sublime-attitude (*brahmavihāra*) meditation ([AN 3:64](#)). It seems more likely that the term is used in an idiomatic sense, indicating either that mindfulness is placed face-to-face with its object, or that it is made prominent, which is how it is translated here.

9. The commentaries insist that “entire body” here means the full length of the breath, but this is unlikely in this context, for two reasons: (a) The first two steps already require an awareness of the entire length of the breath. Otherwise, the meditator wouldn’t know if a breath was short or long. (b) As [AN 10:20](#) indicates, the fourth step involves bringing the mind to the fourth jhāna, a state in which in-and-out breathing grows still ([SN 36:11](#); [AN 10:72](#)) and the body is filled with pure, bright awareness, after awareness has been extended to be sensitive to the entire body beginning with the first jhāna ([DN 2](#); [MN 119](#)). Because the fourth step focuses on the stilling of the breath, there has to be a step in which the awareness is extended to fill the entire body. That would be this step.

10. Sister Dhammadinnā: “In-&-out breaths are bodily; these are things tied up with the body. That’s why in-&-out breaths are bodily fabrications.” — [MN 44](#)

“And how is a monk calmed in his bodily fabrication? There is the case where a monk, with the abandoning of pleasure & pain—as with the earlier disappearance of elation & distress—enters & remains in the fourth jhāna: purity of equanimity & mindfulness, neither pleasure nor pain. This is how a monk is calmed in his bodily fabrication.” — [AN 10:20](#)

11. Sister Dhammadinnā: “Perceptions & feelings are mental; these are things tied up with the mind. That’s why perceptions & feelings are mental fabrications.” — [MN 44](#)

12. [AN 9:34](#) shows how the mind, step by step, is temporarily released from burdensome mental states of greater and greater refinement as it advances through the stages of jhāna. [MN 111](#) shows how a meditator, using discernment, can be released from the factors of any jhāna attainment up through the dimension of nothingness while still in that attainment.

13. This passage refers to the practice of the four jhānas. Notice that even after the Buddha had developed an impressive mastery of the type of concentration that can yield visions of light and forms, he still had to develop the four jhānas to gain insight into the processes of fabrication before he could gain awakening.

14. *Mahaggatam*. This term is used, together with “immeasurable / unlimited,” in the standard description of the awareness generated in the practice of the brahmavihāras ([SN 42:8](#)). According to Ven. Anuruddha in MN 127, however, an enlarged mind is not immeasurable. Its range of awareness is larger than the body but still measurable, ranging in distance from the shade of a tree to the earth bounded by the ocean.

15. *Bhava*. Becoming is the assumption of an identity in a world of experience on the level of sensuality, form, or formlessness. On this topic, see [The Paradox of Becoming](#).

16. This hybrid word—clinging/sustenance—is a translation of the Pāli term *upādāna*. Upādāna has a hybrid meaning because it is used to cover two sides of a physical process metaphorically applied to the mind: the act of clinging whereby a fire takes sustenance from a piece of fuel, together with the sustenance offered by the fuel. On the level of the mind, upādāna denotes both the act of clinging and the object clung to, which together give sustenance to the process of becoming and its attendant factors leading to suffering and stress. There are four types of clinging/sustenance: sensuality, habits & practices, views, and doctrines of the self. For more on this image and its implications for the practice, see [The Mind Like Fire Unbound](#) and [The Shape of Suffering](#).

17. *Nāma-rūpa*. “Feeling, perception, intention, contact, & attention: This is called name. The four great elements, and the form dependent on the four great elements: This is called form. This name & this form are called name-&-form.” — [*SN 12:2*](#)

18. The discussion in the four paragraphs beginning with the phrase, “Vision arose...” takes two sets of variables—the four noble truths and the three levels of knowledge appropriate to each—and lists their twelve permutations. In ancient Indian philosophical and legal traditions, this sort of discussion is called a wheel. This passage is taken from the Buddha’s first discourse, *Setting the Wheel of Dhamma in Motion*, and is the wheel from which the discourse takes its name.

19. The Commentary insists that Anāthapiṇḍika is referring here only to the alms he gives to poor people in general, and not to the alms given to the monks. However, because Anāthapiṇḍika doesn’t qualify his statement in this way, it seems more likely that this discourse occurred either during a general famine or at a low point in his personal finances.

20. A name for a person who has had his/her first experience of the Dhamma eye at the first level of awakening (there are four levels in all). The term comes from the fact that such a person will inevitably gain full awakening in at least seven lifetimes—without falling into any of the lower realms in the meantime—just as a person who has reached a stream leading to the ocean will, when following it, arrive at the ocean inevitably.

21. The Commentary explains how this was produced. Having made bags for the dried rice, they say, the rice is cared for from the start like this: The fields are well prepared, the seeds are planted there, and they are watered with scented water. At harvest time, a rush-mat is tied up (suspended?) and, cutting off the head of the grain, putting a handful in each bag, and tying it up with a string, people dry the grains in the air. Then the grains are sprinkled with fragrant powder and a storeroom is filled with the bags. In the third year, the bags are opened. Using such three-year-cured fragrance-infused rice—unblemished, well purified rice—staple & non-staple foodstuffs are prepared.

22. This is the teaching of Makkhali Gosāla. See [Chapter 4](#).

23. The seven treasures are a divine wheel, an ideal jewel, an ideal elephant, an ideal horse, an ideal wife, an ideal treasurer, an ideal counselor.

24. “Effectual” here means having an effect on a future lifetime. An action that is ineffectual and apparently ineffectual is one that has no effect on any future lifetime—it yields all its fruit in the current lifetime—and does not appear to have an effect on the subsequent lifetime. An action that is ineffectual and apparently effectual is one that is actually ineffectual but appears, erroneously, to be connected to a result in the subsequent lifetime. An action that is effectual and apparently effectual is one that has an impact on the subsequent lifetime. An action that is effectual and apparently ineffectual is one that has no impact on the subsequent lifetime but does have an impact on a lifetime after that.

25. Immeasurable concentration. This is a reference to the practice of the four brahmavihāras: immeasurable goodwill, compassion, empathetic joy, and equanimity.

26. The Commentary does not explain the meaning of this ambiguous sentence. It could mean that when the hell-being’s foot is lifted from the hot, burning floor, either (1) his skin, etc., continues burning or (2) his body returns to its original form. Either arrangement would be gruesome.

27. For further explanation of right view, see [MN 2](#), [MN 117](#), [SN 12:15](#), and [AN 10:93](#).

28. For more on right speech, see [MN 58](#), [SN 11:5](#), [AN 4:183](#), [AN 5:198](#), [AN 10:176](#), and [Sn 3:3](#).

29. For more on right effort, see [MN 101](#) and [AN 6:55](#).

30. For further explanation of right mindfulness, see [DN 22](#) and the book *Right Mindfulness*.

31. [AN 6:63](#) defines “sensuality” in these terms: “The passion for his resolves is a man’s sensuality, not the beautiful sensual pleasures found in the world.”

32. “And what, monks, are unskillful qualities? Wrong view, wrong resolve, wrong speech, wrong action, wrong livelihood, wrong effort, wrong mindfulness, wrong concentration.” — *SN 45:22*

33. For further explanation of right concentration, see [MN 44](#), [MN 111](#), [AN 4:41](#), [AN 5:28](#), and [AN 9:36](#).

34. See [note 18](#).

35. Then a certain monk went to the Blessed One and... said to the Blessed One: “‘The cosmos, the cosmos [*loka*],’ it is said. In what respect does the word ‘cosmos’ apply?”

“Insofar as it disintegrates [*lujjati*], monk, it is called the ‘cosmos.’ Now what disintegrates? The eye disintegrates. Forms disintegrate. Eye-consciousness disintegrates. Eye-contact disintegrates. And whatever there is that arises in dependence on eye-contact—experienced as pleasure, pain, or neither-pleasure-nor-pain—that too disintegrates.”

[Similarly with the ear, nose, tongue, body, and intellect.] — [SN 35:82](#)

36. On unestablished consciousness, see [SN 12:64](#), [SN 22:87](#), and the discussion in *The Paradox of Becoming*, [Chapter 7](#).

37. With fuel remaining (*sa-upādisesa*) and with no fuel remaining (*anupādisesa*): The analogy here is to a fire. In the first case, the flames are out, but the embers are still glowing. In the second, the fire is so thoroughly out that the embers have grown cold.

38. Such (*tādin*): An adjective to describe one who has attained the goal. It indicates that the person’s state is undefinable and not subject to change or influence of any sort.

39. Following the reading in the Burmese and PTS editions: *dhamma-sārādigamā khaye ratā*.

40. The six sense spheres and all phenomena resulting from them—see [SN 35:23](#).

41. Notice that dependent co-arising (*paṭicca samuppāda*) is expressed in terms of processes—of events and actions—without reference to a framework containing those processes. In other words, it doesn't mention the existence or non-existence of agents doing the actions, or of a framework in time and space in which these processes happen. Thus it makes possible a way of understanding the causes of suffering and stress without reference to the existence or non-existence of an “I” or an “other” responsible for those events. Instead, the events are viewed simply as events in the context of the process—a way of viewing that makes it possible to abandon clinging to any of these events, so as to bring suffering to an end. Even the idea of an “I” or an “other” is seen simply as part of the process (under the factors of fabrication and the sub-factor of attention under “name” in name-and-form). This is what makes possible the abandoning of any attachment to the conceit “I am,” as mentioned in [Ud 2:1](#), 4:1, 6:6, and 7:1.

For a discussion of dependent co-arising in general, see [The Shape of Suffering](#). For further discussion of its role in framing and abandoning thoughts of “I am,” see *Skill in Questions*, [Chapter 3](#) and [Chapter 8](#).

42. This causal principle—called *idappaccayatā*, “this/that conditionality”—is actually two causal principles in interaction. The first principle is expressed in the pair of statements, “When this is, that is. When this isn't, that isn't.” This is the principle of synchronous causality, in which the effect arises and disappears at the same time as the cause. The second principle is expressed in the statements, “From the arising of this comes the arising of that. From the cessation of this comes the cessation of that.” This is a principle of causality that can be diachronous, in other words, the effect will arise or cease after the cause has arisen or ceased. The interaction of these two principles is what makes the Buddha's explanations of causality so complex.

43. In other words, regardless of whatever one bases one's suppositions around an experience on, by the time the act of supposing is complete, the base has already changed.

44. This refers to the final step on the path, when the path itself is abandoned.

45. Reading *sabb'upadhiṃ hi* with the Thai edition. The Burmese and Sri Lankan editions read *upadhiṃ hi*: "For this stress comes into play in dependence on acquisition."

46. This passage indicates the way out of the dilemma posed above, that one cannot gain release either through becoming or non-becoming. Rather than focus on whether one wants to take "what has come to be" in the direction of becoming or non-becoming, one develops dispassion for "what has come to be" as it occurs, and this provides the way out. On this point, see *The Paradox of Becoming*, [Chapters 2](#) and [Chapter 6](#).

47. The passage in braces is found only in the Burmese edition.

48. *Dvevācikā*: As the third member of the triple gem, the Noble Saṅgha, had not yet arisen, they went for refuge in the Buddha and Dhamma.

49. The word "*ekāyana*" here denotes a path that leads to only one destination—it doesn't have any forks.

50. According to the Commentary, the five floods are the defilements associated with the five physical sense doors, whereas the sixth flood covers the defilements associated with the sixth sense door, the intellect. Or alternatively, it says, the five floods are the five lower fetters—self-identity views, uncertainty, grasping at habits & practices, sensual passion, and irritation—whereas the sixth flood covers the five higher fetters: passion for form, passion for formlessness, conceit, restlessness, and ignorance.

51. Reading *bhāsitametaraṃ* with the Thai edition. The Burmese reads *pabhāvitametaraṃ*

52. The Pāli phrases for the four noble truths are grammatical anomalies. From these anomalies, some scholars have argued that the expression “noble truth” is a later addition to the texts. Others have argued even further that the content of the four truths is also a later addition. Both of these arguments are based on the unproven assumption that the language the Buddha spoke was grammatically regular and that any irregularities were later corruptions of the language. This assumption forgets that the languages of the Buddha’s time were oral dialects and that the nature of such dialects is to contain many grammatical irregularities. Languages tend to become regular only when being used to govern a large nation state or to produce a large body of literature: events that happened in India only after the Buddha’s time. (A European example: Italian was a group of irregular oral dialects until Dante fashioned it into a regular language for the sake of his poetry.) So the irregularity of the Pāli here is no proof either for the earliness or lateness of this particular teaching.

53. For further discussion of the first noble truth, see [DN 22](#), [MN 109](#), [SN 22:48](#), [SN 22:79](#), [SN 38:14](#), [AN 6:63](#).

54. For further discussion of the second noble truth, see [DN 22](#), [SN 12:2](#), [SN 12:64](#).

55. For further discussion of the fourth noble truth, see [MN 117](#), [SN 45:8](#).

56. Another argument for the lateness of the expression “noble truth” is that a truth—meaning an accurate statement about a body of facts—is not something that should be abandoned. In this case, only the craving is to be abandoned, not the truth about craving. However, in Vedic Sanskrit—as in modern English—a “truth” can mean both a fact and an accurate statement about a fact. In this case, the “truth” is the fact, not the statement about the fact. The fact of craving is to be abandoned, not the statement about it. So the expression is not necessarily late.

57. See [note 18](#).

58. Following the Thai edition. The Burmese has *aññāsi koṇḍañña*, “You (or he) knew, Kondañña”.

59. The word “every” here and in all parallel passages is *sabba*, which is the same as the word for “all.” On the range of meaning covered by the word “all,” see [SN 35:23](#), [DN 11](#), [DN 15](#), [MN 49](#), and [AN 10:81](#) indicate that there is a type of consciousness that lies outside the range of “all,” and so would not fall under the aggregate of consciousness. This apparently corresponds to the dimension mentioned in [SN 35:117](#) and [Ud 8:1](#).

60. Because Yasa was already an arahant, the Buddha did not add, as he had with the group of five monks, “for the right ending of stress.”

61. Reading *mārabandhanabaddhosi* with the Thai edition. The Burmese and PTS editions read, *mahābandhanabaddhosi*, “You are bound by a great bond,” which repeats the line in the preceding exchange.

62. Reading *tena* with the Thai edition.

63. Nāga means not only “serpent” but also “great being.”

64. This style of narrative—in which prose passages alternate with verses retelling parts of what was narrated in the prose—is called a *campū*. Another example is in the latter part of [DN 16](#).

65. The Indian sub-continent.

66. Here the PTS edition adds, “Take it if you like.” “Enough, Great Contemplative, you yourself brought it, you take it yourself.”

67. The “middle-eight nights” are a period in February, regarded in northern India as the coldest part of the year.

68. According to the Commentary, the Buddha’s ten dwellings are the ten noble dwellings listed in [AN 10:20](#); his ten strengths are the ten Tathāgata-strengths listed in [MN 12](#) (see [Chapter 10](#)); he knows the ten guidelines to good conduct listed in [MN 41](#); and he is endowed with the arahant’s tenfold path as described in [MN 117](#).

69. This indicates that the arising of the Dhamma eye is not simply a realization of the impermanence of phenomena subject to origination. It also involves seeing that which is not subject to origination or cessation: i.e., the deathless.

70. Upatissa is Ven. Sāriputta's personal name, while Kolita is Ven. Moggallāna's.

71. The Commentary states that LongNails (Dīghanakha) was a nephew of Ven. Sāriputta.

72. Following the Thai edition of the Canon. The Burmese and PTS editions say that Ven. Sāriputta was standing.

73. The Pāli word *no* in this sentence can mean either “indeed” or “to us.”

74. Compare this account of Ven. Sāriputta's awakening with the account given in [MN 111](#).

75. There is a question as to where the first part of the poem ends and the second begins. The Commentary assigns only the last stanza—beginning with, “I am the son of the Buddha”—to the second part, and everything before that to the first. This, however, doesn't fit with the fact that the seventh stanza is obviously addressed to the person who engendered the Buddha, and not to the Buddha himself. For this reason, we have placed the division into two parts after the sixth stanza, as the first six stanzas are unified by the theme of bearing fruit, with the fourth and fifth stanza possibly included to remind the Buddha of the good results that would come to his family if he provided them with the opportunity to give him alms. Alternatively, the division could be placed after the fourth stanza, in that the fifth stanza could be interpreted as beginning a line of thought aimed at putting the listener into the proper mood to accept the principle of the results of good kamma seen not in this lifetime but in the next.

76. Rohiṇī is the name both of a river at the edge of the Sakyan lands and of an asterism, i.e., a star in the zodiac used to indicate a season of time.

77. Reading *vipaccatu* with the Thai edition, which seems to fit better with the imagery in the earlier part of the poem than the reading in the other editions—*samijjhatu*, “may it succeed.”

78. Reading *kasate* with the Thai edition.

79. Reading *dhīro* with the Thai edition. The other editions read *vīro*, hero.

80. Sakka is the name of the king of the devas of the heaven of the Thirty-three. Ven. Kāludāyin is playing here with the similarity between this name and that of the Sakyan lineage.

81. Reading *Māyanāmā* with the Sri Lankan and PTS editions. The Thai edition reads *Māyā mahesī*, so that the line would read, “The Buddha’s mother is Queen Māyā.” This would provide a play on words—*mahesi*, great seer, and *mahesī*, queen.

82. The Commentary identifies the threefold deva realm as the Tusita (Contented) heaven, but doesn’t explain why that heaven would be given this name. Some verses in the Jātaka identify the threefold deva realm as the heaven of the Thirty-three, and the later reference to “those groups of devas” in this poem would seem to support this latter interpretation.

83. An epithet for the Buddha, meaning “resplendent.” Aṅgīrasa was the name of an ancient brahmanical sage to which the Gotama clan claimed a connection. The Commentary suggests that this was one of the Bodhisatta’s personal names prior to his awakening.

84. This suggests that this story occurred either after Suddhodana’s death or after his retirement from power.

85. *Ahaṃ tayā*, literally, ‘I’m with you,’ seems to be an idiom meaning something like ‘I’m on your side’ or ‘I’m agreed with you.’

86. The same three knowledges that the Buddha attained on the night of his awakening.

87. Note that Devadatta is not referred to as ‘Venerable’ (*Āyasmā*).

88. According to the Commentary, Rāhula was a seven-year-old novice when this conversation occurred.

89. *Sāmañña*. Throughout ancient cultures, the terminology of music was used to describe the moral quality of people and actions. Discordant intervals or poorly tuned musical instruments were metaphors for evil; harmonious intervals and well tuned instruments, metaphors for good. In Pāli, the term *sama*—“even”—described an instrument tuned on-pitch. There is a famous passage (in [AN 6:55](#), see [Chapter 7](#)) where the Buddha reminds Soṇa Koḷivisa—who had been over-exerting himself in the practice—that a lute sounds appealing only if the strings are neither too taut nor too lax, but “evenly” tuned. This image would have special resonances with the Buddha’s teaching on the middle way. It also adds meaning to the term *samaṇa*—monk or contemplative—which the texts frequently mention as being derived from *sama*. The word *sāmañña*—“evenness,” the quality of being in tune—also means the quality of being a contemplative: The true contemplative is always in tune with what is proper and good.

90. For analyses of the many values taught in this passage, see, “[The Road to Nirvāṇa Is Paved with Skillful Intentions](#),” “[In the Eyes of the Wise](#),” and “[The Buddha Teaches His Son](#).”

91. This question and answer are missing in the PTS, Burmese, and Sri Lankan editions of the Canon.

92. Here the PTS, Sri Lankan, and Burmese editions add a further condition for the arising of effluents in the Saṅgha: the Saṅgha has great learning.

93. The inconsistency here—two heaps becoming three—may stem from the fact that in the story of Ven. Raṭṭhapāla ([MN 82](#)), on which this story appears to be patterned, there are three heaps of silver and gold.

94. Not the same as the Ven. Assaji who was one of the group of five monks, the Buddha’s first students, and who taught Ven. Sāriputta. In fact, note that the

monk who ends up telling the Buddha about the conduct of the misbehaving Assaji and his followers is described in the same terms as those used to describe how Ven. Assaji's behavior inspired Sāriputta the wanderer.

95. This pattern allows for the use of cloth scraps of many shapes and sizes, and yet yields an orderly appearance. At the same time, if a large piece of cloth is obtained, cutting it into small pieces reduces its value, so that it is less likely to be stolen. Cloth was apparently very expensive at that time.

96. As [Chapter 16](#) will indicate, Ven. Upāli—the same Upāli who had been the barber of the Sakyan princes—went on to become an arahant and the foremost expert in the Vinaya.

97. Ariṭṭha is apparently referring to sexual intercourse.

98. The first seven of these comparisons are treated in detail in [MN 54](#). The simile of the butcher's ax and chopping block is mentioned in MN 23, the simile of swords and spears in [SN 5:1](#), and the simile of the snake's head in [Sn 4:1](#).

99. Apart from a few minor details, this story up to this point is identical with the origin story for Pācittiya 68 and the origin story for the rules concerning the act of suspension given in Cv 1:32.1–3. Ariṭṭha was the first monk to be suspended from the Saṅgha. Cv 1:34 reports that, instead of making an effort to mend his ways so that the act of suspension might be rescinded, he simply disrobed.

100. The image here is apparently that of trying to start a fire with the friction of a fire stick. Ariṭṭha hasn't even been able to create any warmth, much less the spark of insight that would create light.

101. According to the Commentary, “indulge in sensual pleasures” here means indulging in sexual intercourse; the Sub-commentary adds that other acts expressing sexual desire—such as hugging and petting—should be included under this phrase as well.

102. See [MN 49](#), [Chapter 11](#).

103. Throughout the first part of this story, Ven. Nāgasamāla refers to the Buddha with this exaggerated form of address. Perhaps the compilers meant this as a linguistic hint of how inappropriate an attendant he was for the Buddha. At the point in the narrative where he puts the Buddha's bowl and robes on the ground, the Sri Lankan and Burmese editions correct his statement to the more appropriate: "This, lord, is the Blessed One's bowl & robes." However, to be in keeping with his normal way of addressing the Buddha, and to stress the rudeness of the gesture, I felt it better to keep the sentence as it is in the Thai edition. Only after Ven. Nāgasamāla is chastened by his experience with the thieves does he revert to using the simpler and more standard address: "lord."

104. Milk-feeding = *khīrapaka*. This is a poetic way of saying "young and unweaned"—the "milk" here being the regurgitated food with which the mother heron feeds her young. Also—in the conventions of Indian literature—the reference to milk suggests that the heron is white.

105. [DN 16](#) ([Chapter 15](#)) indicates that the Buddha had planned to develop a nuns' order early in his teaching career. So it appears that his initial refusal of Mahāpajāpatī's request was strategic: that he already had in mind the conditions under which such an order should be founded, but he wanted to wait until Mahāpajāpatī was earnest enough to accept them. If this is the case, then the strategy was wise. As we will see below, after accepting the conditions, she later tried to have at least two of them rescinded.

106. According to [SN 16:13](#), the True Dhamma is said to have disappeared when a counterfeit of the True Dhamma has arisen in the world. In other words, when there is more than one version of the Dhamma, people will have doubts as to which version is the True Dhamma. The Buddha's prediction has proven quite prescient, in that it was approximately five hundred years after his death that the Prajñāpāramitā Sūtras, with their doctrine of the non-arising of dhammas, first appeared.

107. This may be a kind of caterpillar.

108. This is not exactly what the Buddha had said. The nuns here are replacing “I allow that nuns be given the Acceptance by monks (*anujānāmi... bhikkhūhi bhikkhuniyo upasampādetum*)” with “Nuns should be given Acceptance by monks (*bhikkhūhi bhikkhuniyo upasampādetabbā*).” The allowance for monks to give Acceptance to nuns was later amended at Cv X.17.2 so that the Bhikkhu Saṅgha could give Acceptance to a nun only after she had been found by the Bhikkhunī Saṅgha to be free of obstructing conditions.

109. See [DN 16](#) on the topic of how homage is best shown to the Buddha.

110. Mahāpajāpatī’s sister, the Buddha’s mother.

111. The Group-of-Six monks appear often in the Vinaya as notorious troublemakers. They were so called because they had six ringleaders: Assaji (not the same Assaji who was among the group of five monks) & Punabbasu in Kīṭāgiri, Mettiya & Bhummaja in Rājagaha, and Paṇḍuka & Lohitaka in Sāvattihī.

112. [AN 10:69](#) identifies bestial topics of conversation as: “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.”

113. The “potency” of a virtuous monk is his unwillingness to seek redress when he has been treated wrongly. The bad kamma of having mistreated a monk pure in his virtue is what returns to burn the person who did it.

114. Lady Visākhā. According to the Commentary, she was actually Migāra’s daughter, but because she introduced him to the Dhamma, she gained the epithet of being his mother.

115. In the parallel passage at [SN 3:11](#), King Pasenadi states this, not as a question, but as a fact: “Of those in the world who are arahants or on the path

to arahantship, these are among them.” The version presented here, however, seems psychologically more probable: The king, rather than trying to lie to the Buddha, wants to test the latter’s ability to see through the disguise of his spies.

116. In [SN 3:11](#), this verse is replaced with the following:

Not by appearance
is a man rightly known,
nor should trust be based
on a quick glance,
—for, disguised as well restrained,
the unrestrained go through this world.
A counterfeit earring made of clay,
a bronze half-dollar coated in gold:
They go about in this world
hidden all around:
 impure inside,
 beautiful out.

The verse in [SN 3:11](#) may seem more immediately relevant to the situation than the verse given here, but the verse given here is a more interesting and original response to what is happening.

117. Ways of the world (*lokadhamma*): gain, loss, status, loss of status, praise, criticism, pleasure, pain.

118. See [note 192](#).

119. This principle was later adopted by the monks at the First Council, in response to the Buddha’s offer that they could, if they saw fit, rescind the minor training rules. See [Chapter 16](#).

120. The Pāli here reads, *na āyatakenēva papāto*. The Commentary insists that this phrase means, “with no abrupt drop-off.” There are three reasons for not accepting the Commentary’s interpretation here. (a) The first is grammatical. The word *āyataka* means “long, drawn out; lasting a long time.” To interpret *āyatakena*, the instrumental of a word meaning “long, drawn out,” to mean “abrupt” makes little sense. (b) The second reason is geographical. The continental shelf off the east coast of India does have a sudden drop-off after a long gradual slope. (c) The third reason is doctrinal. As noted in the interpretation of the simile, the shape of the ocean floor corresponds to the course of the practice. If there were no sudden drop-off, there would be no sudden penetration to awakening. However, there are many cases of sudden penetration in the Canon, Exhibit A being Bāhiya’s attainment of arahantship in [Ud 1:10](#).

121. The monks here address Ven. Nanda as “*āyasmant*.” According to [DN 16](#), they did not normally address one another in this formal way while the Buddha was still alive. So there is an element of sarcasm in the way they use the term here.

122. Reading *yassa tiṇṇo kāmapaṅko* with the Thai edition. The Burmese, Sri Lankan, and PTS editions read, *yassa nittiṇṇo paṅko*: “In whom the mire is crossed over.”

123. According to the Commentary, Ven. Rāhula was eighteen years old when this discourse took place.

124. In other words, one dies fully alert.

125. See [note 35](#).

126. *Anupādisesa-nibbāna-dhātu*. See [note 37](#).

127. [DN 11](#) explains instruction using the “marvel of pointing out” in these terms: “There is the case where a monk gives instruction in this way: ‘Direct your thought in this way, don’t direct it in that. Attend to things in this way, don’t attend to them in that. Let go of this, enter and remain in that.’”

128. On this and the following instruction, see [DN 16](#), [Chapter 15](#).

129. See [AN 10:29](#).

130. On this and the following cognitive skills, see [DN 2](#).

131. The Buddha regards Kasi's offer of milk-rice as payment for his teachings, which is why he rejects it.

132. The five hindrances are sensual desire, ill will, sloth & drowsiness, restlessness & anxiety, and uncertainty. The seven factors for awakening are mindfulness, analysis of qualities, persistence, rapture, calm, concentration, and equanimity.

133. The PTS reading here—"I will not stamp him out"—is surely a mistake. I follow the Thai reading of this passage, even though it is somewhat ungrammatical. There are passages in [MN 90](#) where King Pasenadi's sentences don't quite parse, and perhaps this is another example of his brusque language.

134. Following the Sri Lankan and Burmese editions. In the Thai edition, this sentence reads, less effectively, "What can I do?"

135. Reading *na imehi kataṃ, sapant'ime samaṇā sakya-puttiyā* with the Sri Lankan and Burmese editions. The Thai reads, less grammatically, *na imehi kataṃ, pāpant'ime samaṇā sakya-puttiyā*.

136. In Pāli, *paṇḍita-vādo*, "one who teaches the teaching of the wise." Like the sophists ("wisdom-ists") of Greece who were near contemporaries of the Buddha, Saccaka claimed to be wise, but his wisdom was largely a matter of debater's tricks. So it seems appropriate to adopt the Greek label for him.

137. The same Ven. Assaji who was among the group of five monks and who taught Sāriputta the wanderer the brief gist of the Buddha's teaching that immediately inspired the latter to attain the Dhamma eye.

138. Aggivessana is Saccaka's clan name.

139. Saccaka is here attempting to appeal to the prejudices of his audience, a cheap debater's trick.

140. Again, Saccaka is trying to appeal to the vanity of his audience. He doesn't realize, however, that he is setting himself up for a trap. By tying his audience's vanity to the Buddha's analogy, he cannot later deny that the analogy is valid.

141. Following the Thai edition here, which reads, "*Āgamehi tvaṃ Dummukha. Āgamehi tvaṃ Dummukha. Mukharo'si tvaṃ Dummukha.*" The Burmese edition here reads, "Just you wait, Dummukha. Just you wait, Dummukha." The Sri Lankan edition reads, "Just you wait, Dummukha. You're a big-mouth, Dummukha."

142. Baka Brahmā here appears to be referring both to his Brahmā world and to the state of mind that enables one to inhabit his Brahmā world.

143. *Pajāpati* has different meanings in different contexts. In some contexts, it refers to a creator deva dwelling in a Brahmā world of form. In other contexts, it refers to the chief wife of a major deva.

144. The word "body" in this discourse refers to three things: an individual body, a group of beings on a particular level of being, and the level of being as a whole. The Commentary says that coarse body here refers to the four levels of deprivation, and refined body, further on, to the Brahmā worlds.

145. The Ābhassarā Brahmā-body is attained through mastering and relishing the second jhāna. The next two Brahmā-bodies are attained through mastering and relishing, respectively, the third and fourth. See [AN 4:123](#) and [125](#), and in particular note 2 under the latter sutta.

146. The phrase in braces is from the Burmese edition of the Canon.

147. What is not experienced through the earthness of earth (and so on through the list of categories up through the allness of the all) is nibbāna, or

unbinding. It is described in these terms because it is directly known, without intermediary of any sort.

148. These statements can be read in two ways. The first way is to regard them in light of the standard definition of self-identification view (see, for instance, [MN 44](#), [MN 109](#), and [SN 22:1](#)) in which one defines self either as identical with an aggregate, as possessing an aggregate, as being contained in an aggregate, or as containing an aggregate within it. The second way is to regard the statements in light of the parallel passage from [MN 1](#), in which one engages in metaphysical speculation as to whether one's being is identical with something, lies within something, or comes from something. For more on this topic, see the introduction to [MN 1](#).

149. “What is the All? Simply the eye & forms, ear & sounds, nose & aromas, tongue & flavors, body & tactile sensations, intellect & ideas. This is termed the All. Anyone who would say, ‘Repudiating this All, I will describe another,’ if questioned on what exactly might be the grounds for his assertion, would be unable to explain, and furthermore, would be put to grief. Why is that? Because it lies beyond range.” — [SN 35:23](#)

For more on this topic, see [The Mind Like Fire Unbound, Chapter 1](#).

150. Consciousness without surface (*viññāṇam anidassanam*): See the discussion in [Chapter 2](#), in the section on unbinding.

151. In other words, the act of searching for non-becoming—or annihilation—is also a type of becoming. Although the Buddhist path aims at the cessation of becoming (*bhava*), it does not attempt this cessation by trying to annihilate the process of becoming. Instead, it does so by focusing on what has already come to be (*bhūta*), developing dispassion for what has come to be and for the nutriment—the causes—of what has come to be. With no more passion, there is no clinging to or taking sustenance from the causes of what has come to be. And through this lack of clinging or sustenance comes release. On this point see [SN 12:31](#) and [Iti 49](#).

152. The Mātikās are lists of dhamma-topics—such as the thirty-seven Wings to Awakening—that formed the basis for the Abhidhamma.

153. The Buddha uses the plural form to address Ven. Anuruddha, meaning that he is addressing all of them.

154. The meaning seems to be that people would put bile into a dog's nose to make it more vicious. The Commentary states that "When the bile breaks" means "When I put the bile of a bear or fish into its nose."

155. The Thai reads *anantarika-kammaṃ*, while the Burmese has *ānantariyaṃ kammaṃ*. The meaning is the same: action (*kamma*) without anything between it (*antarika/antariya*) and its result. Thus the etymology parallels that of the English word "immediate." The meaning is that such an action causes one to go immediately to hell at the end of one's life. [AN 5:129](#) lists five such actions: "One who has killed one's mother, one who has killed one's father, one who has killed an arahant, one who—with a corrupt intention—has caused the blood of a Tathāgata to flow, and one who has caused a split in the Saṅgha. These are the five inhabitants of the states of deprivation, inhabitants of hell, who are in agony & incurable." As we will see below, Devadatta commits two of these actions, and he incites Ajātasattu to commit one as well.

156. The PTS and Burmese editions add, "for alms."

157. "Nāga" can mean elephant, magical serpent, or great being.

158. This refers to Pācittiya 32 in the Vinaya, which prohibits monks from eating invited meals when a specific group of four or more monks have been invited.

159. The nine practices mentioned here—being a wilderness dweller, one who wears robes of cast-off cloth, an alms-goer, one who dwells at the root of a tree, a cemetery dweller, one who lives in the open air, one who doesn't lie down, one who is content with whatever dwelling is assigned to him, or one who eats only one meal a day—are among the thirteen optional ascetic (*dhutaṅga*) practices that monks may undertake. The other four are: possessing only one set of the triple robe, bypassing no donors on one's almsround, eating

only from one's bowl, and not accepting food brought after one's almsround. All thirteen practices are listed in [Thag 16:7](#).

160. This is the decisive step in causing a schism.

161. [DN 11](#) describes this marvel: "And what is the marvel of pointing out? There is the case where a monk gives instruction in this way: 'Direct your thought in this way, don't direct it in that. Attend to things in this way, don't attend to them in that. Let go of this, enter and remain in that.'" This is the method by which, according to the Buddha in the origin story for [Pr 1](#), the previous Buddhas Vipassin, Sikhin, and Vessabhū used to instruct their students.

162. A two-horned chestnut is the nut of a tree (*Trapa bicornis*) growing in south and southeast Asia. Its shell looks like the head of a water buffalo, with two nasty, curved "horns" sticking out of either side.

163. Jīvaka was the personal physician to King Bimbisāra, and also served as physician to the Buddha and the Saṅgha of monks when they stayed near Rājagaha. His story, one of the more entertaining accounts in the Canon, is told in [Mv 8:1](#).

164. The Canon does not explain why Ajātasattu killed his father even though the latter had already handed the kingdom over to him. The Commentary states that he was afraid that those loyal to Bimbisāra would try to reinstate him as king.

165. The Thai edition, which we have followed here, reads *dhammā*: mental qualities. Other editions read *dhammo*: the Dhamma. The Commentary maintains that this refers to the mental qualities conducive to concentration.

166. The story of Ven. Mahā Kassapa's Going-forth is told in [SN 16:11](#).

167. There is a play on words in this sentence, between *Tathāgata* ("one truly gone," or "one who has become true") and *vi-tatham*, "untruthfully."

168. Notice that Vassakāra, by addressing the Buddha as “Master Gotama,” shows a lesser degree of respect to the Buddha than King Ajātasattu had told him to. Vassakāra also appears in [MN 108](#), [AN 4:35](#), and [AN 4:183](#), and in each instance displays a limited understanding of the Dhamma.

169. According to the Commentary, that is precisely what Vassakāra did, thus enabling King Ajātasattu to defeat the Vajjians without bloodshed. In addition to being ironic—showing how benighted Ajātasattu was, trying to get military advice from the Buddha—this passage has a poignant meaning for the Saṅgha. As the following passage shows, the conditions of no decline in the Saṅgha are not very different from those for no decline in the Vajjians. And although those conditions may prevail in the Saṅgha, the example of the Vajjians shows that they can be easily abandoned. This passage thus serves as a warning not to be heedless. See also [AN 5:77–80](#).

170. This is the same principle that the Buddha enunciated in [NP 15](#), and that the Saṅgha adopted as a policy during the First Council. See [Chapter 16](#).

171. See [AN 7:21](#).

172. See [MN 29–30](#).

173. See [MN 53](#) and [AN 7:63](#).

174. See [SN 46:51](#) and [SN 46:53](#).

175. The Burmese edition does not contain the word, “further,” here.

176. See [AN 10:60](#).

177. See [MN 61](#).

178. This is the last reported encounter between the Buddha and Ven. Sāriputta.

179. See [AN 10:95](#).

180. See [Ud 8:6](#).

181. The translation here follows the Burmese and Sri Lankan editions of the text. The PTS version of the passage doesn't state the time of day, whereas the Thai version says that the Buddha went to the rest-house hall in the morning—which, given the events that follow, doesn't seem right, for he would have spent the entire day teaching the lay followers of Pāṭali Village.

182. Pāṭaliputta later became the capital of King Asoka's empire. The “breaking open of the seed-pods (*pūṭa-bhedana*)” is a wordplay on the last part of the city's name. The city is now named Patna.

Archeological evidence from what may have been part of Asoka's palace in Pāṭaliputta shows burnt wooden posts buried in mud—perhaps a sign that the palace burned and then was buried in a flood.

183. The five lower fetters are self-identification views, uncertainty, grasping at habits & practices, sensual desire, and ill will. The five higher fetters, abandoned by the arahant in addition to the lower five, are passion for form, passion for what is formless, conceit, restlessness, and ignorance. See [AN 10:13](#).

184. The four pairs are (1) the person on the path to stream-entry, the person experiencing the fruit of stream-entry; (2) the person on the path to once-returning, the person experiencing the fruit of once-returning; (3) the person on the path to non-returning, the person experiencing the fruit of non-returning; (4) the person on the path to arahantship, the person experiencing the fruit of arahantship. The eight individuals are the eight types forming these four pairs.

185. For another way to gauge whether one has attained stream-entry, see [MN 48](#). Notice that in this Dhamma-mirror, the Buddha gives criteria only for gauging one's own level of attainment and not that of others. On this point, see [AN 10:75](#).

186. Ambapālī apparently ordained as a nun later in life. Her verses are recorded in Thag 13:1.

187. Following the Thai edition. The Sinhalese and PTS editions have “we’ve been totally defeated (*parājitamhā*)” rather than “cheated” (*vañcitamhā*); the Burmese edition has Little Mango (*Ambakā*) instead of Little Ambapālī (*Ambapālikā*).

188. In other words, the Buddha had no esoteric version of the Dhamma that he taught only to an inner circle or a select class of privileged beings. The Dhamma that he taught to his close disciples was consistent with the Dhamma he taught at large.

189. In other words, he did not hold back any teachings from his students until he was about to die. As the narrative in [DN 16](#) makes clear, the teachings he taught up to the night of his unbinding were identical to the teachings he had taught for his entire career.

190. As the text will make clear, these are some of the locations where, in the past, the Buddha had commented to Ven. Ānanda on how refreshing the location was, implying that living on would not be a burden, and that he could, if he so desired, extend his life. The reference to these locations was apparently to remind Ānanda of what he had said there.

191. “And what is the base of power? Whatever path, whatever practice, leads to the attainment of power, the winning of power: That is called the base of power. And what is the development of the base of power? There is the case where a monk develops the base of power endowed with concentration founded on desire & the fabrications of exertion. He develops the base of power endowed with concentration founded on persistence... concentration founded on intent... concentration founded on discrimination & the fabrications of exertion. This is called the development of the base of power.” — *SN 51:26*

192. An eon, in the Buddhist cosmology, is an immensely long stretch of time. According to the Commentary here, it can also mean the full lifespan of a human being in that particular period of the eon (Buddhist cosmology allows for a huge fluctuation in human lifespans over the course of an eon). The Commentary adopts this second meaning in this passage, and so takes the

Buddha's statement here as meaning that a person who has developed the bases of power could live for a full lifespan or for a little bit more. In this case, the Pāli for the last part of this compound, *kappāvasesarī*, would mean, "an eon plus a remainder."

193. See [note 161](#).

194. In other words, the Buddha relinquished the will to live longer. It was this relinquishment that led to his total unbinding three months later.

195. Reading *tulam* as a present participle.

196. The image is of splitting a coat of mail with an arrow.

197. This list is apparently a description both of the ways in which beings on different levels of the cosmos are percipient, and of experiences that a meditator—particularly one who is inclined to visions—might have. [AN 10:29](#) adds this comment to the list:

"Now, of these eight dimensions of mastery, this is supreme: when one percipient of the formless internally sees forms externally as white, white in their color, white in their features, white in their glow. And there are beings who are percipient in this way. Yet even in the beings who are percipient in this way there is still aberration, there is change. Seeing this, the instructed disciple of the noble ones grows disenchanted with that. Being disenchanted with that, he becomes dispassionate toward what is supreme, and even more so toward what is inferior."

198. This, too, is a list of the stages of meditation as experienced by one who is inclined to visions.

These lists of eight factors are not randomly chosen. They all highlight the grandeur of the Buddha's attainment and add to the marvelous savor of this entire passage.

199. These are the thirty-seven *bodhi-pakkhiya-dhammā*. For a full account, see [The Wings to Awakening](#).

200. The Buddha will repeat these two statements as his last exhortation before his total unbinding. On the topic of heedfulness, see [SN 35:97](#) and [SN 55:40](#). On the topic of consummation, see [MN 53](#).

201. The Commentary notes a wide range of opinions on what “pig-delicacy” means. The opinion given in the Mahā Aṭṭhakathā—the primary source for the Commentary we now have—is that pig-delicacy is tender pork. Other opinions include soft bamboo shoots or mushrooms that pigs like to nibble on, or a special elixir. Given that India has long had a history of giving fanciful names to its foods and elixirs, it’s hard to say for sure what the Buddha ate for his last meal.

202. This style of narrative—in which prose passages alternate with verses retelling parts of what was narrated in the prose—is called a *campū*. This is one of the few passages in the Canon where this style is used, three others being the beginning of the story of the Kassapa brothers ([Mv 1:15](#)), the Kuṇāla Jātaka (J 5:416–456), and [Ud 8:5](#), which also narrates these events, minus the Buddha’s conversation with Pukkusa Mallaputta. The fact that this is the only section of this sutta using this style suggests that perhaps the version of the narrative given in [Ud 8:5](#) was composed first as a separate piece and then later incorporated into this sutta.

203. Ven. Ānanda’s description of the water is alliterative in the Pāli: *sātodakā sītodakā setodakā*.

204. The narrative in [Ud 8:5](#) skips from this poem to the point in the narrative where the Buddha goes to the Kakudha River, skipping over the story of Pukkusa Mallaputta.

205. Āḷāra Kālāma was the teacher from whom the Buddha, before his awakening, learned how to attain the dimension of nothingness, one of the formless attainments. See [MN 26](#). The Vibhaṅga to Pārājika 4 indicates that the purity of one’s mastery of any of these formless attainments can be measured by the extent to which one does not hear sounds while in that attainment. The same passage also indicates that if one does hear sounds, that does not mean that one has not achieved that attainment, simply that one’s

mastery of the attainment is not entirely pure. It further indicates that “purity” here does not mean purity from defilements. After all, in the Vibhaṅga to Pārājika 4, Ven. Mahā Moggallāna’s attainment of the formless states is said to be impure, and yet he is an arahant. “Purity” refers instead to the strength of one’s concentration.

206. *Āyasmant*: This is a term of respect usually reserved for senior monks. The Buddha’s use of it here was probably meant to emphasize the point that Cunda’s gift of the Buddha’s last meal should be treated as a very honorable thing.

207. Up to this point in the sutta, the standard phrase describing the Buddha’s act of lying down to rest ends with the phrase, “attending to the perception [mental note] of getting up.” Here, however, the Buddha is lying down for the last time and will pass away in this posture, so he makes no mental note to get up.

208. [SN 12:67](#) states: “If a monk practices for the sake of disenchantment, dispassion, & cessation with regard to aging-&-death... birth... becoming... clinging/sustenance... craving... feeling... contact... the six sense media... name-&-form... consciousness... fabrications... ignorance, he deserves to be called a monk who practices the Dhamma in accordance with the Dhamma.” [SN 22:39](#) states: “For a monk practicing the Dhamma in accordance with the Dhamma, what accords with the Dhamma is this: that he keep cultivating disenchantment with regard to form... feeling... perception... fabrications... consciousness.” [SN 22:40–41](#) add that this is to be done by remaining focused on stress, inconstancy, and not-self with regard to these five aggregates.

209. From Vedic times, it has been considered auspicious in India to gaze on a holy person or heavenly being, and to be gazed on by such a being as well. Here the fact that heavenly beings themselves want to gaze on the Buddha indicates the high regard they have for him (this is also the motive for their Great Convocation in [DN 20](#)); the phrase later in this paragraph, “the One with Eyes,” indicates that they also regarded his gaze as highly auspicious for them. Later passages in this discourse indicate that human beings have similar feelings about the auspiciousness of the Buddha’s gaze and the Buddha as an object of one’s own gaze. A great deal of the later history of Buddhism in India

—including devotional practice, Buddhology, meditation practice, and even the architecture of monasteries—grew out of the continuing desire to have a vision of the Buddha and to be gazed on by the Buddha, even after his *Parinibbāna*.

It's sometimes assumed, based on a passage in [SN 22:87](#), that the Pāli Canon is uniformly negative toward this aspect of Buddhist tradition. There, Ven. Vakkali, who is ill, states that “For a long time have I wanted to come & see the Blessed One, but I haven’t had the bodily strength to do so,” and the Buddha comforts him, “Enough, Vakkali. Why do you want to see this filthy body? Whoever sees the Dhamma sees me; whoever sees me sees the Dhamma.” It should be noted, however, that the Buddha’s treatment of this topic is sensitive to the context. In [SN 22:87](#), he is talking to a monk who (1) is too sick to come see the Buddha; and (2) is on the verge of arahantship. Here in [DN 16](#), however, the Buddha dismisses Ven. Upavāṇa so as to honor the desire of the devas who want to see him in his last hour, and he sends Ven. Ānanda into Kusinārā to inform the lay people there so that they too will be able to see him in his last hour. His motive here may be similar to that given for encouraging the building of a burial mound dedicated to him: Seeing him will help human beings and devas to brighten their minds, and that will be for their long-term welfare & happiness. So the attitudes expressed on this topic in the Pāli Canon, when taken in their entirety, are more complex than is generally recognized.

210. Reading *chinna-pada* with the Thai edition.

211. A righteous king who has, through the Dhamma, conquered the four corners of the earth. For the monarch’s seven treasures, see [note 23](#).

212. The desire to have one’s name announced to a holy person appears to have been a part of pre-Buddhist devotional practice in India. This passage, along with others in the Canon (see, for example, MN 89, [Chapter 14](#)), indicates that it was quickly adopted into Buddhist devotional practice as well. It lived on in later Buddhist practice in the custom of having the donor’s name inscribed in bas-reliefs and other offerings placed near or on a stupa, even in locations where the name would not be visible to human eyes.

213. The Commentary notes that Subhadda makes this statement based on non-Buddhist practices he knew from his previous sectarian affiliation.

214. [See Cv 11](#), in [Chapter 16](#).

215. A monk named Channa is depicted at several spots in the Vinaya as despising all other monks on the grounds that “The Buddha is mine, the Dhamma is mine, it was by my young master that the Dhamma was realized” ([Sg 12](#)). This would fit in with the post-canonical tradition identifying Channa as the horseman who accompanied the young Prince Siddhartha on the night of the latter’s Great Renunciation. Two rules in the Vinaya—[Sg 12](#) and [Pc 12](#)—depict him as devious & impossible to admonish. [Cv 11](#), below, tells of his reaction to the brahmā-punishment, and of the ultimately good effect it had on him. [SN 22:90](#) tells a more detailed version of the same story.

216. Ven. Ānanda, assuming that the Buddha has passed away, addresses Ven. Anuruddha—his senior—as “venerable sir,” in line with the Buddha’s instructions.

217. This is one of the earthquakes forecast earlier in the sutta.

218. See [AN 5:49](#) and [AN 5:57](#).

219. This apparently refers to the devas who are non-returners, living in the Pure Abodes.

220. A different Subhadda from the Buddha’s last direct-witness disciple.

221. See [Cv 11](#).

222. The commentary notes that Ven. Mahā Kassapa entered the fourth jhāna, which he used as the basis for a feat of supranormal power so that the Buddha’s feet would appear out of their extensive wrappings.

223. Up to this point in the narrative, the Buddha’s body is called a *sarīra* (singular). Here the noun becomes plural—with the meaning of “relics”—and

remains plural for the remainder of the narrative.

224. According to the Commentary, this closing poem was added to the sutta by elder monks in Sri Lanka. The Thai, Sri Lankan, and Burmese editions end the sutta with a further, fairly anticlimactic, verse that appears to be an even later composition:

Altogether forty teeth,
and all the head-hairs & body-hairs
were taken by the devas
one after another
around the universe.

225. A *pārājika* offense is the most serious category of offense in the Vinaya. A monk who commits one is automatically no longer a monk and cannot reordain in this lifetime. A *saṅghādisesa* offense is one that requires an offender to undergo a penance of six days. A *nissaggiya pācittiya* offense requires an offender to forfeit an item that he obtained improperly and to confess the offense. The remaining categories listed here are offenses that entail confession.

226. This is the same principle that the Buddha enunciated in [NP 15](#), discussed above in [Chapter 5](#). There is the possibility that the Buddha made the offer to let the Saṅgha rescind the lesser and minor training rules, not because he expected that they would do so, but because he wanted to provide them with the opportunity to show their loyalty to him by voluntarily holding to a principle that he had emphasized again and again while he was alive.

227. The monks here are not accusing Ven. Ānanda of having committed offenses against the Vinaya, as none of the actions they cite break any of the rules, and they themselves do not use the word, “offense.” They are simply accusing him of wrongdoings in his conduct with regard to the Buddha. (In [DN 16](#), the Buddha himself said that Ānanda’s neglect to invite him to stay for an eon was an instance of wrongdoing.) Perhaps they are testing him to see if he has any remaining pride around the fact that he was so close to the Buddha

and was so highly praised, both by the Buddha and by others, for the way in which he fulfilled his role as the Buddha's attendant.

228. This incident shows how accurate accounts of the Buddha's teachings not standardized by the First Council may have eventually made their way into the Canon. In keeping with the Great Standards laid down in [DN 16](#), communities of reciters would accept additional accounts remembered by Ven. Purāṇa and others like him, as long as they were consistent with what was already accepted as Dhamma and Vinaya.

229. Gold, of course, doesn't go out of existence simply because there is counterfeit gold. What happens is that it goes out of use: People find that counterfeit gold is easier to use. An added implication of this statement may be that as long as there is only genuine gold, people will not doubt its authenticity. When there is both genuine and counterfeit gold, doubts will arise as to what is genuine—all gold becomes doubtful—and people will end up using whichever is easier or more to their liking.

230. The point here is that the True Dhamma will not disappear through natural disasters, such as landslides, floods, fires, or windstorms. For an account of how people in the time of the Buddha understood natural events in terms of the four properties, see [MN 28](#).

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