

## *Cross-questioning: I*

The Buddha cited cross-questioning (*paṭipucchā*) as a distinctive feature of his general teaching method [§73], noting that it's an effective means for clarifying obscure points and resolving doubts. In this way it helps realize one of the rewards of listening to the Dhamma [§8]: clarifying what is not yet clear. By observing the Buddha's use of this particular strategy in action, we can see why this is so.

To begin with, an interpersonal dynamic in which the teacher is open to cross-questioning from the student, and the student from the teacher, provides an atmosphere conducive for establishing that the topics under discussion are reasonable and responsive to the listeners' needs. Even though the Buddha, in opening himself to questions, was also opening himself to arguments and debates, he saw that if the student was intent on learning, even a contentious exchange could lead to a positive result. At times he would be willing to debate an insincere opponent if those listening to the debate were intent on learning the truth [§126], for he saw that the cross-questioning within the debate would clarify the truth in their minds.

In fact, it's possible to regard cross-questioning as the most inter-subjective mode of teaching. A teacher not open to cross-questioning is guilty of objectifying himself and his audience. On the one hand, the way he presents his teaching as a finished product stands on the foundation of objectification-classifications, "I am the thinker," unwilling to open his thought to the probing of others. On the other hand, he is treating his listeners as objects, for he shows no concern for whether they will understand or benefit from the beauty or logic of his thought. However, a teacher who welcomes cross-questioning is concerned less with his status as a teacher and more with communicating something clear and useful. In honoring his listeners' freedom to question, he opens the discussion to their subjective experience of doubt and their desire for knowledge. Thus a sincere exchange of questions—particularly around the primary common-ground problem of subjective experience, how to gain release from suffering and stress—is the pedagogical equivalent of thought prior to objectification. The Buddha rejected objectification not only as a style of thinking but also as a style of teaching: another way in which his teaching style was an expression of his compassion.

Furthermore, as a compassionate and responsible teacher, the Buddha was not content simply to give the right answer to a question. He also wanted to ensure that his listeners understood the answer and had the right mental context for putting it to use. Thus his most distinctive form of cross-questioning was to cite activities familiar to them and—from his own experience—similar to the context in which the teaching was to be used. Then he would cross-question them about those activities to ensure that they too saw the parallel in a way that would help them understand and apply the teaching effectively.

At the same time, by showing his listeners how cross-questioning was done, he was giving them an example of how to pursue the process of clarification within their own minds. Having seen the value of self cross-examination—an internal form of cross-questioning—in his own search for awakening, he wanted to expose his listeners to the same process, showing them how it could be done skillfully, in hopes that they would subject themselves to the same process and receive similar results.

An important part of this lesson included knowing which types of cross-

questioning to focus on, and which ones to put aside. Even though the Buddha was generally open to cross-questioning from his listeners, the fact that he was offering his teaching as a gift meant that he held the right to maintain firm control over what he would and wouldn't give. This meant exercising control over two things: the questions he would and wouldn't answer, and the questioners he would and wouldn't respond to. As we will see in Chapters Seven and Eight, he would put aside any questions whose answer would harm himself or others, or would distract attention from the issue at hand: how to understand and put an end to suffering and stress. As we will see later in this chapter, he refused to submit to cross-questioning from listeners whose motives in cross-questioning were less than sincere. Thus, even though the Buddha taught by example that it was, in general, a good principle to be open to cross-questioning, he also taught by example that cross-questioning, in order to stay beneficial, had to stay focused within appropriate limits.

In Chapter One we noted the nine different situations to which the Canon applies the term "cross-questioning." Although only four of the situations involve cross-questioning as a response to a question, all nine are united by two common threads: A person should take responsibility for his or her actions or statements; and truth is to be found and clarified by a mutual willingness to cross-question and be cross-questioned. Thus, to understand what the Buddha intended when applying this strategy to questions addressed to him, it is useful to recapitulate all nine. They are:

1) A monk is accused of an offense that he denies committing. His fellow monks cross-question him to see if he can give a coherent and believable account of his behavior.

2) A monk, even after being reprovved by his fellow monks, maintains a position in the Buddha's presence that is clearly pernicious. After the Buddha ascertains that the monk will not abandon the pernicious view, he rebukes the monk and then turns to the other monks to cross-question them as to the relevant right view. This is to ensure that none of them pick up the first monk's errant position.

3) The Buddha or one of his disciples makes a statement that a listener finds unclear. The listener asks him to explain what the statement means and how it fits in with his other statements.

4) A person asks a question unclear in its wording or underlying motive. The Buddha cross-questions him to clarify the original question.

5) A person asks for a definition of a term without realizing that he has enough knowledge to provide at least part of the definition himself. The Buddha responds by cross-questioning the person in such a way that the person ends up contributing to the answer of his own question.

6) A person asks a question in a way indicating that he may not understand the response the Buddha will give—either the content of the response or the strategy with which it is given. The Buddha then draws an example, usually an activity, familiar to the person and questions him on it. From the person's replies, the Buddha shows how the proper response to the original question can be understood in the same frame as the person's understanding of the familiar activity.

7) A person presents an argument against the Buddha's teaching. The Buddha cites a hypothetical example that disproves the person's position and then questions him on it. From the person's answers, the Buddha shows how the person has contradicted himself and so disproven his own argument.

8) The Buddha encourages his listeners to cross-question themselves about their actions or traits present in their minds.

9) The Buddha cross-questions his listeners as to phenomena they are experiencing in the present moment.

The first of these situations is not, strictly speaking, a teaching situation, but the Buddha's method for handling it throws light on the responsibilities assumed in cross-questioning in all contexts. Thus we will examine below how accusations are handled in the monastic Saṅgha, to see what those responsibilities are. The remaining situations can be roughly divided into three categories: the student questions the teacher's statement (situation three); the teacher questions the student's statement or question (situations two, four, five, six, and seven); and the teacher encourages the student to question him/herself (situations eight and nine).

These last two situations are particularly effective in leading to awakening, and, as we will see, they act as the culmination of the process of cross-questioning applied in other situations. Thus, to focus special attention on them, we will devote a separate chapter to them, following this one. Although in this chapter we will have occasion to mention these two situations, our primary focus here is on how the Buddha employs cross-questioning in the first seven.

1) *Accusations*. When Monk A suspects Monk B of misbehavior and wants to bring up the issue with him, he first has to ask B's permission to discuss the issue. If B thinks that A is simply trying to create trouble with abusive or unprincipled cross-questioning, he is free to deny permission. However, he himself should be sure of his own motives in denying permission, for if A feels that B is hiding something, he can gain support from his fellow monks to have the issue brought up in the midst of the Saṅgha. If they are convinced of A's sincerity, they will pressure B to give leave for A to make his accusation. Then they will cross-examine B—the word for cross-examination, *paṭipucchā*, is the same as for cross-questioning—until they can reach a unanimous decision as to whether B is guilty as charged.

The monk bringing the accusation is directed to establish five qualities in himself while he speaks: compassion, seeking the other's benefit, sympathy, removal of offenses, and esteem for the Vinaya (Cv.IX.5.5-6). The first four of these qualities mean that he is not to speak out of malice or the simple desire to shame the accused; the fourth and fifth mean that if he feels an offense has been committed, he is not to back off his accusation simply out of pity for the accused over the hardships the latter may have to undergo in the course of the cross-examination or the penalty for the offense. The fact that these two principles overlap at the fourth quality—seeking the removal of offenses—shows that compassion and strict adherence to rules are not incompatible principles. In fact, they are mutually reinforcing. If a monk is to succeed in his practice, he must be scrupulous in his behavior and take responsibility for his errors. Thus any skillful effort to get him to behave in a responsible manner is for his long-term benefit.

It's important to note that these procedures and standards for handling a cross-examination contain a strong ethical element in being fair to the accused. The fact that the latter may have acted unethically in committing an offense does not give his accusers the right to handle the cross-examination in an unfair or unethical way, for that would undercut their ability to arrive at the truth. The accused could later complain of their behavior, and that would call into question the truth of their verdict.

As for the accused monk, he is directed to establish two qualities in himself while being cross-examined: truth and unprovokability (Cv.IX.5.7). In other words, he is responsible for giving a true account of his actions and for not getting angered when asked probing questions or told that his word is in doubt. Although the monk making the accusation is advised to be compassionate,

examples of cross-examination given in the Vinaya (see, for example, Cv.IV.14.29) show that the accused is to be pressed and questioned quite aggressively until the Saṅgha is convinced of his guilt or innocence, so that if there is an offense, it can be removed and the standards of the Vinaya upheld. Thus the monk being cross-examined must remain patient and calm regardless of how his words are questioned.

These principles parallel those that can be observed in other forms of cross-questioning. Some of these parallels apply across the board, whereas others apply particularly in the context of an argument about the Dhamma. In all cases of cross-questioning, the person being questioned is not to take the questions as an insult, and so should remain unprovokable. He also has the responsibility of being truthful, even if the truthful answer undercuts his earlier position.

In the case of an argument about the Dhamma, the person to be questioned can opt out at the beginning of the argument if he feels that his opponent's motives are suspect. As we will see in the section on arguments, the Buddha had high standards for the type of person he was willing to argue with, and would often refuse to speak with those who did not meet his standards. Although some of these standards were intellectual, others were ethical, focused on the person's willingness to follow fair and truthful methods of argument. Like the process of cross-examining an accused monk, an argument could arrive convincingly at the truth only if both sides conducted it in a fair and ethical way. For this reason, the Buddha would argue with a person only if he trusted two qualities in that person: the desire for truth and the ability to adhere to truthful, ethical modes of discussion. Thus when he *did* engage a person in an argument, it was a sign of respect.

And of compassion: Just as kindness and strict adherence to the Vinaya were seen as necessary and mutually reinforcing motivations for cross-examining an accused monk, kindness and strict adherence to the truth were seen as necessary and mutually reinforcing motivations for engaging in an argument about the Dhamma. The Buddha did not argue simply to score points or to disgrace his opponent, and he discouraged his disciples from engaging in debates simply for the sake of coming out ahead. Instead, his purpose in arguing with his opponents was to establish them in right view so that they could embark on the path to the end of suffering. If at times—as in cross-examinations—this required being aggressive in demolishing his opponents' arguments, that was a sign not of ill will but of the seriousness with which he regarded their error.

Thus the way the Buddha formulated the principles to be observed in a cross-examination following an accusation provides insight into the principles that underlie the practice of cross-questioning in general.

2) *Establishing orthodoxy.* MN 22 [§71] and MN 38 [§72] contain the two cases in the Canon where the Buddha felt the need to cross-question an assembly of monks about his teaching after they had heard an errant monk assert a pernicious form of wrong view in his presence. Here again, the Buddha's treatment of the errant monk might seem harsh, but he was acting out of compassion for the monks in the assembly, in case any of them might be swayed by the errant monk's position. In other words, the Buddha apparently saw the errant monk as a lost cause—for having behaved unethically in continuing to misrepresent the Buddha's teaching to the Buddha's face—but he didn't want this lost cause to cause further losses among the other monks. We have to remember that during the Buddha's lifetime there were no written accounts of his teachings; the monks and nuns all had to rely on their memory of what they had heard directly from him or through word-of-mouth from fellow members of the Saṅgha. Thus the Buddha saw the need to establish orthodoxy whenever a

member of the Saṅgha was found espousing false interpretations of his teaching.

Here again, there is a parallel with the way the Buddha taught the monks to handle accusations. When a monk wants to bring up an accusation in a meeting of the Saṅgha, he is first to ask permission to question a knowledgeable monk in detail about the rules touching on the suspected offense. This questioning serves a dual purpose. It alerts all the monks present to reflect on their own behavior, to see if they have committed any offenses against the rules being explained; if the monk about to be accused is actually guilty of such an offense, he has the opportunity to confess it before the accusation is made, thus saving the Saṅgha from the burden of having to open an investigation. At the same time, the process of questioning the knowledgeable monk provides an opportunity for all the monks to refresh their knowledge of the rules in question, so that if an investigation is opened they are all in a position to make an informed decision on the case.

In the same way, the Buddha's cross-questioning of the assembly of monks allows all the monks to refresh their knowledge of the point in question, and to examine their own views to see if they have misinterpreted what they have previously heard.

3) *Questioning the speaker.* Although the Buddha was a skilled rhetorician, he did not engage in rhetoric for rhetoric's sake. In teaching a path of practice, he meant for his words to be put into practice. And in most cases, this required that their meaning be clear, and their interrelationships precisely delineated. Although the Buddha occasionally spoke in cryptic terms [§47; §123; see also SN 1:1; SN 1:20], his purpose in these instances was frequently to subdue the pride of his listener. If the technique worked, the listener would be ready to listen carefully to his teachings; if not, teaching the person would have been a waste of time in any event. At other times, he might make a cryptic statement to the monks and then enter his dwelling without explaining his words. In cases of this sort, his intention was apparently to give one of his senior disciples the opportunity to show the monks how they should analyze statements of this sort for themselves [§ 50; see also MN 138].

In general, though, the Buddha took pains to explain his terms clearly and to teach in a step-by-step manner so that his listeners could follow what he was saying and see how one step in the practice built on the previous ones. To make doubly sure that his listeners understood, and to show them that he sincerely wanted them to understand, he would invite them to ask questions then and there about what they found unclear [§75]. AN 2:46 [§73] and AN 6:51 [§74] state that this was a general practice not only when the Buddha spoke, but also when the monks discussed the Dhamma among themselves. In MN 94 [§76] and MN 146 [§77], two monks who are giving talks explicitly invite their listeners to question them about anything they, the listeners, don't understand; in MN 94 the listener actually does ask a question. One of the most famous instances, however, in which a listener freely asks questions of a speaker is MN 84 [§100], when King Koravya asks Ven. Raṭṭhapāla about the meaning of the Dhamma summaries that Raṭṭhapāla had learned from the Buddha and that had inspired his ordination.

Although there were occasions—as in MN 140, Ud 1:10, and Ud 5:3—where the Buddha praised specific listeners for not “pestering” him with issues related to the Dhamma, these listeners were so wise that they had no need to ask questions and could attain noble attainments while listening to him speak. The fact that he later praised these listeners to the monks in these terms suggests that he may have wanted the monks to question him only about genuine problems. But—as we noted in the Introduction—the Buddha nevertheless took the

principle of being open to cross-questioning so seriously that his next-to-last instruction to the monks before his passing away was to invite them to cross-question him about any doubts they might have about the Buddha, Dhamma, Saṅgha, the path, or the practice [§82]. To underline the sincerity of the invitation, he stated it three times, and then even gave the opportunity for any monks too shy to speak in front of the whole group to inform their friends of any questions they might have. In other words, even though he was on the verge of death, he did not consider the monks to be “pestering” him if their questions were based on serious doubts. Only after the monks remained silent did he address them with his final words.

In establishing the practice of being open to cross-questioning as a general principle, the Buddha was showing that people speaking the Dhamma should be held responsible for their words. They are not to engage irresponsibly in attractive but vague generalities—“the works of poets, artful in sound, artful in rhetoric, the work of outsiders” [§73]. For, after all, even if such words may be pleasing, they serve no truly compassionate intent. Thus people speaking the Dhamma should be able to explain the meaning of everything they say [§197].

In MN 58 [§93] the Buddha makes the point that he did not spend his time formulating answers for anticipated questions. He knew the Dhamma so well that when asked a question, he could come up with an answer on the spot. However, he also knew that his students might not have such familiarity with the Dhamma and yet might be asked difficult questions. So, as a way of preparing them for this eventuality, he—and Ven. Sāriputta—would warn his students of potential questions they might be asked and of the answers they should give.

The Canon cites two examples in which the Buddha does this, and in both he is preparing his students for faultfinders. In MN 59 [§78], he prepares them for questioners who might spot what they think is an inconsistency in his teaching: How can he describe unbinding as pleasant or happy (*sukha*) when it is devoid of feeling? His answer is that the word *pleasure* is not limited to feelings. In DN 29 [§79] he prepares them for a question directed at one of his claimed skills that, in the eyes of some, might not measure up to the skills claimed by other contemporary teachers. Pūraṇa Kassapa and Nigaṇṭha Nāṭaputta, who taught two different forms of determinism, both claimed to have infinite knowledge of the cosmos, including knowledge of the past and future, which in their view was already predetermined [§156]. The Buddha, however, did not claim that the future was predetermined, and so his knowledge of the future was of a more specific sort. Followers of Pūraṇa Kassapa and Nigaṇṭha Nāṭaputta might cast aspersions on what they could regard as the limited nature of this sort of knowledge, so here the Buddha clarifies what his knowledge of past and future actually are: His knowledge of the past is the ability to recollect any past event that he wants; his knowledge of the future is that this is his last birth; there is no further becoming. Regardless of how unlimited Pūraṇa Kassapa and Nigaṇṭha Nāṭaputta might claim their knowledge of the future to be, they do not have this sort of knowledge of their own future at all.

In a similar passage, Ven. Sāriputta prepares a group of monks for questions they might face concerning the Buddha’s teachings when they go to foreign lands [§80]. In this case, the questions he anticipates are not from faultfinders but from intelligent people with a sincere interest to know: “What does your teacher teach? Why does he teach that?” Ven. Sāriputta’s answers to these questions are of special interest, for they demonstrate what he saw as the best way to frame an introduction to the Buddha’s teachings. In keeping with the fact that the Buddha taught a path, Ven. Sāriputta begins his explanation not with a metaphysical proposition but with a recommended course of action: the subduing of passion

and desire. After stating the benefits that come from this course of action, he then reverts to a more basic pragmatic principle about action as a whole: the desirability of abandoning unskillful qualities and developing skillful ones. The way Ven. Sāriputta handles this question not only prepares the monks for questions they might face, but also shows them the best way to present the Dhamma to intelligent newcomers.

In this way, the Buddha and Ven. Sāriputta prepare the monks for their responsibility of being open to questions as they spread the teaching.

However, it's important to note that in establishing his openness to be questioned, the Buddha is also alerting his listeners that he expects them to be open to questioning as well. This principle applies in two contexts. The first context is contained in the handful of passages where the Buddha approaches sectarians of other schools and questions them about their teachings [§§83-84], or when a follower of those sectarians approaches the Buddha, and the Buddha asks him about what his teachers teach [§85]. In each of these cases, the sectarians espouse doctrines denying the efficacy of action, among them determinism. In response, the Buddha points out that their doctrines, when followed to their logical conclusion, make the idea of a holy life, a path of practice for true happiness, totally meaningless. The follower is swayed by the Buddha's arguments, but there is no indication of whether the sectarians are.

Still, the passages in which the Buddha relates these encounters to his monk followers do serve other purposes. To begin with, the Buddha is showing the monks that they have the right to cross-question members of other sects quite aggressively. He also provides the monks with the tools needed specifically to refute any doctrine denying the efficacy of action. This underscores the importance of action as the focus of the Buddha's categorical teachings. And it's particularly important to note that these encounters establish the point that he did not teach a deterministic view of the workings of kamma, and that his teachings should not be confused with the various forms of determinism current in his day. The effort with which the Buddha emphasized this point—even to the extent of seeking out the determinists to dispute their teachings—calls attention to a fact that has long been misunderstood within the Buddhist tradition over the centuries and is still widely misunderstood to this day: The Buddha was not a determinist, and his teachings on kamma and causality—to be correctly understood—have to be interpreted in a non-deterministic way.

The other context in which the Buddha alerts his listeners that they have to be open to questioning is when they are asking him questions and he announces that he will cross-question them in turn. If they want answers from him, they first have to be willing to give him the answers he wants from them. This establishes the principle that the teaching and the learning of the Dhamma are a cooperative process. The more both sides are open to questioning, the more easily the Dhamma can be learned in a way that is conducive to practice.

With these observations in mind, we can now look at the four situations in which the Buddha cross-questions his questioners.

4) *Clarifying the question.* In cases where a question or the motivation behind it is unclear, the Buddha would cross-question the person asking the question about the meaning of its terms or about his/her motivation for asking it. There are a number of ironies surrounding this type of cross-questioning. To begin with, the Commentary identifies it as the primary use of cross-questioning, whereas in the Canon it's one of the rarest. Among the few examples of this type, two—in DN 9 [§88] and MN 90 [§86]—contain their own ironies.

In DN 9, Poṭṭhapāda the wanderer asks if self is the same as perception, and the Buddha responds first by asking Poṭṭhapāda to define what sort of self he is

referring to. Poṭṭhapāda ends up offering three definitions, and in each case the Buddha shows that self is one thing and perception another. In other words, regardless of how the terms are defined, the answer is the same. Perhaps the Buddha wanted to emphasize this point by offering Poṭṭhapāda the chance to come up with as many different definitions as possible, only to see them all treated in the same way.

In MN 90, King Pasenadi asks the Buddha if there are devas. MN 100 [§87] suggests that this was a trick question in the Buddha's time: If the person answering said Yes, he would be asked to prove his answer and yet be unable to do so. If he said No, he would be denying the contemporary convention whereby kings were called devas, and thus could be accused of showing disrespect for kings. In MN 100, the Buddha gives something of a trick answer to the trick question—recognizing the existence of the convention on the human plane, but not getting into the issue of whether there is a separate plane of earthly or heavenly devas—and the person asking the question is so impressed that he goes for refuge.

Given this background, it's only natural that in MN 90, when King Pasenadi asks if there are devas, the Buddha first questions his motives for doing so. It turns out, however, that Pasenadi—whom the Canon frequently depicts as somewhat scatterbrained—has a totally different question in mind and has simply been sloppy about putting it into words.

Even from just these two examples, though, it's possible to draw four lessons for when this sort of cross-questioning is useful: a) when forcing the questioner to be more precise in defining his terms allows for a more precise answer to the question; b) when it allows for the rhetorical point of showing that, however a particular term is defined, the answer will be the same; c) when one senses a trick question and wants to avoid falling into a trap; and d) when one is dealing with questioners who have trouble articulating their thoughts.

5) *Extracting definitions.* There are three cases where the Buddha, when asked the definition of a term, responds by cross-questioning the questioner in a way that allows the questioner to arrive at the definition based on knowledge he has already acquired: either through personal experience or from having heard the Buddha's teachings [§89-90]. This, however, is not the Buddha's preferred strategy when asked for definitions—in the vast majority of cases he simply gives the definition as requested—and even in cases where he does use it, the process of cross-questioning yields only part of the definition requested. But it's easy to see how this strategy can be effective when the questioner has enough background, for it not only yields the meaning of the term but also shows how the term relates to what the questioner already knows. This strategy is especially effective in §89, for the question relates to how the Dhamma is visible here & now, and so the Buddha's way of responding drives home the point that the questioner has already seen an aspect of the Dhamma here & now.

However, the most interesting variation on this strategy is in AN 3:73 [§91], where Ven. Ānanda is asked a series of questions that are not requests for definitions, and yet his strategy of cross-questioning turns them into a search for definitions that the questioner ends up providing himself.

To understand why Ven. Ānanda does this, we first have to recall one of the essential features of the etiquette of a Dhamma teacher: the Buddha's insistence that Dhamma speakers not harm themselves or others by their speech [§8], which means that they not exalt themselves or disparage others by name. There are examples in the Canon where the Buddha is quite critical of teachers of other schools of thought, but he mentions these teachers by name only when speaking to the monks (AN 3:138, Chapter Seven). When asked point-blank by lay people



or wanderers of other sects whether teachers or members of other sects are awakened, he usually puts the question aside and simply teaches the Dhamma. In one famous instance, however—the discourse to the Kālāmas [§149]—he puts the question aside and then follows it with a series of cross-questions, extracting responses from his listeners based on their experience of what is skillful and not, establishing the principle that teachers are to be evaluated by testing their teachings. We will examine this example again in Chapter Seven.

Here in AN 3:73, however, Ven. Ānanda establishes a similar principle without putting the question aside, but simply by cross-questioning his listener, a student of the fatalist school who was apparently testing Ven. Ānanda's manners. When asked who is teaching rightly, who is practicing rightly, and who is well-gone, Ven. Ānanda avoids the trap of naming names and instead asks the questioner about what, in general terms, right teaching, right practice, and right attainment would be. He gets the questioner to state that those who teach the abandoning of passion, aversion, and delusion teach rightly; those who practice for the abandoning of passion, aversion, and delusion are practicing rightly; and those who have abandoned passion, aversion, and delusion are well-gone. In this way, Ven. Ānanda then notes, the questioner has answered his own question. The result is that the questioner, impressed with Ven. Ānanda's tact, goes for refuge in the Triple Gem.

One of the noteworthy features of this passage is that Ven. Ānanda adopts a strategy used by the Buddha and takes it further than any extant examples we have of the Buddha's own use of it: both in the way in which the cross-questioning yields complete definitions, and in the deft way it avoids a potential trap. We cannot know if the Buddha ever used this strategy with quite this finesse, but the record as we have it in the Canon suggests that this is one instance in which a disciple of the Buddha developed one of the Buddha's response-strategies further than the Teacher did himself.

6) *Exploring hypotheticals.* This is one of the two most frequent ways in which the Buddha cross-questions his questioners. In situations where he senses that they might not understand his answer to their questions, or they have shown confusion about statements he has already made, he prefaces or follows his answers by citing hypothetical cases: either examples of the point he is trying to make or analogies that illuminate it. He then questions his questioners about the details of the hypothetical cases, after which he shows how their knowledge of those cases applies to the points they have trouble understanding. In this way, the questioners become participants in explaining the points in question and resolving their own confusion. At the same time, the Buddha is demonstrating an important pedagogical point: that a convenient way to clarify an issue in the minds of one's listeners is to remind them of a relevant pattern they have already learned and mastered in the past. In the terms of the Buddha's own vocabulary, this is an exercise in strengthening mindfulness—the ability to keep something in mind—combining it with discernment to treat the question at hand.

A short example of this strategy is this:

[Prince Abhaya:] “Venerable sir, 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?”

[The Buddha:] “Very well then, prince, I will cross-question you on this matter. Answer as you see fit. What do you think? Are you skilled in the

parts of a chariot?"

"Yes, venerable sir. I am skilled in the parts of a chariot."

"And what do you think? 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?"

"Venerable sir, 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." —  
MN 58

AN 4:111 [§98] contains a variation on the strategy of cross-questioning hypotheticals, in which the Buddha doesn't wait to be asked a question. He quizzes a horse-trainer about the latter's approach to training horses, and then—when the trainer in turn asks him how he trains his monks—draws on the analogy provided by the trainer's answers to his original questions.

It's easy to see that this strategy would have a doubly positive effect on the questioners. First, they see that they already have a fund of knowledge they can apply to understanding the Dhamma; this gives them confidence that they can learn even more abstruse points. Second, they sense that the Buddha respects their knowledge; this makes them more inclined to view him and his teachings with respect as well. In establishing an atmosphere of mutual respect, the Buddha makes it easier for his listeners to learn with an open, trusting, and receptive state of mind.

MN 97 [§111] constitutes a special case in the use of this particular strategy. In this discourse Ven. Sāriputta is addressing a layperson he has taught in the past. The layperson—Dhanañjāni—having come under the influence of a wife with no faith in the Buddha's teachings, has been gaining his livelihood in a dishonest manner. Ven. Sāriputta asks him about his behavior and then cross-questions him on a series of hypothetical situations as to what will happen at death to people who try to excuse their dishonest behavior, as Dhanañjāni has done, by citing the need to help their family and relatives. Dhanañjāni ends up admitting that his excuses are worthless. What's special about this case is that the hypotheticals draw, not on Dhanañjāni's personal experience, but on the implications of the doctrine of kamma, which Ven. Sāriputta has apparently taught Dhanañjāni in the past. In this case, instead of clarifying new points of the Dhamma, the cross-questioning simply serves to remind Dhanañjāni of points he already knows. Still, this case has two important points in common with other uses of this strategy. The first is that it clarifies an important point by reminding the listener of something the listener already knows. This shows the importance of the act of reminding in the process of clarification. The second point is that the discussion is conducted in an atmosphere of mutual trust, respect, and compassion. This is what inclines Dhanañjāni to accept the fairly harsh points that Ven. Sāriputta wants to convey.

In addition to explaining categorical answers, the Buddha also uses the strategy of exploring hypotheticals to explain why he is using a particular strategy in responding to a question. We have already seen three instances in

which he uses this form of cross-questioning to show why he is giving an analytical answer to a question [§§68-69, §103]. The most famous instance in which he uses this strategy to explain why he is putting a question aside is MN 72 [§190], a passage we will discuss in Chapter Eight.

Two points in particular stand out in the Buddha's strategy of exploring hypotheticals through cross-questioning. One is that the analogies he draws deal primarily with skills and activities that the listeners have mastered. This point resonates with the fact that his own teaching deals primarily with the mastery of skills, and adds clarity and nuance to his primary categorical teaching, the distinction between what is skillful and not. Because skills require strategies—sometimes paradoxical, and always sensitive to context—the Buddha's frequent reference to skills in this context emphasizes the need to think strategically, alert to paradox and context, when trying to comprehend and follow the path.

The second point is that the Buddha often uses this strategy with people of rank: kings, princes, generals, brahmans, and village headmen. Sensitive to their position in society, they would be pleased that a person of the Buddha's stature would recognize their knowledge and skills, and would trust them—with a little encouragement—to answer their own questions and resolve their own confusion.

The fact that the Buddha would sometimes use this strategy specifically to appeal to the vanity of a high-ranking visitor is shown by comparing §104 with §105. In both cases, the same person, General Siha—is asking the same question, concerning the rewards of generosity in the present life. In the first case, the Buddha simply gives a categorical answer to the question; in the second, he cross-questions Siha about Siha's personal experience with the issue, giving Siha the opportunity to describe the rewards he has seen from his own generosity. The fact that the Buddha in the first instance doesn't resort to cross-questioning shows that the question doesn't inherently demand a cross-questioning response. The fact that Siha in the second instance explicitly takes the opportunity to declare that he is a person of generosity shows that he is not averse to self-flattery—a fact that the Buddha probably sensed when choosing to respond to the question in the way he did.

The Buddha's ability to appeal to his listeners' vanity in this way is a mark of his rhetorical skill. He himself is not reduced to being a sycophant; the sincerity of the implied compliment is much more believable than direct flattery, for it demonstrates trust and respect in action; and—by illustrating his point with analogies—he is giving a valuable lesson in how to draw on one's previous knowledge of skills in comprehending the skills needed for the path. In this way he shows his proud listeners that their knowledge and skills are a more appropriate reason for pride than is their rank.

7) *Engaging in debate*. This, the other of the two most frequent ways in which the Buddha cross-questions his questioners, is virtually identical with the preceding strategy. The primary difference is that the questioners are not expressing confusion; instead, they are arguing with a statement the Buddha has made. As we will see, though, the Buddha treats those who argue with him primarily as if they are simply confused. In this case, as in the preceding one, the Buddha responds by citing hypothetical cases: examples that refute the point the questioners are trying to make, or analogies indicating why it is wrong. Then he questions them about the details of the hypothetical cases, after which he shows how their answers to his questions refute their position. In some cases—as in the following example—he doesn't even have to make the connection explicit. The questioner realizes that the cross-question has already defeated him.

[Saccaka Aggivessana:] “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 of Kosala or King Ajātasattu Vedehiputta of Magadha—wield the power in his own domain to execute those who deserve execution, to fine those who deserve to be fined, and to banish those who deserve to be banished?”

“Yes, Master Gotama, he would... Even these oligarchic groups, such as the Vajjians & Mallans, wield the power in their own domains to execute those who deserve execution, to fine those who deserve to be fined, and to banish those who deserve to be banished, to say nothing of a consecrated, noble-warrior king such as King Pasenadi of Kosala, or King Ajātasattu Vedehiputta of Magadha. 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. — *MN 35*

There are two further differences between the Buddha’s use of this strategy and of the preceding one. The first is that, whereas in the preceding strategy he uses analogies proportionately more than examples, here the proportions are reversed (the above passage being one of his rare uses of analogy in this context). The reason is not hard to see: A person set on debate might easily deny an analogy’s relevance to the point in question, whereas it’s harder to deny that an example doesn’t fall under the general point being made. Thus the Buddha, when engaged in an argument, would use analogies only when they were obviously relevant, and examples to make the majority of his points.

The second difference is the obvious one that, whereas the preceding strategy can feed the pride of the questioner, this strategy can severely wound it, for in responding to the Buddha’s cross-questioning the questioner has become a party to the refutation of his own argument. And he has done a thorough job of refutation. Having given, in response to the Buddha’s cross-questioning, answers that support the Buddha’s position, he cannot turn around and deny what he has just said. In effect, he has done the Buddha’s work so thoroughly that there is little left for the Buddha to say. Many are the cases where, on being defeated by the Buddha’s cross-questioning in front of an audience, the questioner is left “silent, abashed, his shoulders drooping, his head down, brooding, at a loss for words.”

This raises two points. The first is that, for this strategy to work, the questioner must be truthful in his responses to the Buddha’s cross-questioning. This means that the Buddha would have to be selective in choosing whom to debate. The second is that, given the Buddha’s avowed principles in teaching—that he would speak only what is true, beneficial, and timely—he must have seen some benefit in refuting his opponents so thoroughly. And with these two points we come to the heart of the Buddha’s approach to debate in general. For him it was a mark of his respect that he would be willing to debate a listener; and he saw the defeat of his opponent’s wrong views as an act of compassion.

Given the way debates are usually conducted, especially in modern society, it seems hard to reconcile these two principles. We see debaters showing extreme disrespect for their opponents, and so it seems inevitable that debate must involve disdain. To avoid the obvious dangers of this lack of civility, we see other groups maintaining that the compassionate way to live together is to leave each

person to his or her own opinions, or to celebrate the fact that our views are diverse.

The Buddha's approach, however, was very different. On the one hand, he was selective in taking on an opponent in debate. He would not engage in debates designed simply for the sport of trying to defeat an opponent. Sn 4:8 [§120] and MN 18 [§123] are examples in which he declines to get involved in debates of this sort. In the first case he states his reasons for not participating; in the second, he stymies a would-be debater with a statement that leaves no room for argument. For him, a debate was worthwhile only if aimed at establishing the truth.

To further this end, the Buddha would sometimes explicitly set the conditions for a debate when faced with argumentative followers of other beliefs:

"If, householder, you will confer taking a stand on the truth, we might have some discussion here." — MN 56

"Vappa, if you will allow of me what should be allowed, protest what should be protested, and further cross-question me directly then & there on the meaning of any statement of mine that you don't understand—'How is this, lord? What is the meaning of this?'—then we could have a discussion here." — AN 4:195

In other words, debates should be conducted in a way that stands by the truth and recognizes established standards for what is and is not a valid argument. At the same time, the participants—rather than attacking or ridiculing any statement they don't understand—should make every effort to get at the meaning of what their opponents are saying.

One of the implications of "standing by the truth" is that arguments be internally consistent—a point reflected in the admonition the Buddha gives to any debater whose statements contradict one another:

"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 taking a stand on the truth; let us have some discussion here.'" — MN 56

Because internal consistency is also an established standard for a valid argument, the Buddha apparently saw legitimate forms of debate not as mere conventions but as implicit expressions of the nature of the truth.

In addition to being selective in the format of the debate, the Buddha was also selective in the type of person he was willing to talk to. MN 80 [§117] states the basic qualities he was looking for in a student—being truthful and observant—and AN 3:68 [§118] fleshes out these qualities by describing in more detail the sort of person fit to talk to or not.

The first two sets of qualities pertains to the person's intellectual capabilities:

"If a person, when asked a question, doesn't give a categorical answer to a question deserving a categorical answer, doesn't give an analytical answer to a question deserving an analytical answer, doesn't cross-question a question deserving cross-questioning, doesn't put aside a question deserving to be put aside, then—that being the case—he is a person unfit to talk with. But if a person, when asked a question, gives a categorical answer to a question deserving a categorical answer, gives an analytical answer to a question deserving an analytical answer, cross-questions a question deserving cross-questioning, and puts aside a question deserving to be put aside, then—that being the case—he is a

person fit to talk with....

“If a person, when asked a question, doesn’t stand by what is possible and impossible, doesn’t stand by agreed-upon assumptions, doesn’t stand by teachings known to be true, doesn’t stand by standard procedure, then—that being the case—he is a person unfit to talk with. But if a person, when asked a question, stands by what is possible and impossible, stands by agreed-upon assumptions, stands by teachings known to be true, stands by standard procedure, then—that being the case—he is a person fit to talk with....

The next two sets of qualities, however, deal with the extent to which the person conducts an argument in an ethical manner:

“If a person, when asked a question, wanders from one thing to another, pulls the discussion off the topic, shows anger & aversion and sulks, then—that being the case—he is a person unfit to talk with. But if a person, when asked a question, doesn’t wander from one thing to another, doesn’t pull the discussion off the topic, doesn’t show anger or aversion or sulk, then—that being the case—he is a person fit to talk with....

“If a person, when asked a question, puts down [the questioner], crushes him, ridicules him, grasps at his little mistakes, then—that being the case—he is a person unfit to talk with. But if a person, when asked a question, doesn’t put down [the questioner], doesn’t crush him, doesn’t ridicule him, doesn’t grasp at his little mistakes, then—that being the case—he is a person fit to talk with.” — AN 3:68

In short, the Buddha would engage a person in conversation and debate only if he felt that the person was competent and truthful, and would behave in a fair and civil manner: the sort of person who would engage in debate not simply to win a point, but to find the truth. In this way, the type of person the Buddha would debate with was intimately connected to the form of debate in which he was willing to engage. On one level, this point is obvious enough—anyone would prefer to debate with a person whose way of debating is congenial—but the Buddha is not dealing simply with preferences here. He is dealing with principles. The ability to follow the proper form of the debate as he defines it is not simply a matter of the intellect. It reflects the character of the debater as well: his fairness, his honesty, his ethical standards. This means that the pursuit of truth requires not only a sharp intellect but also personal integrity. This may be one of the reasons why, as we noted above, the Buddha saw that standard procedure in the conduct of a debate is intimately related to the nature of truth: Because truth is both a matter of factual accuracy and moral rectitude, only a person who is true in his or her way of seeking the truth will be able to find it.

From these considerations we can conclude that when the Buddha engages a person in a debate, it’s a sign that he respects that person’s motives and morals. Even in the case of Saccaka [§126], who tries to snare the Buddha with a variety of cheap debater’s tricks—such as appealing to the prejudices of the audience he has brought along—we find that by the end of their encounters, recorded in MN 35, Saccaka displays enough truthfulness to show that he has benefited from their debates.

And that is the Buddha’s intention in every debate: to benefit his opponent. For him, it is not an act of compassion simply to leave a person to his or her views, for those views can easily be wrong, leading that person to act in ways that produce many lifetimes of suffering. On the surface, the Buddha’s sharp insistence on right and wrong view here might seem surprising. After all, view-

clinging is one of the forms of clinging he abandoned at awakening. However, this does not mean that he lost his sense of right and wrong. As he points out in Sn 4:9 [§47], the awakened state is not defined in terms of view, but it cannot be attained without right view. The Buddha may no longer need right view for his own sake, but he sees that other people need to develop it if they are to reach full awakening. Having been to the top of the mountain, he is in a position to see that only one path leads there.

This is why the factors of the noble eightfold path are all termed *right*, and anything deviating from them *wrong*. As he states in Sn 4:12 [§48], “the truth is one; there is no second.” Even a stream-winner—who has had only a first glimpse of the deathless—is in a position to see that no path aside from the noble eightfold path leads to the deathless [§144]. Any view that deviates from right view is a wrong view that strays from the path. As §67 shows, acting on wrong view is like trying to get milk from a cow by twisting her horn: In addition to not getting any milk, you wear yourself out and torment the cow.

Thus the Buddha, when necessary, sees it as an act of respect and compassion to argue aggressively with anyone who is desirous of the truth but holds to wrong view. The fact that he uses cross-questioning—a means of clarification—as his primary mode of debate shows that he regards debate as a means of instruction: Once he can get the opponent to see the facts clearly in the right perspective, he has accomplished his immediate aim. And in keeping with the fact that instruction is a collaborative effort, involving the kamma of both sides, the collaboration of cross-questioning is an ideal strategy to drive his points home.

Given this understanding, it is easy to see that even when the Buddha is aggressive in his cross-questioning—and he can at times be extremely aggressive, even to the point of going *ad hominem* [§125; see also MN 14]—it is a sign, not of ill will, but of the sincerity of his concern for the other person’s well-being.

Here again we can see the parallels between the way the Buddha handles arguments and the way he instructs his monks to handle the cross-examination of a monk accused of having committed an offense. In both cases, the process must be conducted with mutual respect, compassion, and a clear sense of right and wrong. Just as the accused has the right not to give leave to accusers whose motives he suspects, the Buddha holds the right not to engage in an argument with a person who is not aiming at the truth and who will not conduct the argument in a fair way. Just as the accusers must keep the well-being of the accused foremost in mind so as to release him from his offense, the Buddha cross-questions his opponents for the compassionate purpose of clearing up their misunderstanding and establishing them in right view. And just as the accusers, motivated by their esteem for the Vinaya, can cross-question the accused in an aggressive manner, the Buddha can be aggressive in rooting out wrong view because, knowing the true value of the Dhamma (SN 5:2), he knows that any truthful questioner would benefit from developing the same appreciation.

These, then, are the first seven situations in which the Buddha would apply the approach of cross-questioning. As we will see in the next chapter, these seven types of cross-questioning reach their culmination in the remaining two, but before we explore how that happens, it would be useful to stop and take stock of the situations we have already covered. One way to do this is to compare the Buddha’s use of cross-questioning in these situations with the way Socrates is portrayed as using cross-questioning in Plato’s dialogues. It has often been said that the Buddha makes frequent use of the Socratic method, so it’s instructive to see exactly how far this is true.

The parallels between the two teachers are obvious. Comparing the Buddha's teachings with what we find, for example, in the *Protagoras*, we can see that both teachers express a dislike of empty bombast [§73], and both feel that learning is best fostered in an atmosphere where people are free to question one another. Both state that the back-and-forth of a dialogue is most effective when conducted in an atmosphere of mutual good will. Just as the Buddha would regard cross-questioning as a compassionate activity, leading to the true happiness of the questioner, Socrates in the *Symposium* states that philosophical dialectic—the process of talking things through together—is an expression of the highest form of love in that it leads eventually to the vision of absolute truths.

However, the two teachers have very different ideas of how cross-questioning works. In the *Theaetetus*, Socrates compares himself to a midwife, helping his interlocutors give birth to definitions that he then tests to see how viable they are. But in line with his belief in the transmigration of souls, he holds that the birth of a true idea is actually its rebirth. In the *Meno*, he asks a slave a series of leading questions about how to find a square with double the area of a given square. After a number of false starts, the slave—who has no background whatsoever in geometry—arrives at the correct answer. Socrates then argues that this knowledge must have come from his knowledge of true principles gained before birth.

The Buddha, however, even though he teaches rebirth, does not see the process of cross-questioning as operating in this way at all. He questions his listeners as to knowledge they have gained from practical experience in this life. Even when extracting definitions from his listeners, he draws solely on information or experiences in the immediate present.

A second major difference between the two teachers is in how they characterize the good will that provides the ideal atmosphere for discovering the truth. In Socrates' eyes, this good will starts with carnal love and attraction, whereas for the Buddha good will starts with the realization that all beings desire happiness and freedom from suffering, and he allows no role for carnal love in the mutual pursuit of truth at all.

These differences in how the process of cross-questioning is understood to work are reflected in how the two teachers actually use the strategy. Throughout the Platonic dialogues, Socrates makes most frequent use of the strategy of extracting definitions from his listeners, whereas the Buddha in the Pali Canon rarely employs that strategy, and—even when he does employ it—doesn't make it carry the full burden of extracting extended definitions from his listeners in the way that Socrates does. Instead, the Buddha makes frequent use of the strategy of exploring hypotheticals—analogies and examples, usually based on actions and skills—to aid in understanding his points. This difference reflects the deeper difference we noted between these two in Chapter Three: that Socrates sees dialectic as a way of constructing, through clear definitions connected through reason, an intellectual grasp of reality as a whole; whereas the Buddha sees the strategy of cross-questioning hypotheticals as a way of clarifying the path of skills needed to achieve the goal of unbinding.

A second difference in practice is that, at crucial junctures in dialogues such as the *Symposium* and the *Republic*, Socrates abandons the dialectical strategy of cross-questioning to make assertions concerning issues that the Buddha would have classified under the categories of objectification, such as the existence or non-existence of the soul and whether it can be identified with the body. In these passages, Socrates bases his remarks on myth and visionary experiences, a mode of presentation that precludes cross-questioning. As we noted above, this sort of presentation is the pedagogical equivalent of objectification. In contrast, the Buddha almost always avoids the categories of objectification; even when he



does use them he remains open to cross-questioning, keeping the discussion in the pedagogical mode appropriate to pre-objectified thought.

A third difference in practice is that Socrates' strategy of cross-questioning often ends up with an inconclusive result: Many ideas are tested and found wanting—to use the midwife analogy, the children produced are not viable and so are allowed to die—and yet they are not replaced with any useful conclusions. The *Meno*, for instance, starts with Meno asking Socrates if goodness can be taught. Socrates then gets Meno to provide a definition of goodness, only to reject every definition he can induce Meno to supply. The dialogue ends somewhat uselessly, with their agreeing that goodness, whatever it might be, is a gift of the gods.

Thus the process of the Socratic dialogue is often less about reaching a goal than about the process itself, the happiness to be found in clarifying one's ideas and approaching—if never quite reaching in this lifetime—an intellectual grasp of pure abstractions. In the Buddha's hands, however, the process of cross-questioning has a clear goal—awakening—attainable in this life, and the discourses show that in many cases the arguments and analogies explored through cross-questioning either lead the listeners there immediately, inspire them to practice with ardency and resolution until they soon achieve awakening, or encourage them to take refuge as a first step in that direction.

The Buddha's pragmatic emphasis is further illustrated by the cluster of topics he treats through cross-questioning: how to understand the workings of kamma, how to understand pleasure and pain, how important caste is in comparison to action, whether the life gone forth can benefit as many people as the practice of sacrifice, what his qualifications for teaching are, and why he teaches the way he does. And actually, all six of these topics are permutations of one: kamma. Pleasure and pain are best understood in terms of the actions that lead to them; people are to be judged by their actions rather than their caste; the life gone forth enables one to find and teach to numerous beings the path of action leading to the end of suffering, something no sacrifice can do; the Buddha is qualified to teach because of the skillful way he has mastered the principles of cause and effect in training his mind; and the way he teaches—and in particular, his use of cross-questioning itself—is a primary example of how the kamma of collaborative effort works.

In this way we can see again that *how* the Buddha teaches is intimately connected to *what* he teaches. Sensitive to the role that kamma plays on the path to awakening, he uses the kamma of cross-questioning in a way that sensitizes his listeners to that role as well. Rather than aiming his students at abstractions—as Socrates does—he aims them in the other direction, at the particulars of their actions and their results. That's where they will find release.

This point will become even clearer in the next chapter, where we see how the Buddha cross-questions his students—and encourages them to cross-question themselves—on their present actions and the results of those actions. There we will see that cross-questioning oneself on one's actions from the grossest levels to the subtlest is one of the most effective ways to achieve awakening.

## READINGS

### ESTABLISHING ORTHODOXY

§ 71. Then the monk Ariṭṭha Formerly-of-the-Vulture-Killers 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 pernicious 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'?"<sup>1</sup>

"Exactly so, lord. 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."

"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: of much stress, much despair, & greater drawbacks. I have 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. But you, worthless man, through your own poor grasp [of the Dhamma], not only misrepresent us but also dig yourself up [by the root] and produce much demerit for yourself. That will lead to your long-term harm & suffering."

Then the Blessed One said to the monks, "What do you think, monks? Is this monk Ariṭṭha Formerly-of-the-Vulture-Killers even warm 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 pernicious viewpoint. I will cross-question 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 Ariṭṭha Formerly-of-the-Vulture-Killers does when, through his own poor grasp, he not only misrepresents us but also digs himself up [by the root] and produces 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: 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."

"It's good, monks, that you understand the Dhamma taught by me in this way, for in many ways I have described obstructive acts to you, 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: of much stress, much despair, & greater drawbacks. I have 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. But this monk Ariṭṭha Formerly-of-the-Vulture-Killers, through his own poor grasp [of the Dhamma], has both misrepresented 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." — MN 22

NOTE: 1. The Commentary notes that Ariṭṭha here is referring to sexual intercourse and other related acts.

§ 72. Then the monk Sāti, the Fisherman's Son, went to the Blessed One and, on arrival, having bowed down to him, sat to one side. As he was sitting there, the Blessed One said to him, "Is it true, Sāti, that this pernicious view has arisen in you—'As I understand the Dhamma taught by the Blessed One, it is just this consciousness that runs and wanders on [from birth to birth], not another'?"

"Exactly so, lord. As I understand the Dhamma taught by the Blessed One, it is just this consciousness that runs and wanders on, not another."

"Which consciousness, Sāti, is that?"<sup>1</sup>

"This speaker, this knower, lord, that is sensitive here & there to the ripening of good & evil actions."

"And to whom, worthless man, do you understand me to have taught the Dhamma like that? Haven't I, in many ways, said of dependently co-arisen consciousness, 'Apart from a requisite condition, there is no coming-into-play of consciousness'?<sup>2</sup> But you, through your own poor grasp, not only misrepresent us but also dig yourself up [by the root] and produce much demerit for yourself. That will lead to your long-term harm & suffering."

Then the Blessed One said to the monks, "What do you think, monks? Is this monk Sāti, the Fisherman's Son, even warm in this Dhamma & Vinaya?"

"How could he be, lord? No, lord."

When this was said, the monk Sāti, the Fisherman's Son, sat silent, abashed, his shoulders drooping, his head down, brooding, at a loss for words.

Then the Blessed One, seeing that the monk Sāti, the Fisherman's Son, 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 pernicious viewpoint. I will cross-question 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 Sāti, the Fisherman's Son, does when, through his own poor grasp [of the Dhamma], he not only misrepresents us but also digs himself up [by the root] and produces much demerit for himself?"

"No, lord, for in many ways the Blessed One has said of dependently co-arisen consciousness, 'Apart from a requisite condition, there is no coming-into-play of consciousness.'"

"It's good, monks, that you understand the Dhamma taught by me in this way, for in many ways I have said of dependently co-arisen consciousness, 'Apart from a requisite condition, there is no coming-into-play of consciousness.' But this monk Sāti, the Fisherman's Son, through his own poor grasp [of the Dhamma], has not only misrepresented us but has also dug himself up [by the root], producing much demerit for himself. That will lead to this worthless man's long-term harm & suffering." — MN 38

1. The Buddha, knowing that there are two types of consciousness—the consciousness aggregate (*viññāṇakkhandha*) and consciousness without surface (*viññāṇaṇi anidassanaṇi*—see §205, note 4)—is here giving Sāti the chance to identify which of the two types he has interpreted as running and wandering on. Sāti’s answer shows that he is talking about the first type. It would have been interesting to see how the Buddha would have attacked Sāti’s misunderstanding if Sāti had identified the second.

2. The Pali here is, *Nanu mayā moghapurisa anekapariyāyena paṭiccasamuppannaṇi viññāṇaṇi vuttāni, ‘Aññatra paccayā n’atthi viññāṇassa sambhavoti?’* Literally: “Worthless man, hasn’t dependently-coarisen consciousness been described by me in many ways that, ‘Apart from a requisite condition, there is no coming-into-play of consciousness?’”

Some translators, thinking that all consciousness must be dependently co-arisen, have translated this sentence as, “Misguided man, have I not stated in many ways consciousness to be dependently arisen since without a condition there is no origination of consciousness?” They then use this translation to assert that the two passages in the Canon referring to consciousness without surface [§161, §205] are not in keeping with the principle, expressed here, that all consciousness is dependently co-arisen. Thus, they say, those two passages cannot be accepted as coming genuinely from the Buddha, whereas this passage in MN 38 definitely can. Their translation, however, is grammatically incorrect, as it inserts a “since” where there is none in the Pali, and ignores the quotation marks (*ti*) around the sentence in which dependently co-arisen consciousness is described. Thus it is a case of an interpretation forced on a passage that is then supposed to act as evidence confirming the interpretation—a form of circular reasoning.

When this passage is correctly translated, however, there is no conflict between this passage and those. The Buddha here is discussing dependently-coarisen consciousness in a way that does not conflict with the possibility that there is also a consciousness without surface that lies beyond the six sense-spheres and is not dependently-coarisen. In fact, because he modifies the consciousness discussed here with the adjective “dependently-co-arisen,” that suggests that he is keeping in mind the fact that there is another type of consciousness to which that modification does not apply.

## CROSS-QUESTIONING IN THE PROCESS OF LEARNING

§ 73. “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, artful in sound, artful in expression, 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, artful in sound, artful 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*

§ 74. Ven. Ānanda said, “There is the case, friend Sāriputta, where a monk masters the Dhamma: dialogues, narratives of mixed prose & verse, explanations, verses, spontaneous exclamations, quotations, birth stories, amazing events, question & answer sessions. He teaches the Dhamma in detail—as he has heard it, as he has remembered it—to others. He gets others to recite the Dhamma in detail—as they have heard it, as they have remembered it. He holds a group chanting of the Dhamma in detail—as he has heard it, as he has remembered it. He thinks about & evaluates the Dhamma as he has heard it, as he has remembered it; he contemplates it with his intellect. He enters the Rains in monasteries in which there are senior monks who are learned, who know the tradition, who are holders of the Dhamma, the Vinaya, & the Mātika [the lists of topics that later formed the basis for the Abhidhamma]. Having approached them periodically, he questions them & quizzes them: ‘How is this, venerable sirs? What is the meaning of this?’ They make open for him what wasn’t open, make plain what wasn’t plain, dispel doubt on various doubtful points.

“It’s to this extent, friend Sāriputta, that a monk hears Dhamma he has not heard, that the Dhammas he has heard do not get confused, that the Dhammas he has touched with his awareness stay current, and that he understands what (previously) was not understood.” — *AN 6:51*

*Invitations to cross-questioning:*

§ 75. “Therefore, monks, when you understand the meaning of any statement of mine, that is how you should remember it. But when you don’t understand the meaning of any statement of mine, then right then & there you should cross-question me or the experienced monks.” — *MN 22*

§ 76. Then Ghoṭamukha the brahman, taking a low seat, sat to one side. As he was sitting there, he said to Ven. Udena, “My good contemplative, there is no righteous wanderer’s life: That is [the opinion] that occurs to me here, but that may be from not seeing either someone like your venerable self or the Dhamma here.”

“Brahman, if you will allow of me what should be allowed, protest what should be protested, and further cross-question me right then & there on the meaning of any statement of mine that you don’t understand—‘How is this, Master Udena? What is the meaning of this?’—then we could have a discussion here.” — *MN 94 [See also §109]*

§ 77. As the nuns were sitting there, Ven. Nandaka said to them, “This will be a cross-questioning talk, sisters. Where you understand, you should say, ‘We understand.’ Where you don’t, you should say, ‘We don’t understand.’ Where you feel doubt or indecision, you should cross-question me right then & there: ‘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."

"... Is the ear constant or inconstant?"

"Inconstant, venerable sir." ...

"... Is the nose constant or inconstant?"

"Inconstant, venerable sir." ...

"... Is the tongue constant or inconstant?"

"Inconstant, venerable sir." ...

"... Is the body constant or inconstant?"

"Inconstant, venerable sir." ...

"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."

"... Are sounds constant or inconstant?"

"Inconstant, venerable sir." ...

"... Are aromas constant or inconstant?"

"Inconstant, venerable sir." ...

"... Are flavors constant or inconstant?"

"Inconstant, venerable sir." ...

"... Are tactile sensations constant or inconstant?"

"Inconstant, venerable sir." ...

"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 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.

"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."

"... Is ear-consciousness constant or inconstant?"

"Inconstant, venerable sir." ...

"... Is nose-consciousness constant or inconstant?"

"Inconstant, venerable sir." ...

"... Is tongue-consciousness constant or inconstant?"

"Inconstant, venerable sir." ...

"... Is body-consciousness constant or inconstant?"

"Inconstant, venerable sir." ...

"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 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 if a skilled 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?”<sup>1</sup>

“No, venerable sir. Why is that? Because if the skilled 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 & remains in the fermentation-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* as a factor for awakening... *persistence* as a factor for awakening... *rapture* as a factor for awakening... *serenity* as a factor for awakening... *concentration* as a factor for awakening... *equanimity* as a factor for awakening dependent on seclusion, dependent on dispassion, dependent on cessation, resulting in relinquishment. These are the seven factors for awakening through whose development & pursuit a monk enters & remains in the fermentation-free release of awareness & release of discernment, 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 departed.

Then, not long after the nuns’ departure, the Blessed One addressed the monks: “Monks, just as on the uposatha day of the fifteenth, people at large feel no doubt or indecision 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 500 nuns, the most backward is a



stream-winner, not destined for the planes of deprivation, headed to self-awakening for sure.” — MN 146

NOTE: 1. The act of covering the cow with skin refers to the arahant’s return to the world of the six senses after emerging from the experience of awakening.

*The Buddha anticipates cross-questioning of his teaching by faultfinders:*

§ 78. “Now it’s possible, Ānanda, that some wanderers of other sects 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,<sup>1</sup> the Blessed One describes it as pleasure.’” — MN 59 [See also §116]

NOTE: 1. This passage indicates that the aggregates do not cover all possible experience. See also §205, note 4.

§ 79. “Now it’s possible, Cunda, that some wanderers of other sects might say, ‘Gotama the contemplative describes unlimited knowledge & vision with regard to the past, but doesn’t describe unlimited knowledge & vision with regard to the future. What is this? How is this?’ Those wanderers of other sects construe the sort of knowing that is not knowledge & vision to be the sort of knowing that is knowledge & vision, just like those who are foolish & inexperienced. The Tathāgata’s memory-&-recollection knowledge with regard to the past is such that he recollects whatever he wants. The Tathāgata’s knowledge with regard to the future arises born from his awakening: ‘This is the last birth. There is now no further becoming.’

“With regard to what is past: If it is unfactual, untrue, & unbeneficial, the Tathāgata does not declare it. If it is factual, true, but unbeneficial, the Tathāgata does not declare it. If it is factual, true, & beneficial, the Tathāgata has a sense of the proper time for giving the answer to that question.

“With regard to what is future...

“With regard to what is present: If it is unfactual, untrue, & unbeneficial, the Tathāgata does not declare it. If it is factual, true, but unbeneficial, the Tathāgata does not declare it. If it is factual, true, & beneficial, the Tathāgata has a sense of the proper time for giving the answer to that question.” — DN 29 [§69, §156]

*Ven. Sāriputta anticipates cross-questioning of the teaching by sincere, intelligent people:*

§ 80. Ven. Sāriputta said, “Friends, in foreign lands there are wise nobles & brahmins, householders & contemplatives—for the people there are wise & discriminating—who will question a monk: ‘What is your teacher’s doctrine? What does he teach?’

“Thus asked, you should answer, ‘Our teacher teaches the subduing of passion & desire.’

“Having thus been answered, there may be wise nobles & brahmins, householders & contemplatives... who will question you further, ‘And your

teacher teaches the subduing of passion & desire for what?’

“Thus asked, you should answer, ‘Our teacher teaches the subduing of passion & desire for form... for feeling... for perception... for fabrications. Our teacher teaches the subduing of passion & desire for consciousness.’ [§38]

“Having thus been answered, there may be wise nobles & brahmins, householders & contemplatives... who will question you further, ‘And seeing what danger does your teacher teach the subduing of passion & desire for form... for feeling... for perception... for fabrications? Seeing what danger does your teacher teach the subduing of passion & desire for consciousness?’

“Thus asked, you should answer, ‘When one is not free from passion, desire, love, thirst, fever, & craving for form, then from any change & alteration in that form, there arises sorrow, lamentation, pain, grief, & despair. When one is not free from passion... for feeling... for perception... for fabrications... When one is not free from passion, desire, love, thirst, fever, & craving for consciousness, then from any change & alteration in that consciousness, there arise sorrow, lamentation, pain, grief, & despair. Seeing this danger, our teacher teaches the subduing of passion & desire for form... for feeling... for perception... for fabrications. Seeing this danger our teacher teaches the subduing of passion & desire for consciousness.’

“Having thus been answered, there may be wise nobles & brahmins, householders & contemplatives... who will question you further, ‘And seeing what benefit does your teacher teach the subduing of passion & desire for form... for feeling... for perception... for fabrications? Seeing what benefit does your teacher teach the subduing of passion & desire for consciousness?’

“Thus asked, you should answer, ‘When one is free from passion, desire, love, thirst, fever, & craving for form, then with any change & alteration in that form, there does not arise any sorrow, lamentation, pain, grief, or despair. When one is free from passion... for feeling... for perception... for fabrications... When one is free from passion, desire, love, thirst, fever, & craving for consciousness, then with any change & alteration in that consciousness, there does not arise any sorrow, lamentation, pain, grief, or despair. Seeing this benefit, our teacher teaches the subduing of passion & desire for form... for feeling... for perception... for fabrications. Seeing this benefit our teacher teaches the subduing of passion & desire for consciousness.’

“Friends, if one who entered & remained in unskillful qualities were to have a pleasant abiding in the here & now—unthreatened, undespairing, unfeverish—and on the breakup of the body, after death, could expect a good destination, then the Blessed One would not advocate the abandoning of unskillful qualities. But because one who enters & remains in unskillful qualities has a stressful abiding in the here & now—threatened, despairing, & feverish—and on the breakup of the body, after death, can expect a bad destination, that is why the Blessed One advocates the abandoning of unskillful qualities.

“If one who entered & remained in skillful qualities were to have a stressful abiding in the here & now—threatened, despairing, & feverish—and on the breakup of the body, after death, could expect a bad destination, then the Blessed One would not advocate entering into skillful qualities. But because one who enters & remains in skillful qualities has a pleasant abiding in the here & now—unthreatened, undespairing, unfeverish—and on the breakup of the body, after death, can expect a good destination, that is why the Blessed One advocates entering into skillful qualities.” — SN 22:2 [See also §20; §26]

*Awakening through cross-questioning the speaker:*

§ 81. On one occasion many elder monks were staying at Kosambi in Ghosita's park. And at that time Ven. Khemaka was staying at the Jujube Tree park, diseased, in pain, severely ill. Then in the late afternoon the elder monks left their seclusion and addressed Ven. Dāsaka, (saying,) "Come, friend Dāsaka. Go to the monk Khemaka and on arrival say to him, 'The elders, friend Khemaka, say to you, "We hope you are getting better, friend. We hope you are comfortable. We hope that your pains are lessening and not increasing. We hope that there are signs of their lessening, and not of their increasing.'""

Replying, "As you say, friends," to the elder monks, Ven. Dāsaka went to Ven. Khemaka and on arrival said to him, "The elders, friend Khemaka, say to you, 'We hope you are getting better, friend. We hope you are comfortable. We hope that your pains are lessening and not increasing. We hope that there are signs of their lessening, and not of their increasing.'"

"I am not getting better, my friend. I am not comfortable. My extreme pains are increasing, not lessening. There are signs of their increasing, and not of their lessening."

Then Ven. Dāsaka went to the elder monks and, on arrival, said to them, "The monk Khemaka has said to me, 'I am not getting better, my friend. I am not comfortable. My extreme pains are increasing, not lessening. There are signs of their increasing, and not of their lessening.'"

"Come, friend Dāsaka. Go to the monk Khemaka and on arrival say to him, 'The elders, friend Khemaka, say to you, "Concerning these five clinging-aggregates described by the Blessed One—i.e., the form clinging-aggregate, the feeling clinging-aggregate, the perception clinging-aggregate, the fabrications clinging-aggregate, the consciousness clinging-aggregate: Do you assume anything with regard to these five clinging-aggregates to be self or belonging to self?""

Replying, "As you say, friends," to the elder monks, Ven. Dāsaka went to Ven. Khemaka and on arrival said to him, "The elders, friend Khemaka, say to you, 'Concerning these five clinging-aggregates described by the Blessed One—i.e., the form clinging-aggregate, the feeling clinging-aggregate, the perception clinging-aggregate, the fabrications clinging-aggregate, the consciousness clinging-aggregate: Do you assume anything with regard to these five clinging-aggregates to be self or belonging to self?'"

"Friend, concerning these five clinging-aggregates described by the Blessed One—i.e., the form clinging-aggregate... the feeling... perception... fabrications... consciousness clinging-aggregate: With regard to these five clinging-aggregates, there is nothing I assume to be self or belonging to self."

Then Ven. Dāsaka went to the elder monks and on arrival said to them, "The monk Khemaka has said to me, 'Friend, concerning these five clinging-aggregates described by the Blessed One—i.e., the form clinging-aggregate... the feeling... perception... fabrications... consciousness clinging-aggregate: With regard to these five clinging-aggregates, there is nothing I assume to be self or belonging to self.'"

"Come, friend Dāsaka. Go to the monk Khemaka and on arrival say to him, 'The elders, friend Khemaka, say to you, "Concerning these five clinging-aggregates described by the Blessed One—i.e., the form clinging-aggregate... the feeling... perception... fabrications... consciousness clinging-aggregate: If, with regard to these five clinging-aggregates, Ven. Khemaka assumes nothing to be self or belonging to self, then Ven. Khemaka is an arahant, devoid of fermentations.'""

Replying, "As you say, friends," to the elder monks, Ven. Dāsaka went to

Ven. Khemaka and on arrival said to him, “The elders, friend Khemaka, say to you, ‘Concerning these five clinging-aggregates described by the Blessed One—i.e., the form clinging-aggregate... the feeling... perception... fabrications... consciousness clinging-aggregate: If, with regard to these five clinging-aggregates, Ven. Khemaka assumes nothing to be self or belonging to self, then Ven. Khemaka is an arahant, devoid of fermentations.’”

“Friend, concerning these five clinging-aggregates described by the Blessed One—i.e., the form clinging-aggregate... the feeling... perception... fabrications... consciousness clinging-aggregate: With regard to these five clinging-aggregates, there is nothing I assume to be self or belonging to self, and yet I am not an arahant. With regard to these five clinging-aggregates, ‘I am’ has not been overcome, although I don’t assume that ‘I am this.’”

Then Ven. Dāsaka went to the elder monks and on arrival said to them, “The monk Khemaka has said to me, ‘Friend, concerning these five clinging-aggregates described by the Blessed One—i.e., the form clinging-aggregate... the feeling... perception... fabrications... consciousness clinging-aggregate: With regard to these five clinging-aggregates, there is nothing I assume to be self or belonging to self, and yet I am not an arahant. With regard to these five clinging-aggregates, ‘I am’ has not been overcome, although I don’t assume that ‘I am this.’”

“Come, friend Dāsaka. Go to the monk Khemaka and on arrival say to him, ‘The elders, friend Khemaka, say to you, “Friend Khemaka, this ‘I am’ of which you speak: What do you say ‘I am’? Do you say, ‘I am form,’ or do you say, ‘I am something other than form’? Do you say, ‘I am feeling... perception... fabrications... consciousness,’ or do you say, ‘I am something other than consciousness’? This ‘I am’ of which you speak: What do you say ‘I am’?””

Replying, “As you say, friends,” to the elder monks, Ven. Dāsaka went to Ven. Khemaka and on arrival said to him, “The elders, friend Khemaka, say to you, ‘Friend Khemaka, this “I am” of which you speak: What do you say “I am”? Do you say, “I am form,” or do you say, “I am something other than form”? Do you say, “I am feeling... perception... fabrications... consciousness,” or do you say, “I am something other than consciousness”? This “I am” of which you speak: What do you say “I am”?”

“Enough, friend Dāsaka. What is accomplished by this running back & forth? Fetch me my staff. I will go to the elder monks myself.”

Then Ven. Khemaka, leaning on his staff, went to the elder monks and, on arrival, exchanged courteous greetings with them. After an exchange of friendly greetings & courtesies, he sat to one side. As he was sitting there, the elder monks said to him, “Friend Khemaka, this ‘I am’ of which you speak: What do you say ‘I am’? Do you say, ‘I am form,’ or do you say, ‘I am something other than form’? Do you say, ‘I am feeling... perception... fabrications... consciousness,’ or do you say, ‘I am something other than consciousness’? This ‘I am’ of which you speak: What do you say ‘I am’?”

“Friends, it’s not that I say ‘I am form,’ nor do I say ‘I am something other than form.’ It’s not that I say, ‘I am feeling... perception... fabrications... consciousness,’ nor do I say, ‘I am something other than consciousness.’ With regard to these five clinging-aggregates, ‘I am’ has not been overcome, although I don’t assume that ‘I am this.’

“It’s just like the scent of a blue, red, or white lotus: If someone were to call it the scent of a petal or the scent of the color or the scent of a filament, would he be speaking correctly?”

“No, friend.”

“Then how would he describe it if he were describing it correctly?”

“As the scent of the flower: That’s how he would describe it if he were

describing it correctly.”

“In the same way, friends, it’s not that I say ‘I am form,’ nor do I say ‘I am other than form.’ It’s not that I say, ‘I am feeling... perception... fabrications... consciousness,’ nor do I say, ‘I am something other than consciousness.’ With regard to these five clinging-aggregates, ‘I am’ has not been overcome, although I don’t assume that ‘I am this.’

“Friends, even though a noble disciple has abandoned the five lower fetters, he still has with regard to the five clinging-aggregates a lingering residual ‘I am’ conceit, an ‘I am’ desire, an ‘I am’ obsession. But at a later time he keeps focusing on the phenomena of arising & passing away with regard to the five clinging-aggregates: ‘Such is form, such its origination, such its disappearance. Such is feeling.... Such is perception.... Such are fabrications.... Such is consciousness, such its origination, such its disappearance.’ As he keeps focusing on the arising & passing away of these five clinging-aggregates, the lingering residual ‘I am’ conceit, ‘I am’ desire, ‘I am’ obsession is fully obliterated.

“Just like a cloth, dirty & stained: Its owners give it over to a washerman, who scrubs it with salt earth or lye or cow-dung and then rinses it in clear water. Now even though the cloth is clean & spotless, it still has a lingering residual scent of salt earth or lye or cow-dung. The washerman gives it to the owners, the owners put it away in a scent-infused wicker hamper, and its lingering residual scent of salt earth, lye, or cow-dung is fully obliterated.

“In the same way, friends, even though a noble disciple has abandoned the five lower fetters, he still has with regard to the five clinging-aggregates a lingering residual ‘I am’ conceit, an ‘I am’ desire, an ‘I am’ obsession. But at a later time he keeps focusing on the phenomena of arising & passing away with regard to the five clinging-aggregates: ‘Such is form, such its origination, such its disappearance. Such is feeling.... Such is perception.... Such are fabrications.... Such is consciousness, such its origination, such its disappearance.’ As he keeps focusing on the arising & passing away of these five clinging-aggregates, the lingering residual ‘I am’ conceit, ‘I am’ desire, ‘I am’ obsession is fully obliterated.”

When this was said, the elder monks said to Ven. Khemaka, “We didn’t cross-examine Ven. Khemaka with the purpose of troubling him, just that [we thought] Ven. Khemaka is capable of declaring the Blessed One’s message, teaching it, describing it, setting it forth, revealing it, explaining it, making it plain—just as he has in fact declared it, taught it, described it, set it forth, revealed it, explained it, made it plain.”

That is what Ven. Khemaka said. Gratified, the elder monks delighted in his words. And while this explanation was being given, the minds of sixty-some monks, through no clinging, were released from fermentations—as was Ven. Khemaka’s. — SN 22:89

*The Buddha’s final invitation to cross-question him:*

§ 82. Then the Blessed One addressed the monks, “If even a single monk has any doubt or indecision 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 cross-question him in his presence.’”

When this was said, the monks were silent.

A second time, the Blessed One said, “If even a single monk has any doubt or indecision 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 cross-question him in his presence.’”

A second time, the monks were silent.

A third time, the Blessed One said, "If even a single monk has any doubt or indecision 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 cross-question him in his presence.'"

A third time, the monks were silent.

Then the Blessed One addressed the monks, "Now, if it's out of respect for the Teacher that you don't ask, let a friend inform a friend."

When this was said, the monks were silent.

Then Ven. Ānanda said to the Blessed One, "It's amazing, lord. It's astounding. I'm confident that in this community of monks there isn't even a single monk who has any doubt or indecision concerning the Buddha, Dhamma, or Saṅgha, the path or the practice."

"You, Ānanda, speak out of confidence, while there is knowledge in the Tathāgata that in this community of monks there isn't even a single monk who has any doubt or indecision concerning the Buddha, Dhamma, or Saṅgha, the path or the practice. Of these 500 monks, the most backward is a stream-winner, not destined for the planes of deprivation, headed to self-awakening for sure."

Then the Blessed One addressed the monks, "Now then, monks, I exhort you: All fabrications are subject to decay. Bring about completion by being heedful."

Those were the Tathāgata's last words. — DN 16

## THE BUDDHA QUESTIONS OTHER SECTARIANS

§ 83. "Monks, there are these three sectarian guilds that—when interrogated, pressed, & rebuked by wise people—even though they may explain otherwise, remain stuck in [a doctrine of] inaction. Which three?"

"There are contemplatives & brahmins who hold this teaching, hold this view: 'Whatever a person experiences—pleasant, painful, or neither pleasant nor painful—is all caused by what was done in the past.' There are contemplatives & brahmins who hold this teaching, hold this view: 'Whatever a person experiences—pleasant, painful, or neither pleasant nor painful—is all caused by a supreme being's act of creation.' There are contemplatives & brahmins who hold this teaching, hold this view: 'Whatever a person experiences—pleasant, painful, or neither pleasant nor painful—is all without cause & without condition.'

"Having approached the contemplatives & brahmins 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... unchaste... a liar... a divisive speaker... a coarse speaker... an idle chatterer... covetous... one bearing thoughts of ill will... 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 & brahmins who hold to such teachings, such views.

"Having approached the contemplatives & brahmins 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... unchaste... a liar... a divisive speaker... a coarse speaker... an idle chatterer... covetous... one bearing thoughts of ill will... 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... unchaste... a liar... a divisive speaker... a coarse speaker... an idle chatterer... covetous... one bearing thoughts of ill will... 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 interrogated, pressed, & rebuked by wise people—even though they may explain otherwise, remain stuck in inaction.” — AN 3:62

§ 84. The Blessed One said, “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 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.”

“If, however, you knew that you existed in the past, and that you did not not exist; if you knew that you did evil actions in the past, and that you did not not do them; if you knew that you did such-and-such evil actions in the past; you don’t 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; if you knew what is the abandoning of unskillful qualities and the attainment of skillful qualities in the here-&-now, 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.”

“Friend Nigaṇṭhas, it’s as if a man were shot with an arrow thickly smeared with poison. As a result of being shot with the arrow, he would feel fierce, sharp, racking pains. His friends & companions, kinsmen & relatives would provide him with a surgeon. The surgeon would cut around the opening of the wound with a knife. As a result of the surgeon’s cutting around the opening of the wound with a knife, the man would feel fierce, sharp, racking pains. The surgeon would probe for the arrow with a probe. As a result of the surgeon’s probing for the arrow with a probe, the man would feel fierce, sharp, racking pains. The surgeon would then pull out the arrow. As a result of the surgeon’s pulling out the arrow, the man would feel fierce, sharp, racking pains. The surgeon would then apply a burning medicine to the mouth of the wound. As a result of the surgeon’s applying a burning medicine to the mouth of the wound, the man would feel fierce, sharp, racking pains. But then at a later time, when the wound had healed and was covered with skin, he would be well & happy, free, master of himself, able to go wherever he liked. The thought would occur to him, “Before, I was shot with an arrow thickly smeared with poison. As a result of being shot with the arrow, I felt fierce, sharp, racking pains. My friends & companions, kinsmen & relatives provided me with a surgeon.... The surgeon



cut around the opening of the wound with a knife... probed for the arrow with a probe... pulled out the arrow... applied a burning medicine to the mouth of the wound. As a result of his applying a burning medicine to the mouth of the wound, I felt fierce, sharp, racking pains. But now that the wound is healed and covered with skin, I am well & happy, free, master of myself, able to go wherever I like."

"In the same way, friend Nigaṇṭhas, if you knew that you existed in the past, and that you did not not exist... if you knew what is the abandoning of unskillful qualities and the attainment of skillful qualities in the here-&-now, 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 you do not know that you existed in the past... you do not know what is the abandoning of unskillful qualities and the attainment of skillful qualities in the here-&-now, 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."

"When this was said, the Nigaṇṭhas said to me, 'Friend, the Nigaṇṭha Nātaputta [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.

“So I asked them further, ‘Friend Nigaṇṭhas, what do you think? Can an action to be experienced in the here-&-now be turned, through striving & exertion, into an action to be experienced in the future life?’

“No, friend.’

“Can an action to be experienced in the future life be turned, through striving & exertion, into an action to be experienced in the here-&-now?’

“No, friend.’

“What do you think? Can an action to be experienced as pleasure be turned, through striving & exertion, into an action to be experienced as pain?’

“No, friend.’

“Can an action to be experienced as pain be turned, through striving & exertion, into an action to be experienced as pleasure?’

“No, friend.’

“What do you think? Can an action ripe to be experienced be turned, through striving & exertion, into an action not ripe to be experienced?’

“No, friend.’

“Can an action not ripe to be experienced be turned, through striving & exertion, into an action ripe to be experienced?’

“No, friend.’

“What do you think? Can an action greatly to be experienced be turned, through striving & exertion, into an action barely to be experienced?’

“No, friend.’

“Can an action barely to be experienced be turned, through striving & exertion, into an action greatly to be experienced?’

“No, friend.’

“What do you think? Can an action to be experienced be turned, through

striving & exertion, into an action not to be experienced?’

“‘No, friend.’

“‘Can an action not to be experienced be turned, through striving & exertion, into an action to be experienced?’

“‘No, friend.’

“‘So, friends, it seems that an action to be experienced in the here-&-now cannot be turned, through striving & exertion, into an action to be experienced in the future life. An action to be experienced in the future life cannot be turned, through striving & exertion, into an action to be experienced in the here-&-now.... An action to be experienced cannot be turned, through striving & exertion, into an action not to be experienced. An action not to be experienced cannot be turned, through striving & exertion, into an action to be experienced. That being the case, the striving of the Nigaṇṭhas is fruitless, their exertion is fruitless.’

“Such is the teaching of the Nigaṇṭhas. And, such being the teaching of the Nigaṇṭhas, ten legitimate deductions can be drawn that give grounds for censuring them.

“[1] If beings experience pleasure & pain based on what was done in the past, then obviously the Nigaṇṭhas have done bad things in the past, which is why they now feel such fierce, sharp, racking pains.

“[2] If beings experience pleasure & pain based on the creative act of a supreme god, then obviously the Nigaṇṭhas have been created by an evil supreme god, which is why they now feel such fierce, sharp, racking pains.

“[3] If beings experience pleasure & pain based on sheer luck, then obviously the Nigaṇṭhas have evil luck, which is why they now feel such fierce, sharp, racking pains.

“[4] If beings experience pleasure & pain based on birth, then obviously the Nigaṇṭhas have had an evil birth, which is why they now feel such fierce, sharp, racking pains.

“[5] If beings experience pleasure & pain based efforts in the here-&-now, then obviously the Nigaṇṭhas have evil efforts in the here-&-now, which is why they now feel such fierce, sharp, racking pains.

“[6] If beings experience pleasure & pain based on what was done in the past, the Nigaṇṭhas deserve censure. Even if not, they still deserve censure.

“[7] If beings experience pleasure & pain based on the creative act of a supreme god, the Nigaṇṭhas deserve censure. Even if not, they still deserve censure.

“[8] If beings experience pleasure & pain based on sheer luck, the Nigaṇṭhas deserve censure. Even if not, they still deserve censure.

“[9] If beings experience pleasure & pain based on birth, the Nigaṇṭhas deserve censure. Even if not, they still deserve censure.

“[10] If beings experience pleasure & pain based efforts in the here-&-now, the Nigaṇṭhas deserve censure. Even if not, they still deserve censure.

“Such is the teaching of the Nigaṇṭhas, monks. And, such being the teaching of the Nigaṇṭhas, these ten legitimate deductions can be drawn that give grounds for censuring them.” — *MN 101*

§ 85. Then Asibandhakaputta the headman, a disciple of the Nigaṇṭhas, went to the Blessed One and on arrival, having bowed down to him, sat to one side. As he was sitting there, the Blessed One said to him, “Headman, how does Nigaṇṭha Nātaputta teach the Dhamma to his disciples?”

“Nigaṇṭha Nātaputta teaches the Dhamma to his disciples in this way, lord: ‘All those who take life are destined for a state of deprivation, are destined for

hell. All those who steal.... All those who indulge in sexual misconduct.... All those who tell lies are destined for a state of deprivation, are destined for hell. Whatever one keeps doing frequently, by that is one led [to a state of rebirth].’ That’s how Nigaṇṭha Nāṭaputta teaches the Dhamma to his disciples.”

“If it’s true that ‘Whatever one keeps doing frequently, by that is one led [to a state of rebirth],’ then no one is destined for a state of deprivation or destined to hell in line with Nigaṇṭha Nāṭaputta’s words. What do you think, headman? If a man is one who takes life, then taking into consideration time spent doing & not doing, whether by day or by night, which time is more: the time he spends taking life or the time he spends not taking life?”

“If a man is one who takes life, lord, then taking into consideration time spent doing & not doing, whether by day or by night, the time he spends taking life is less, and the time he spends not taking life is certainly more. If it’s true that ‘Whatever one keeps doing frequently, by that is one led [to a state of rebirth],’ then no one is destined for a state of deprivation or destined to hell in line with Nigaṇṭha Nāṭaputta’s words.”

“What do you think, headman? If a man is one who steals... engages in sexual misconduct... tells lies, then taking into consideration time spent doing & not doing, whether by day or by night, which time is more: the time he spends telling lies or the time he spends not telling lies?”

“If a man is one who tells lies, lord, then taking into consideration time spent doing & not doing, whether by day or by night, the time he spends telling lies is less, and the time he spends not telling lies is certainly more. If it’s true that ‘Whatever one keeps doing frequently, by that is one led [to a state of rebirth],’ then no one is destined for a state of deprivation or destined to hell in line with Nigaṇṭha Nāṭaputta’s words.”

“There’s the case, headman, where a certain teacher holds this doctrine, holds this view: ‘All those who take life are destined for a state of deprivation, are destined for hell. All those who steal.... All those who engage in sexual misconduct.... All those who tell lies are destined for a state of deprivation, are destined for hell.’ A disciple has faith in that teacher, and the thought occurs to him, ‘Our teacher holds this doctrine, holds this view: “All those who take life are destined for a state of deprivation, are destined for hell.” There are living beings that I have killed. I too am destined for a state of deprivation, am destined for hell.’ He fastens onto that view. If he doesn’t abandon that doctrine, doesn’t abandon that state of mind, doesn’t relinquish that view, then as if he were to be carried off, he would thus be placed in hell.

“[The thought occurs to him,] ‘Our teacher holds this doctrine, holds this view: ‘All those who steal.... All those who engage in sexual misconduct.... All those who tell lies are destined for a state of deprivation, are destined for hell.’ There are lies that I have told. I too am destined for a state of deprivation, am destined for hell.’ He fastens onto that view. If he doesn’t abandon that doctrine, doesn’t abandon that state of mind, doesn’t relinquish that view, then as if he were to be carried off, he would thus be placed in hell.

“There is the case, headman, where a Tathāgata appears in the world, worthy and rightly self-awakened, consummate in clear knowing & conduct, well-gone, a knower of the cosmos, unexcelled trainer of those to be tamed, teacher of human & divine beings, awakened, blessed. He, in various ways, criticizes & censures the taking of life, and says, ‘Abstain from taking life.’ He criticizes & censures stealing, and says, ‘Abstain from stealing.’ He criticizes & censures engaging in sexual misconduct, and says, ‘Abstain from engaging in sexual misconduct.’ He criticizes & censures the telling of lies, and says, ‘Abstain from the telling of lies.’

“A disciple has faith in that teacher and reflects: ‘The Blessed One in a variety

of ways criticizes & censures the taking of life, and says, “Abstain from taking life.” There are living beings that I have killed, to a greater or lesser extent. That was not right. That was not good. But if I become remorseful for that reason, that evil deed of mine will not be undone.’ So, reflecting thus, he abandons right then the taking of life, and in the future refrains from taking life. This is how there comes to be the abandoning of that evil deed. This is how there comes to be the transcending of that evil deed.

“[He reflects:] ‘The Blessed One in a variety of ways criticizes & censures stealing... engaging in sexual misconduct... the telling of lies, and says, “Abstain from the telling of lies.” There are lies that I have told, to a greater or lesser extent. That was not right. That was not good. But if I become remorseful for that reason, that evil deed of mine will not be undone.’ So, reflecting thus, he abandons right then the telling of lies, and in the future refrains from telling lies. This is how there comes to be the abandoning of that evil deed. This is how there comes to be the transcending of that evil deed.

“Having abandoned the taking of life, he refrains from taking life. Having abandoned stealing, he refrains from stealing. Having abandoned sexual misconduct, he refrains from sexual misconduct. Having abandoned lies, he refrains from lies. Having abandoned divisive speech, he refrains from divisive speech. Having abandoned coarse speech, he refrains from coarse speech. Having abandoned idle chatter, he refrains from idle chatter. Having abandoned covetousness, he becomes uncovetous. Having abandoned ill will & anger, he becomes one with a mind of no ill will. Having abandoned wrong views, he becomes one who has right views.

“That disciple of the noble ones, headman—thus devoid of covetousness, devoid of ill will, unbewildered, alert, mindful—keeps pervading the first direction [the east] with an awareness imbued with good will, likewise the second, likewise the third, likewise the fourth. Thus above, below, & all around, everywhere, in its entirety, he keeps pervading the all-encompassing cosmos with an awareness imbued with good will—abundant, expansive, immeasurable, without hostility, without ill will. Just as a strong conch-trumpet blower can notify the four directions without any difficulty, in the same way, when the awareness-release through good will is thus developed, thus pursued, any deed done to a limited extent no longer remains there, no longer stays there.

“That disciple of the noble ones—thus devoid of covetousness, devoid of ill will, unbewildered, alert, mindful—keeps pervading the first direction with an awareness imbued with compassion... empathetic joy... equanimity, likewise the second, likewise the third, likewise the fourth. Thus above, below, & all around, everywhere, in its entirety, he keeps pervading the all-encompassing cosmos with an awareness imbued with equanimity—abundant, expansive, immeasurable, without hostility, without ill will. Just as a strong conch-trumpet blower can notify the four directions without any difficulty, in the same way, when the awareness-release through equanimity is thus developed, thus pursued, any deed done to a limited extent no longer remains there, no longer stays there.” — *SN 42:8*

## CLARIFYING THE QUESTION

§ 86. [King Pasenadi:] “But, lord, are there devas?”

[The Buddha:] “But why do you ask, great king, ‘But, lord, are there devas?’”

“Whether the devas come back to this life, lord, or whether they don’t.”

“Those devas who are afflicted come back to this life, whereas those devas

who are unafflicted don't come back to this life." — MN 90

§ 87. [Saṅgārava Bhāradvāja:] "Well, Master Gotama, are there devas?"

"It's immediately known to me, Bhāradvāja, that there are devas."

"Why, when asked if there are devas, did Master Gotama say, 'It's immediately known to me, Bhāradvāja, that there are devas.' When that's the case, isn't that empty and false?"

"When, on being asked if there are devas, one would say, 'There are devas' or one would say, 'They are immediately known, they are known to me,' then a knowledgeable person would come to the categorical conclusion that there are devas."

"But why didn't Master Gotama answer me the first way?"

"It's assumed as something high in the world that there are devas." — MN 100

§ 88. "Now, lord, is perception a person's self, or is perception one thing and self another?"

"What self do you posit, Poṭṭhapāda?"

"I posit a gross self, possessed of form, made up of the four great existents [earth, water, fire, and wind], feeding on physical food."

"Then, Poṭṭhapāda, your self would be gross, possessed of form, made up of the four great existents, feeding on physical food. That being the case, then for you perception would be one thing and self another. And it's through this line of reasoning that one can realize how perception will be one thing and self another: even as there remains this gross self—possessed of form, made up of the four great existents, and feeding on food—one perception arises for that person as another perception passes away. It's through this line of reasoning that one can realize how perception will be one thing and self another."

"Then, lord, I posit a mind-made self complete in all its parts, not inferior in its faculties."

"Then, Poṭṭhapāda, your self would be mind-made, complete in all its parts, not inferior in its faculties. That being the case, then for you perception would be one thing and self another. And it's through this line of reasoning that one can realize how perception will be one thing and self another: even as there remains this mind-made self—complete in all its parts, not inferior in its faculties—one perception arises for that person as another perception passes away. It's through this line of reasoning that one can realize how perception will be one thing and self another."

"Then, lord, I posit a formless self made of perception."

"Then, Poṭṭhapāda, your self would be formless and made of perception. That being the case, then for you perception would be one thing and self another. And it's through this line of reasoning that one can realize how perception will be one thing and self another: even as there remains this formless self made of perception, one perception arises for that person as another perception passes away. It's through this line of reasoning that one can realize how perception will be one thing and self another."

"Is it possible for me to know, lord, whether perception is a person's self or if perception is one thing and self another?"

"Poṭṭhapāda—having other views, other practices, other satisfactions, other aims, other teachers—it's hard for you to know whether perception is a person's self or if perception is one thing and self another." — DN 9

## EXTRACTING DEFINITIONS

§ 89. Then Moliya Sivaka the wanderer went to the Blessed One and, on arrival, 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: “‘The Dhamma is visible here-&-now. The Dhamma is visible here-&-now.’ Thus it is said. To what extent, lord, is the Dhamma visible here-&-now, timeless, inviting all to come & see, pertinent, to be known by the observant for themselves?”

“Very well then, Sivaka, I will cross-question you on this matter. Answer as you see fit. What do you think? There being greed present within you, do you discern, ‘There is greed present within me’? And there being no greed present within you, do you discern, ‘There is no greed present within me’?”

“Yes, lord.”

“Sivaka, the fact that, there being greed present within you, you discern, ‘There is greed present within me’; and, there being no greed present within you, you discern, ‘There is no greed present within me’: It is in this way that the Dhamma is visible here-&-now, timeless, inviting all to come & see, pertinent, to be known by the observant for themselves.

“What do you think? There being aversion present within you, do you discern, ‘There is aversion present within me’? And there being no aversion present within you, do you discern, ‘There is no aversion present within me’?”

“Yes, lord.”

“Sivaka, the fact that, there being aversion present within you, you discern, ‘There is aversion present within me’; and, there being no aversion present within you, you discern, ‘There is no aversion present within me’: It is in this way that the Dhamma is visible here-&-now, timeless, inviting all to come & see, pertinent, to be known by the observant for themselves.

“What do you think? There being delusion present within you, do you discern, ‘There is delusion present within me’? And there being no delusion present within you, do you discern, ‘There is no delusion present within me’?”

“Yes, lord.”

“Sivaka, the fact that, there being delusion present within you, you discern, ‘There is delusion present within me’; and, there being no delusion present within you, you discern, ‘There is no delusion present within me’: It is in this way that the Dhamma is visible here-&-now, timeless, inviting all to come & see, pertinent, to be known by the observant for themselves.” — AN 6:47

*[In AN 6:48, a certain brahman asks the Buddha the same question, and he responds in a similar manner, although instead of using the examples of greed, aversion, and delusion, he uses the examples of passion, aversion, delusion, bodily corrupt behavior, verbal corrupt behavior, and mental corrupt behavior.]*

§ 90. [Ven. Ānanda:] “This word, ‘becoming, becoming’—to what extent is there becoming?”

[The Buddha:] “If there were no kamma ripening in the sensuality-property, would sensuality-becoming be discerned?”

[Ven. Ānanda:] “No, lord.”

The Buddha: “Thus kamma is the field, consciousness the seed, and craving the moisture. The consciousness 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?”

[Ven. Ānanda:] “No, lord.”

[The Buddha:] “Thus kamma is the field, consciousness the seed, and craving the moisture. The consciousness 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?”

[Ven. Ānanda:] “No, lord.”

[The Buddha:] “Thus kamma is the field, consciousness the seed, and craving the moisture. The consciousness 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 3:77

§ 91. I have heard that on one occasion Ven. Ānanda was staying in Kosambi at Ghosita’s park. Then a certain householder, a disciple of the Fatalists (Ajivakas), went to him and, on arrival, having bowed down to him, sat to one side. As he was sitting there he said to Ven. Ānanda, “Among us, sir, whose Dhamma is well-taught? Who has practiced well in this world? Who in the world is well-gone?”

“Very well then, householder, I will cross-question you on this matter.

Answer as you see fit. Now, what do you think? Those who teach a Dhamma for the abandoning of passion, for the abandoning of aversion, for the abandoning of delusion—is their Dhamma well-taught or not? Or how does this strike you?”

“Sir, those who teach a Dhamma for the abandoning of passion, for the abandoning of aversion, for the abandoning of delusion—their Dhamma is well-taught. That’s how it strikes me.”

“And what do you think, householder? Those who have practiced for the abandoning of passion, for the abandoning of aversion, for the abandoning of delusion—have they practiced well in this world or not? Or how does this strike you?”

“Sir, those who have practiced for the abandoning of passion, for the abandoning of aversion, for the abandoning of delusion—they have practiced well in this world. That’s how it strikes me.”

“And what do you think, householder? Those whose passion is abandoned, its root destroyed, made like a palmyra stump, deprived of the conditions of development, not destined for future arising; those whose aversion is abandoned... whose delusion is abandoned, its root destroyed, made like a palmyra stump, deprived of the conditions of development, not destined for future arising: are they, in this world, well-gone or not? Or how does this strike you?”

“Sir, those whose passion... aversion... delusion is abandoned, its root destroyed, made like a palmyra stump, deprived of the conditions of development, not destined for future arising: they, in this world, are well-gone. That’s how it strikes me.”

“In this way, householder, you have answered yourself: ‘Those who teach a Dhamma for the abandoning of passion, for the abandoning of aversion, for the abandoning of delusion—their Dhamma is well-taught. Those who have practiced for the abandoning of passion, for the abandoning of aversion, for the abandoning of delusion—they have practiced well in this world. Those whose passion... aversion... delusion is abandoned, its root destroyed, made like a palmyra stump, deprived of the conditions of development, not destined for future arising: they, in this world, are well-gone.’”



“How amazing, sir! How astounding! There is neither extolling of one’s own Dhamma nor deprecation of another’s, but just the teaching of the Dhamma in its proper sphere, speaking to the point without mentioning oneself.” — AN 3:73

#### HYPOTHETICALS: ON THE BUDDHA AS TEACHER

§ 92. Then Pāṭaliya 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, “I have heard that, ‘Gotama the contemplative knows magic.’ I trust that those who say that, ‘Gotama the contemplative knows magic’ do not slander the Blessed One with what is unfactual, that they declare the Dhamma in accordance with the Dhamma, and that the legitimate implications of what they say give no grounds for criticism. For I would not want to slander the Blessed One.”

“Headman, those who say that, ‘Gotama the contemplative knows magic’ do not slander me with what is unfactual, they declare the Dhamma in accordance with the Dhamma, and the legitimate implications of what they say give no grounds for criticism.”

“Then, good sir, we did not believe the plain truth from those contemplatives & brahmans who said, ‘Gotama the contemplative knows magic.’ Then the Blessed One is actually a magician!”

“But, headman, is one who says that ‘I know magic’ also saying that ‘I am a magician’?”

“That’s just how it is, Blessed One! That’s just how it is, One Well-gone!”

“Very well then, headman, I will cross-question you on this matter. Answer as you see fit. What do you think? Do you know the Koliyan hirelings who wear their top-knots hanging down?”

“Yes, lord....”

“What do you think? What is the job of the Koliyan hirelings who wear their top-knots hanging down?”

“They arrest any thieves among the Koliyans, and they carry messages for the Koliyans. That is the job of the Koliyan hirelings who wear their top-knots hanging down.”

“What do you think? Do you know whether the Koliyan hirelings who wear their top-knots hanging down are virtuous or unvirtuous?”

“I know that the Koliyan hirelings who wear their top-knots hanging down are unvirtuous and of evil character. They are among those in the world who are unvirtuous and of evil character.”

“If someone were to say, ‘Pāṭaliya the headman knows that the Koliyan hirelings who wear their top-knots hanging down are unvirtuous and of evil character; and Pāṭaliya the headman too is unvirtuous and of evil character,’ would someone speaking thus be speaking rightly?”

“No, lord. The Koliyan hirelings who wear their top-knots hanging down are one thing, and I am something else. Their character is one thing, and mine is something else.”

“Then, headman, if you get (to say) that Pāṭaliya the headman knows that the Koliyan hirelings who wear their top-knots hanging down are unvirtuous and of evil character, yet he is not unvirtuous and of evil character, then why can’t the Tathāgata get (to say) that the Tathāgata knows magic, yet the Tathāgata is not a magician?”

“I know magic, headman. I know the (kammic) result of magic, and I know how a magician practices so that—at the breakup of the body, after death—he appears in the plane of deprivation, the bad destination, the lower realms, in

hell.” — SN 42:13

§ 93. “Venerable sir, 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?”

“Very well then, prince, I will cross-question you on this matter. Answer as you see fit. What do you think? Are you skilled in the parts of a chariot?”

“Yes, venerable sir. I am skilled in the parts of a chariot.”

“And what do you think? 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?”

“Venerable sir, 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.”<sup>1</sup> — MN 58

NOTE: 1. This statement is apparently related to the more abstract statement in AN 4:24 [§46], that what the Tathāgata knows is not “established” in him. In other words, he does not define himself or the awakened mind in terms of knowledge or views [§47], even concerning the Dhamma, although the knowledge that led to his awakening and that is born from his awakening [§79] is fully available for him to draw on at any time.

§ 94. When this was said, 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, while 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

§ 95. As he was sitting there, 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 expound to them the holy life both in its particulars & in its meaning, entirely complete, surpassingly pure. Why is that? Because they live with me as their island, with me as their cave, with me as their shelter, with me as their refuge.

“Like the middling field are the male & female lay followers to me. I teach them the Dhamma that is admirable in the beginning, admirable in the middle, admirable in the end. I expound to them the holy life both in its particulars & in its meaning, entirely complete, surpassingly pure. Why is that? Because they live with me as their island, with me as their cave, with me as their shelter, with me as their refuge.

“Like the poor field—sandy, salty, with bad soil—are the followers of other sects to me: contemplatives, brahmans, & wanderers. I teach them the Dhamma that is admirable in the beginning, admirable in the middle, admirable in the end. I expound to them the holy life both in its particulars & in its meaning, entirely complete, surpassingly pure. Why is that? (I think,) ‘Perhaps they might

understand even one sentence. That will be for their long-term benefit & happiness.’

“Suppose, headman, that a man had three waterpots: one uncracked that doesn’t let water seep out, one uncracked that lets water seep out, and one cracked that lets water seep out. What do you think? If that man wanted to store water, in which pot would he store it first...?”

“... He would store it first in the uncracked waterpot that doesn’t let water seep out. Having stored it there, he would store it in the uncracked waterpot that lets water seep out. Having stored it there, he would store it in the cracked waterpot that lets water seep out. Why is that? At least it could go toward washing dishes.”

“In the same way, headman, like the uncracked waterpot that doesn’t let water seep out are the monks & nuns to me.... Like the uncracked waterpot that lets water seep out are the male & female lay followers to me.... Like the cracked waterpot that lets water seep out are the followers of other sects to me: contemplatives, brahmans, & wanderers. I teach them the Dhamma that is admirable in the beginning, admirable in the middle, admirable in the end. I expound to them the holy life both in its particulars & in its meaning, entirely complete, surpassingly pure. Why is that? (I think,) ‘Perhaps they might understand even one sentence. That will be for their long-term benefit & happiness.’” — *SN 42:7*

§ 96. When this was said, Prince Bodhi said to the Blessed One, “Lord, when a monk gains a Tathāgata to discipline him, how long does it take for him to reach & remain 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?”

“Very well then, prince, I will cross-question you on this matter. Answer as you see fit. What do you think? Are you skilled in the art of riding an elephant & wielding a goad?”

“Yes, lord, I am skilled in the art of riding an elephant & wielding a goad.”

“And what do you think? There is the case where a man comes, (thinking,) ‘Prince Bodhi knows the art of riding an elephant & wielding a goad. I will study the art of riding an elephant & wielding a goad under him.’ But if he were without conviction, he would not achieve what could be achieved by one with conviction. If he had many illnesses, he would not achieve what could be achieved by one of few illnesses. If he were full of guile & deceitful, he would not achieve what could be achieved by one without guile or deceit. If he were lazy, he would not achieve what could be achieved by one with aroused persistence. If he were undiscerning, he would not achieve what could be achieved by one who was discerning. What do you think, prince? Would that man be able to train in the art of riding an elephant & wielding a goad under you?”

“Even a man with only one of those qualities, lord, would not be able to train in the art of riding an elephant & wielding a goad under me—to say nothing of one with all five.”

“What do you think, prince? There is the case where a man comes, (thinking,) ‘Prince Bodhi knows the art of riding an elephant & wielding a goad. I will study the art of riding an elephant & wielding a goad under him.’ And if he were to have conviction, he would achieve what could be achieved by one with conviction. If he had few illnesses, he would achieve what could be achieved by one of few illnesses. If he were without guile or deceit, he would achieve what could be achieved by one without guile or deceit. If he had aroused persistence, he would achieve what could be achieved by one with aroused persistence. If he

were discerning, he would achieve what could be achieved by one who was discerning. What do you think, prince? Would that man be able to train in the art of riding an elephant & wielding a goad under you?"

"Even a man with only one of those qualities, lord, would be able to train in the art of riding an elephant & wielding a goad under me—to say nothing of one with all five."

"In the same way, prince, there are these five factors for exertion. Which five?"

"There is the case where a monk has conviction, is convinced of the Tathāgata's awakening: 'Indeed, the Blessed One is worthy and rightly self-awakened, consummate in knowledge & conduct, well-gone, an expert with regard to the world, unexcelled as a trainer for those people fit to be tamed, the Teacher of divine & human beings, awakened, blessed.'

"He is free from illness & discomfort, endowed with good digestion—not too cold, not too hot, of moderate strength—fit for exertion.

"He is free from guile & deceit. He declares himself to the Teacher or to his wise friends in the holy life in line with what he actually is.

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

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

"These are the five factors for exertion.

"When a monk endowed with these five qualities gains a Tathāgata to discipline him, he would reach & remain 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 in seven years.

"Let alone seven years. When a monk endowed with these five qualities gains a Tathāgata to discipline him, he would reach & remain 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 in six years... five years... four years... three years... two years... one year... seven months... six months... five months... four months... three months... two months... one month... half a month... seven days... six days... five days... four days... three days... two days... one day.

"Let alone one day. When a monk endowed with these five qualities gains a Tathāgata to discipline him and is instructed in the evening, he will attain distinction by morning; instructed in the morning, he will attain distinction by evening." — *MN 85*

§ 97. On one occasion the Blessed One was staying near Nālandā in Pāvārika's 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 breakup of the body, after death, reappears in a good destination, the heavenly world."

"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 man is one who takes life, steals, engages in sexual misconduct; is a liar, one who speaks divisive speech, coarse speech, & idle chatter; is covetous, bears thoughts of ill will, & holds to wrong views. Then a great crowd of people, gathering & congregating,

would pray, praise, & circumambulate with their hands palm-to-palm over the heart (saying,) 'May this man, at the breakup of the body, after death, reappear in a good destination, the heavenly world!' What do you think? Would that man—because of the prayers, praise, & circumambulation of that great crowd of people—at the breakup of the body, after death, reappear in a good destination, the heavenly world?"

"No, lord."

"Suppose a man were to throw a large boulder into a deep lake of water, and a great crowd of people, gathering & congregating, would pray, praise, & circumambulate with their hands palm-to-palm over the heart (saying,) 'Rise up, O boulder! Come floating up, O boulder! Come float to the shore, O boulder!' What do you think? Would that boulder—because of the prayers, praise, & circumambulation of that great crowd of people—rise up, come floating up, or come float to the shore?"

"No, lord."

"So it is with any man who takes life, steals, indulges in sexual misconduct; is a liar, one who speaks divisive speech, coarse speech, & idle chatter; is covetous, 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 breakup of the body, after death, reappear in a good destination, the heavenly world!'—still, at the breakup of the body, after death, he would reappear in destitution, a bad destination, the lower realms, hell.

"Now, what do you think? There is the case where a man is one who refrains from taking life, from stealing, & from indulging in sexual misconduct; he refrains from lying, from divisive speech, from coarse speech, & from idle chatter; he is not covetous, bears no thoughts of ill will, & holds to right view. Then a great crowd of people, gathering & congregating, would pray, praise, & circumambulate with their hands palm-to-palm over the heart (saying,) 'May this man, at the breakup of the body, after death, reappear in destitution, a bad destination, the lower realms, hell!' What do you think? Would that man—because of the prayers, praise, & circumambulation of that great crowd of people—at the breakup of the body, after death, reappear in destitution, a bad destination, the lower realms, hell?"

"No, lord."

"Suppose a man were to throw a jar of ghee or a jar of oil into a deep lake of water, where it would break. There the shards & jar-fragments would go down, while the ghee or oil would come up. Then a great crowd of people, gathering & congregating, would pray, praise, & circumambulate with their hands palm-to-palm over the heart (saying,) 'Sink, O ghee/oil! Submerge, O ghee/oil! Go down, O ghee/oil!' What do you think? Would that ghee/oil, because of the prayers, praise, & circumambulation of that great crowd of people sink, submerge, or go down?"

"No, lord."

"So it is with any man who refrains from taking life, from stealing, & from indulging in sexual misconduct; refrains from lying, from divisive speech, from coarse speech, & from idle chatter; is not covetous, 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 breakup of the body, after death, reappear in a destitution, a bad destination, the lower realms, hell!'—still, at the breakup of the body, after death, he would reappear in a good destination, the heavenly world."

When this was said, Asibandhakaputta the headman said to the Blessed One:

“Magnificent, lord! Magnificent! Just as if he were to place upright what was overturned, to reveal what was hidden, to show the way to one who was lost, or to carry a lamp into the dark so that those with eyes could see forms, in the same way has the Blessed One—through many lines of reasoning—made the Dhamma clear. I go to the Blessed One for refuge, to the Dhamma, & to the Community of monks. May the Blessed One remember me as a lay follower who has gone for refuge from this day forward, for life.” — *SN 42:6*

§ 98. Then Kesin the horse trainer went to the Blessed One and, on arrival, having bowed down, sat to one side. As he was sitting there, the Blessed One said to him, “You, Kesin, are a trained man, 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, Kesin, 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?”

“Kessin, 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 celibate 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 celibate 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 celibate life don’t regard one as being worth speaking to or admonishing.” — AN 4:111

#### HYPOTHETICALS: KINGS, PRINCES, & GENERALS

§ 99. [King Ajātasattu:] “So, venerable sir, I ask the Blessed One as well: There are these common craftsmen: elephant-trainers, horse-trainers, charioteers, archers, standard bearers, camp marshals, supply corps officers, high royal officers, commandos, military heroes, armor-clad warriors, leather-clad warriors, domestic slaves, confectioners, barbers, bath attendants, cooks, garland-makers, laundry men, weavers, basket-makers, potters, calculators, accountants, & any other craftsmen of a similar sort. They live off the fruits of their crafts, visible in the here & now. They give happiness & pleasure to themselves, to their parents, wives, & children, to their friends & colleagues. They put in place an excellent presentation of offerings to contemplatives & brahmans, leading to heaven, resulting in happiness, conducive to a heavenly rebirth. Is it possible, venerable sir, to point out a similar fruit of the contemplative life, visible in the here & now?”

“Yes, it is, great king. But first, I will cross-question you on this matter. Answer as you see fit. Suppose there were a man of yours: your slave, your workman, rising in the morning before you, going to bed in the evening only after you, doing whatever you order, always acting to please you, speaking politely to you, always watching for the look on your face. The thought would occur to him, ‘Isn’t it amazing? Isn’t it astounding?—the destination, the results, of meritorious deeds. For this King Ajātasattu is a human being, and I too am a human being, yet King Ajātasattu enjoys himself supplied & replete with the five strings of sensuality—like a deity, as it were—while I am his slave, his workman... always watching for the look on his face. I too should do meritorious deeds. What if I were to shave off my hair & beard, put on the ochre robes, and go forth from the household life into homelessness?’

“So after some time he shaves off his hair & beard, puts on the ochre robes, and goes forth from the household life into homelessness. Having thus gone forth he lives restrained in body, speech, & mind, content with the simplest food & shelter, delighting in solitude. Then suppose one of your men were to inform you: ‘You should know, your majesty, that that man of yours—your slave, your workman... always watching for the look on your face... has gone forth from the household life into homelessness... content with the simplest food & shelter, delighting in solitude.’ Would you, thus informed, say, ‘Bring that man back to me. Make him again be my slave, my workman... always watching for the look on my face!’?”

“Not at all, venerable sir. Rather, I am the one who should bow down to him, rise up out of respect for him, invite him to a seat, invite him to accept gifts of robes, almsfood, lodgings, & medicinal requisites for the sick. And I would provide him with righteous safety, defense, & protection.”

“So what do you think, great king? With that being the case, is there a visible fruit of the contemplative life, or is there not?”

“Yes, venerable sir. With that being the case, there certainly is a visible fruit of the contemplative life.”

“This, great king, is the first fruit of the contemplative life, visible in the here & now, that I point out to you.”



“But is it possible, venerable sir, to point out yet another fruit of the contemplative life, visible in the here & now?”

“Yes, it is, great king. But first, with regard to that, I will ask you a counter-question. Answer however you please. Suppose there were a man of yours: a farmer, a householder, a taxpayer swelling the royal treasury. The thought would occur to him, ‘Isn’t it amazing? Isn’t it astounding?—the destination, the results, of meritorious deeds! For this King Ajātasattu is a human being, and I too am a human being, yet King Ajātasattu enjoys himself supplied & replete with the five strings of sensuality—like a deity, as it were—while I am a farmer, a householder, a taxpayer swelling the royal treasury. I too should do meritorious deeds. What if I were to shave off my hair & beard, put on the ochre robes, and go forth from the household life into homelessness?”

“So after some time he abandons his mass of wealth, large or small; leaves his circle of relatives, large or small; shaves off his hair & beard, puts on the ochre robes, and goes forth from the household life into homelessness. Having thus gone forth he lives restrained in body, speech, & mind, content with the simplest food & shelter, delighting in solitude. Then suppose one of your men were to inform you: ‘You should know, your majesty, that that man of yours—the farmer, the householder, the taxpayer swelling the royal treasury... has gone forth from the household life into homelessness... content with the simplest food & shelter, delighting in solitude.’ Would you, thus informed, say, ‘Bring that man back to me. Make him again be a farmer, a householder, a taxpayer swelling the royal treasury!’?”

“Not at all, venerable sir. Rather, I am the one who should bow down to him, rise up out of respect for him, invite him to a seat, invite him to accept gifts of robes, almsfood, lodgings, & medicinal requisites for the sick. And I would provide him with righteous safety, defense, & protection.”

“So what do you think, great king? With that being the case, is there a visible fruit of the contemplative life, or is there not?”

“Yes, venerable sir. With that being the case, there certainly is a visible fruit of the contemplative life.”

“This, great king, is the second fruit of the contemplative life, visible in the here & now, that I point out to you.”

“But is it possible, venerable sir, to point out yet another fruit of the contemplative life, visible in the here & now?”

“Yes, it is, great king. [And here the Buddha gives his full answer to the king’s question, describing the path of practice in great detail, telling the fruit of jhāna practice, the knowledges based on jhāna, and culminating in the fruit of total release.] — DN 2

§ 100. [Ven. Raṭṭhapāla is speaking to King Koravya:] “Great king, there are four Dhamma summaries stated by the Blessed One who knows & sees, worthy & rightly self-awakened. Having known & seen & heard them, I went forth from the home life into homelessness. Which four?”

“‘The world is swept away. It does not endure’: This is the first Dhamma summary stated by the Blessed One who knows & sees, worthy & rightly self-awakened. Having known & seen & heard it, I went forth from the home life into homelessness.

“‘The world is without shelter, without protector’: This is the second Dhamma summary....

“‘The world is without ownership. One has to pass on, leaving everything behind’: This is the third Dhamma summary....

“‘The world is insufficient, insatiable, a slave to craving’: This is the fourth

Dhamma summary....

"These, great king, are the four Dhamma summaries stated by the Blessed One who knows & sees, worthy & rightly self-awakened. Having known & seen & heard them, I went forth from the home life into homelessness."

"Master Raṭṭhapāla, you say, 'The world is swept away. It does not endure.' Now how is the meaning of this statement to be understood?"

"What do you think, great king? When you were twenty or twenty-five years old—an expert elephant rider, an expert horseman, an expert charioteer, an expert archer, an expert swordsman—were you strong in arm & strong in thigh, fit, & seasoned in warfare?"

"Yes, Master Raṭṭhapāla, when I was twenty or twenty-five years old... I was strong in arm & strong in thigh, fit, & seasoned in warfare. It was as if I had supernormal power. I do not see anyone who was my equal in strength."

"And what do you think, great king? Are you even now as strong in arm & strong in thigh, as fit, & as seasoned in warfare?"

"Not at all, Master Raṭṭhapāla. I'm now a feeble old man, aged, advanced in years, having come to the last stage of life, 80 years old. Sometimes, thinking, 'I will place my foot here,' I place it somewhere else."

"It was in reference to this, great king, that the Blessed One who knows & sees, worthy & rightly self-awakened, said, 'The world is swept away. It does not endure.' Having known & seen & heard this, I went forth from the home life into homelessness."

"It's amazing, Master Raṭṭhapāla. It's astounding, how well that has been said by the Blessed One who knows & sees, worthy & rightly self-awakened: 'The world is swept away. It does not endure.' For the world really is swept away, Master Raṭṭhapāla. It does not endure.

"Now, in this royal court there are elephant troops & cavalry & chariot troops & infantry that will serve to defend us from dangers. And yet you say, 'The world is without shelter, without protector.' How is the meaning of this statement to be understood?"

"What do you think, great king? Do you have any recurring illness?"

"Yes, Master Raṭṭhapāla, I have a recurring wind-illness. Sometimes my friends & advisors, relatives & blood-kinsmen, stand around me saying, 'This time King Koravya will die. This time King Koravya will die.'"

"And what do you think, great king? Can you say to your friends & advisors, relatives & blood-kinsmen, 'My friends & advisors, relatives & blood-kinsmen are commanded: all of you who are present, share out this pain so that I may feel less pain'? Or do you have to feel that pain all alone?"

"Oh, no, Master Raṭṭhapāla, I can't say to my friends & advisors, relatives & blood-kinsmen, 'All of you who are present, share out this pain so that I may feel less pain.' I have to feel that pain all alone."

"It was in reference to this, great king, that the Blessed One who knows & sees, worthy & rightly self-awakened, said, 'The world is without shelter, without protector.' Having known & seen & heard this, I went forth from the home life into homelessness."

"It's amazing, Master Raṭṭhapāla. It's astounding, how well that has been said by the Blessed One who knows & sees, worthy & rightly self-awakened: 'The world is without shelter, without protector.' For the world really is without shelter, Master Raṭṭhapāla. It is without protector.

"Now, in this royal court there is a great deal of gold & silver stashed away underground & in attic vaults. And yet you say, 'The world is without ownership. One has to pass on, leaving everything behind.' How is the meaning of this statement to be understood?"

"What do you think, great king? As you now enjoy yourself endowed &

replete with the five strings of sensuality, can you say, 'Even in the afterlife I will enjoy myself in the same way, endowed & replete with the very same five strings of sensuality'? Or will this wealth fall to others, while you pass on in accordance with your kamma?"

"Oh, no, Master Raṭṭhapāla, I can't say, 'Even in the afterlife I will enjoy myself in the same way, endowed & replete with the very same five strings of sensuality.' This wealth will fall to others, while I pass on in accordance with my kamma."

"It was in reference to this, great king, that the Blessed One who knows & sees, worthy & rightly self-awakened, said, 'The world is without ownership. One has to pass on, leaving everything behind.' Having known & seen & heard this, I went forth from the home life into homelessness."

"It's amazing, Master Raṭṭhapāla. It's astounding, how well that has been said by the Blessed One who knows & sees, worthy & rightly self-awakened: 'The world is without ownership. One has to pass on, leaving everything behind.' For the world really is without ownership, Master Raṭṭhapāla. One has to pass on, leaving everything behind."

"Now, Master Raṭṭhapāla, you say, 'The world is insufficient, insatiable, a slave to craving.' How is the meaning of this statement to be understood?"

"What do you think, great king? Do you now rule over the prosperous country of Kuru?"

"That is so, Master Raṭṭhapāla. I rule over the prosperous country of Kuru."

"What do you think, great king? Suppose a trustworthy, reliable man of yours were to come to you from the east. On arrival he would say to you, 'May it please your majesty to know, I have come from the east. There I saw a great country, powerful & prosperous, populous & crowded with people. Plenty are the elephant troops there, plenty the cavalry troops, chariot troops, & infantry troops. Plenty is the ivory-work there, plenty the gold & silver, both worked & unworked. Plenty are the women for the taking. It is possible, with the forces you now have, to conquer it. Conquer it, great king!' What would you do?"

"Having conquered it, Master Raṭṭhapāla, I would rule over it."

"Now, what do you think, great king? Suppose a trustworthy, reliable man of yours were to come to you from the west... the north... the south... the other side of the ocean. On arrival he would say to you, 'May it please your majesty to know, I have come from the other side of the ocean. There I saw a great country, powerful & prosperous, populous & crowded with people. Plenty are the elephant troops there, plenty the cavalry troops, chariot troops, & infantry troops. Plenty is the ivory-work there, plenty the gold & silver, both worked & unworked. Plenty are the women for the taking. It is possible, with the forces you now have, to conquer it. Conquer it, great king!' What would you do?"

"Having conquered it, Master Raṭṭhapāla, I would rule over it too."

"It was in reference to this, great king, that the Blessed One who knows & sees, worthy & rightly self-awakened, said, 'The world is insufficient, insatiable, a slave to craving.' Having known & seen & heard this, I went forth from the home life into homelessness."

"It's amazing, Master Raṭṭhapāla. It's astounding, how well that has been said by the Blessed One who knows & sees, worthy & rightly self-awakened: 'The world is insufficient, insatiable, a slave to craving.' For the world really is insufficient, Master Raṭṭhapāla. It's insatiable, a slave to craving." — MN 84

§ 101. 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 Nālijaṅgha: "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 what is untrue."

"Yes, madam," the brahman Nālijaṅgha responded to Queen Mallikā. Going 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 line of reasoning 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 Sāvattī 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 line of reasoning 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 Sāvattī 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 line of reasoning 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 Sāvattī there was a man whose mother 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 mother? Have you seen my mother?' It's through this line of reasoning 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 Sāvattī there was a man 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 line of reasoning 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 Sāvatti 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 line of reasoning 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 Nālijaṅgha, 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 discussion 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 Viḍūḍabha 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*

§ 102. [King Pasenadi:] “Where, lord, should a gift be given?”

[The Buddha:] “Wherever the mind feels confidence, great king.”

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

“This [question] is one thing, great king—‘Where should a gift be given?’—while this—‘A gift given where bears great fruit?’—is something else entirely. What is given to a virtuous person—rather than to an unvirtuous one—bears great fruit.

“Very well then, great king, I will cross-question you on this matter. Answer as you see fit.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

“What is given to one who has abandoned five factors and is endowed with five factors in this way bears great fruit.” — *SN 3:24*

§ 103. [King Pasenadi:] “Lord, there are these four castes: noble warriors,

brahmans, merchants, & workers. Is there any distinction or difference among them?"

[The Buddha:] "Great king, of these four castes, two—noble warriors & brahmans—are held to be foremost in terms of receiving homage, hospitality, salutation, & polite services."

"I'm not asking about the present life, lord. I'm asking about the future life. Is there any distinction or difference among these four castes?"

"Great king, there are these five factors for exertion. Which five?"

"There is the case where a monk has conviction, is convinced of the Tathāgata's awakening: 'Indeed, the Blessed One is pure and rightly self-awakened, consummate in knowledge & conduct, well-gone, an expert with regard to the world, unexcelled as a trainer for those people fit to be tamed, the Teacher of divine & human beings, awakened, blessed.'

"He is free from illness & discomfort, endowed with good digestion—not too cold, not too hot, of moderate strength—fit for exertion.

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

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

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

"These are the five factors for exertion.

"As for the four castes, great king: If they were endowed with these five factors for exertion, that would be for their long-term benefit & happiness."

"Lord, if these four castes were endowed with these five factors for exertion, would there be any distinction or difference among them in that respect?"

"I tell you, great king: the difference among them would lie in the diversity of their exertion. Suppose that there were two tamable elephants, tamable horses, or tamable oxen that were well-tamed & well-trained; and two tamable elephants, tamable horses, or tamable oxen that were untamed & untrained. What do you think? Would the two tamable elephants, tamable horses, or tamable oxen that were well-tamed & well-trained acquire the habits of the tamed and reach the status of the tamed?"

"Yes, lord."

"And would the two tamable elephants, tamable horses, or tamable oxen that were untamed & untrained acquire the habits of the tamed and reach the status of the tamed?"

"No, lord."

"In the same way, great king, it is impossible that what could be attained by one who has confidence, who is free from illness, who is neither fraudulent nor deceitful, whose persistence is aroused, and who is discerning could also be attained by one who is without conviction, who is sickly, fraudulent & deceitful, lazy, and dull."

"What the Blessed One says, lord, seems reasonable. What the Blessed One says seems logical. But with regard to these four castes: if they were endowed with these five factors for exertion, and they had right exertion, would there be any distinction or difference among them in that respect?"

"I tell you, great king, that there would be no difference among them with regard to the release of one and the release of another. Suppose that a man, taking dry sala wood, were to generate a fire and make heat appear. And suppose that another man, taking dry saka [teak?] wood, were to generate a fire and make heat appear. And suppose that another man, taking dry mango wood, were to generate a fire and make heat appear. And suppose that another man,

taking dry fig wood, were to generate a fire and make heat appear. Now, what do you think, great king? Among those fires generated from different kinds of wood, would there be any difference between the glow of one and the glow of another, the color of one and the color of another, the radiance of one and the radiance of another?"

"No, lord."

"In the same way, great king, in the power that is kindled by persistence and generated by exertion, I say that there is no difference with regard to the release of one and the release of another."

"What the Blessed One says, lord, seems reasonable. What the Blessed One says seems logical. But, lord, are there devas?"

"But why do you ask, great king, 'But, lord, are there devas'?"

"Whether the devas come back to this life, lord, or whether they don't."

"Those devas who are afflicted come back to this life, whereas those devas who are unafflicted don't come back to this life."

When this was said, General Viḍūḍabha said to the Blessed One, "Lord, can the afflicted devas oust or expel the unafflicted devas from that place?"

Then the thought occurred to Ven. Ānanda, "This General Viḍūḍabha is the son of King Pasenadi Kosala, and I am the son of the Blessed One. Now is the time for the son to confer with the son." So Ven. Ānanda turned to General Viḍūḍabha and said, "Very well then, general, I will cross-question you on this matter. Answer as you see fit. Through the extent of land conquered by King Pasenadi Kosala—where he exercises sovereign & independent kingship—is he able to oust or expel a contemplative or brahman from that place, regardless of whether that person has merit or not, or follows the holy life or not?"

"Sir, through the extent of land conquered by King Pasenadi Kosala—where he exercises sovereign & independent kingship—he is able to oust or expel a contemplative or brahman from that place, regardless of whether that person has merit or not, or follows the holy life or not."

"And what do you think, general? Through the extent of land not conquered by King Pasenadi Kosala—where he does not exercise sovereign & independent kingship—is he able to oust or expel a contemplative or brahman from that place, regardless of whether that person has merit or not, or follows the holy life or not?"

"Sir, through the extent of land not conquered by King Pasenadi Kosala—where he does not exercise sovereign & independent kingship—he is not able to oust or expel a contemplative or brahman from that place, regardless of whether that person has merit or not, or follows the holy life or not."

"And what do you think, general? Have you heard of the Devas of the Thirty-three?"

"Yes, sir, I have heard of the Devas of the Thirty-three, as has King Pasenadi Kosala."

"And what do you think, general? Could King Pasenadi Kosala oust or expel the Devas of the Thirty-three from that place?"

"Sir, King Pasenadi Kosala can't even see the Devas of the Thirty-three. How could he oust or expel them from that place?"

"In the same way, general, afflicted devas, who will come back to this life, can't even see the unafflicted devas who don't come back to this life. How could they oust or expel them from that place?"

Then King Pasenadi Kosala said to the Blessed One, "Lord, what is the name of this monk?"

"His name is Ānanda [Joy], great king."

"What a joy he is! What a true joy! But, lord, are there Brahmās?"

"But why do you ask, 'But, lord, are there Brahmās'?"



“Whether the Brahmās come back to this life, lord, or whether they don’t.”

“Those Brahmās who are afflicted come back to this life, great king, whereas those Brahmās who are unafflicted don’t come back to this life.” — *MN 90*

§ 104. I have heard that on one occasion the Blessed One was staying near Vesālī, in the Great Forest, at the Gabled Pavilion. Then General Siha 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: “Is it possible, lord, to point out a fruit of giving visible in the here & now?”

“It is possible, Siha. One who gives, who is a master of giving, is dear & charming to people at large. And the fact that one who gives, who is a master of giving, is dear & charming to people at large: this is a fruit of giving visible in the here & now.

“Furthermore, good people, people of integrity, admire one who gives, who is a master of giving. And the fact that good people, people of integrity, admire one who gives, who is a master of giving: This too is a fruit of giving visible in the here & now.

“Furthermore, the fine reputation of one who gives, who is a master of giving, is spread far & wide. And the fact that the fine reputation of one who gives, who is a master of giving, is spread far & wide: This too is a fruit of giving visible in the here & now.

“Furthermore, when one who gives, who is a master of giving, approaches any assembly of people—noble warriors, brahmans, householders, or contemplatives—he/she does so confidently & without embarrassment. And the fact that when one who gives, who is a master of giving, approaches any assembly of people—noble warriors, brahmans, householders, or contemplatives—he/she does so confidently & without embarrassment: This too is a fruit of giving visible in the here & now.

“Furthermore, at the breakup of the body, after death, one who gives, who is a master of giving, reappears in a good destination, the heavenly world. And the fact that at the breakup of the body, after death, one who gives, who is a master of giving, reappears in a good destination, the heavenly world: This is a fruit of giving in the next life.”

When this was said, General Siha said to the Blessed One: “As for the four fruits of giving visible in the here & now that have been pointed out by the Blessed One, it’s not the case that I go by conviction in the Blessed One with regard to them. I know them too. I am one who gives, a master of giving, dear & charming to people at large. I am one who gives, a master of giving; good people, people of integrity, admire me. I am one who gives, a master of giving, and my fine reputation is spread far & wide: ‘Siha is one who gives, a doer, a supporter of the Saṅgha.’ I am one who gives, a master of giving, and when I approach any assembly of people—noble warriors, brahmans, householders, or contemplatives—I do so confidently & without embarrassment.

“But when the Blessed One says to me, ‘At the breakup of the body, after death, one who gives, who is a master of giving, reappears in a good destination, the heavenly world,’ that I do not know. That is where I go by conviction in the Blessed One.”

“So it is, Siha. So it is. At the breakup of the body, after death, one who gives, who is a master of giving, reappears in a good destination, the heavenly world.” — *AN 5:34*

§ 105. I have heard that on one occasion the Blessed One was staying near Vesālī, in the Great Forest, at the Gabled Pavilion. Then General Siha 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: "Is it possible, lord, to point out a fruit of giving visible in the here & now?"

"Very well then, Siha, I will cross-question you on this matter. Answer as you see fit. There is the case where there are two men: one without conviction, stingy, miserly, abusive; and one of conviction, a master of giving, one who delights in providing support. What do you think? To which of the two would arahants, on feeling sympathy, first show sympathy: the man without conviction, stingy, miserly, abusive; or the man of conviction, a master of giving, one who delights in providing support?"

"Why, lord, would arahants, when feeling sympathy, first show sympathy to the man without conviction, stingy, miserly, abusive? The man of conviction, a master of giving, one who delights in providing support: He's the one who arahants, on feeling sympathy, would first show sympathy."

"What do you think? Whom would arahants, when visiting, first visit?"

"...The man of conviction, a master of giving, one who delights in providing support..."

"What do you think? From whom would arahants, when receiving (gifts), first receive (gifts)?"

"...The man of conviction, a master of giving, one who delights in providing support..."

"What do you think? Whom would arahants, when teaching, first teach?"

"...The man of conviction, a master of giving, one who delights in providing support..."

"What do you think? Of whom would a fine reputation spread abroad?"

"...The man of conviction, a master of giving, one who delights in providing support..."

"What do you think? Who would approach any assembly of people—noble warriors, brahmans, householders, or contemplatives—confidently & without embarrassment?"

"...The man of conviction, a master of giving, one who delights in providing support..."

"What do you think? Which of the two would—on the breakup of the body, after death—appear in a good destination, the heavenly world: the man without conviction, stingy, miserly, abusive; or the man of conviction, a master of giving, one who delights in providing support?"

"Lord, why would the man the man without conviction, stingy, miserly, abusive—on the breakup of the body, after death—reappear in a good destination, the heavenly world? The man of conviction, a master of giving, one who delights in providing support: He's the one who would—on the breakup of the body, after death—appear in a good destination, the heavenly world.

"Lord, as for the six fruits of giving visible in the here & now that have been pointed out by the Blessed One, it's not the case that I go by conviction in the Blessed One with regard to them. I know them too. I am one who gives, a master of giving, and arahants, when feeling sympathy, show sympathy to me first. I am one who gives, a master of giving, and arahants, when visiting, visit me first. I am one who gives, a master of giving, and arahants when receiving (gifts), receive (gifts) from me first. I am one who gives, a master of giving, and arahants when teaching, teach me first. I am one who gives, a master of giving, and my fine reputation is spread far & wide: 'Siha is one who gives, a doer, a supporter of the Saṅgha.' I am one who gives, a master of giving, and when I approach any assembly of people—noble warriors, brahmans, householders, or contemplatives—I do so confidently & without embarrassment.

"But when the Blessed One says to me, 'At the breakup of the body, after

death, one who gives, who is a master of giving, reappears in a good destination, the heavenly world,' that I do not know. That is where I go by conviction in the Blessed One."

"So it is, Siha. So it is. At the breakup of the body, after death, one who gives, who is a master of giving, reappears in a good destination, the heavenly world."  
— AN 7:54

#### HYPOTHETICALS: BRAHMANS

§ 106. Then the thought occurred to Kāpadika, "When Gotama the contemplative meets my gaze with his, I will ask him a question."

And so the Blessed One, encompassing Kāpadika's awareness with his awareness, met his gaze. Kāpadika thought, "Gotama the contemplative has turned to me. Suppose I ask him a question." So he said to the Blessed One, "Master Gotama, with regard to the ancient hymns of the brahmans—passed down through oral transmission & included in their canon—the brahmans have come to the categorical conclusion that 'Only this is true; anything else is worthless.' What does Master Gotama have to say with regard to this?"

"Tell me, Bhāradvāja, is there among the brahmans even one brahman who says, 'This I know; this I see; only this is true; anything else is worthless?'"

"No, Master Gotama."

"And has there been among the brahmans even one teacher or teacher's teacher back through seven generations who said, 'This I know; this I see; only this is true; anything else is worthless?'"

"No, Master Gotama."

"And among the brahman seers of the past, the creators of the hymns, the composers of the hymns—those ancient hymns, sung, repeated, & collected, which brahmans at present still sing, still chant, repeating what was said, repeating what was spoken—i.e., Atthaka, Vāmaka, Vāmadeva, Vessāmitta, Yamataggi, Angirasa, Bhāradvāja, Vāsettha, Kassapa & Bhagu: Was there even one of these who said, 'This we know; this we see; only this is true; anything else is worthless?'"

"No, Master Gotama."

"So then, Bhāradvāja, it seems that there isn't among the brahmans even one brahman who says, 'This I know; this I see; only this is true; anything else is worthless.' And there hasn't been among the brahmans even one teacher or teacher's teacher back through seven generations who said, 'This I know; this I see; only this is true; anything else is worthless.' And there hasn't been among the brahman seers of the past, the creators of the hymns, the composers of the hymns... even one who said, 'This we know; this we see; only this is true; anything else is worthless.' Suppose there were a row of blind men, each holding on to the one in front of him: The first one doesn't see, the middle one doesn't see, the last one doesn't see. In the same way, the statement of the brahmans turns out to be a row of blind men, as it were: The first one doesn't see, the middle one doesn't see, the last one doesn't see. So what do you think, Bhāradvāja? This being the case, doesn't the conviction of the brahmans turn out to be groundless?"

"It's not only out of conviction, Master Gotama, that the brahmans honor this. They also honor it as unbroken tradition."

"Bhāradvāja, first you went with conviction. Now you speak of unbroken tradition...." — MN 95

§ 107. Then the brahman Saṅgārava 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 say, Master Gotama. We brahmans perform sacrifices and get others to perform sacrifices. And whoever performs a sacrifice, whoever gets others to perform a sacrifice, they have all practiced a practice of merit—the business of a sacrifice—[that benefits] countless beings. But whoever, leaving his family, has gone forth from the home life into homelessness, and tames his single self, brings his single self into tune, brings his single self to unbinding: His practice of merit—this business of going forth—is one [that benefits] only one being.”

“Very well then, brahman, I will cross-question you on this matter. Answer as you see fit. What do you think? There is the case where a Tathāgata appears in the world, an arahant, rightly-self-awakened, consummate in clear-knowing & conduct, one who has gone the good way, knower of the cosmos, unexcelled trainer of those who can be taught, teacher of human & divine beings, awakened, blessed. He says: ‘Here! This is the path, this is the practice that, having practiced, I make known the unexcelled coming ashore in the holy life, having directly known & realized it for myself. Come! You too practice in such a way that you will remain in the unexcelled coming ashore in the holy life, having directly known & realized it for yourselves.’ Thus the Teacher teaches the Dhamma, and others practice, for authenticity [*tathattā*]. And there are countless hundreds of them, countless thousands of them, countless hundreds of thousands of them. This being the case, is this practice of merit—this business of going-forth—one that benefits countless beings, or only one being?”

“This being the case, Master Gotama, this practice of merit—this business of going-forth—is one that benefits countless beings.” — AN 3:61

§ 108. As he was sitting to one side, Esukārin the brahman said to the Blessed One, “Master Gotama, brahmans prescribe four levels of service: They prescribe the level of service to a brahman; they prescribe the level of service to a noble warrior; they prescribe the level of service to a merchant; they prescribe the level of service to a worker. Now the level of service to a brahman that the brahmans prescribe is this: A brahman may serve a brahman, or a noble warrior may serve a brahman, or a merchant may serve a brahman, or a worker may serve a brahman. This, Master Gotama, is the level of service to a brahman that the brahmans prescribe. Now the level of service to a noble warrior that the brahmans prescribe is this: A noble warrior may serve a noble warrior, or a merchant may serve a noble warrior, or a worker may serve a noble warrior. This, Master Gotama, is the level of service to a noble warrior that the brahmans prescribe. Now the level of service to a merchant that the brahmans prescribe is this: A merchant may serve a merchant, or a worker may serve a merchant. This, Master Gotama, is the level of service to a merchant that the brahmans prescribe. Now the level of service to a worker that the brahmans prescribe is this: Only a worker may serve a worker, for who else would serve a worker? This, Master Gotama, is the level of service to a worker that the brahmans prescribe. These are the four levels of service that the brahmans prescribe. What does Master Gotama say to that?”

“But, brahman, has the entire world authorized the brahmans to prescribe these four levels of service?”

“No, Master Gotama.”

“Brahman, it’s as if a man were poor, penniless, & destitute, and people—against his will—were to tie a cut of meat on him, (saying,) ‘You must eat this meat, my good man, and pay its price.’ In the same way, brahmans—without

the consent of those (other) contemplatives & brahmins—prescribe these four levels of service.”

“I don’t say, brahman, that all are fit to be served, but neither do I say that all are not fit to be served. For if, when serving someone, one were to become worse from that service, and not better, I say that that person is not fit to be served. But if when serving someone, one were to become better from that service, and not worse, I say that that person is fit to be served.

“If they were to ask a noble warrior, ‘Which would you serve: one who, when serving him, you became worse from that service, and not better; or one who, when serving him, you became better from that service, and not worse?’ The noble warrior, answering rightly, would say, ‘I would not serve the one who, when serving him, I became worse from that service, and not better; but I would serve the one who, when serving him, I became better from that service, and not worse.’

“If they were to ask a brahman...

“If they were to ask a merchant...

“If they were to ask a worker, ‘Which would you serve: one who, when serving him, you became worse from that service, and not better; or one who, when serving him, you became better from that service, and not worse?’ The worker, answering rightly, would say, ‘I would not serve the one who, when serving him, I became worse from that service, and not better; but I would serve the one who, when serving him, I became better from that service, and not worse.’

“I don’t say that coming from a high-born family is better, but neither do I say that coming from a high-born family is worse. I don’t say that having great beauty is better, but neither do I say that having great beauty is worse. I don’t say that having great wealth is better, but neither do I say that having great wealth is worse. For there is the case where one from a high-born family is one who kills living beings, steals, engages in sexual misconduct, tells lies, speaks divisive speech, speaks coarse speech, engages in idle chatter, is covetous, bears thoughts of ill will, and has wrong views. Therefore I don’t say that coming from a high-born family is better. And yet there is also the case where one from a high-born family is one who doesn’t kill living beings, doesn’t steal, doesn’t engage in sexual misconduct, doesn’t tell lies, doesn’t speak divisive speech, doesn’t speak coarse speech, doesn’t engage in idle chatter, isn’t covetous, doesn’t bear thoughts of ill will, and doesn’t have wrong views. Therefore I don’t say that coming from a high-born family is worse.

[Similarly with people of great beauty or great wealth.]

“I don’t say, brahman, that all are fit to be served, but neither do I say that all are not fit to be served. If when serving someone, one grows in conviction, grows in virtue, grows in learning, grows in generosity, grows in discernment, I say that that person is fit to be served.

When this was said, Esukārin the brahman said to the Blessed One, “Master Gotama, the brahmins prescribe these four types of wealth: They prescribe the proper wealth of a brahman; they prescribe the proper wealth of a noble warrior; they prescribe the proper wealth of a merchant; and they prescribe the proper wealth of a worker. Now the proper wealth of a brahman that the brahmins prescribe is this: going for alms. And if a brahman despises his proper wealth—going for alms—he is one who neglects his duty, like a cowherd who steals. This, Master Gotama, is the proper wealth of a brahman that the brahmins prescribe. Now the proper wealth of a noble warrior that the brahmins prescribe is this: the bow & quiver. And if a noble warrior despises his proper wealth—the bow & quiver—he is one who neglects his duty, like a cowherd who steals. This, Master Gotama, is the proper wealth of a noble

warrior that the brahmins prescribe. Now the proper wealth of a merchant that the brahmins prescribe is this: farming & keeping herds of cattle. And if a merchant despises his proper wealth—farming & keeping herds of cattle—he is one who neglects his duty, like a cowherd who steals. This, Master Gotama, is the proper wealth of a merchant that the brahmins prescribe. Now the proper wealth of a worker that the brahmins prescribe is this: the sickle & the carrying pole. And if a worker despises his proper wealth—the sickle & the carrying pole—he is one who neglects his duty, like a cowherd who steals. This, Master Gotama, is the proper wealth of a worker that the brahmins prescribe. These are the four types of wealth that the brahmins prescribe. What does Master Gotama say to that?”

“But, brahman, has the entire world authorized the brahmins to prescribe these four types of wealth?”

“No, Master Gotama.”

“Brahman, it’s as if a man were poor, penniless, & destitute, and people—against his will—were to tie a cut of meat on him, (saying,) ‘You must eat this meat, my good man, and pay its price.’ In the same way, brahmins—without the consent of those (other) contemplatives & brahmins—prescribe these four types of wealth.

“Brahman, I prescribe the noble, transcendent Dhamma as a person’s proper wealth.” — MN 96

#### HYPOTHETICALS: KAMMA

§ 109. Then the Blessed One said to Ven. MahāMoggallāna, “For what discussion are you now sitting here together? Or what was your discussion that was interrupted in mid-course?”

“Just now, lord, I said to Vappa the Sakyan, the disciple of the Nigaṅthas, ‘In case there were a person who—from the fading of ignorance, and from the arising of clear knowing—were restrained in body, restrained in speech, & restrained in mind, do you see the possibility that, from any cause, fermentations to be experienced as pain would flow toward that person in a future life?’ When this was said, Vappa the Sakyan said to me, ‘I do see the possibility where there would be a case where—from the cause of a previously done evil action whose results have yet to ripen—fermentations to be experienced as pain would flow toward that person in a future life.’ This was my discussion with Vappa the Sakyan that was interrupted when the Blessed One appeared.”

Then the Blessed One said to Vappa the Sakyan, “Vappa, if you will allow of me what should be allowed, protest what should be protested, and further cross-question me directly then & there on the meaning of any statement of mine that you don’t understand—‘How is this, lord? What is the meaning of this?’—then we could have a discussion here.”

“Lord, I will admit what should be admitted, reject what should be rejected, and further cross-question the Blessed One directly on the meaning of any statement of his that I don’t understand—‘How is this, lord? What is the meaning of this?’: Let us have a discussion here.”

“Vappa, as for any fermentations causing trouble & vexation that arise in dependence on bodily activity: When one has abandoned bodily activity, those fermentations causing trouble & vexation do not exist for him. He does no new action [*kamma*], and as for old action, he destroys it with each contact: a wasting away that is visible here & now, timeless, inviting inspection, pertinent, to be known by the observant for themselves. Do you see the possibility that, from

any cause, fermentations to be experienced as pain would flow toward that person in a future life?"

"No, lord."

"Vappa, as for any fermentations causing trouble & vexation that arise in dependence on verbal activity... any fermentations causing trouble & vexation that arise in dependence on mental activity... any fermentations causing trouble & vexation that arise in dependence on ignorance: From the fading of ignorance, and from the arising of clear knowing, those fermentations causing trouble & vexation do not exist for him. He does no new action, and as for old action, he destroys it with each contact: a wasting away that is visible here & now, timeless, inviting inspection, pertinent, to be known by the observant for themselves. Do you see the possibility that, from any cause, fermentations to be experienced as pain would flow toward that person in a future life?"

"No, lord."

"For a monk whose mind is thus rightly released, Vappa, six continual dwellings have been attained. When seeing a form via the eye, he is neither glad nor sad, but dwells equanimous, mindful, & alert.

"When hearing a sound via the ear....

"When smelling an aroma via the nose....

"When tasting a flavor via the tongue....

"When feeling a tactile sensation via the body....

"When cognizing an idea via the mind, he is neither glad nor sad, but dwells equanimous, mindful, & alert.

"When sensing a feeling limited to the body, he discerns that 'I am sensing a feeling limited to the body.' When sensing a feeling limited to life, he discerns that 'I am sensing a feeling limited to life.' He discerns that 'With the breakup of the body, after the termination of life, all that is sensed, not being relished, will grow cold right here.'

"Vappa, suppose a shadow were to be discernable in dependence on a stump. A man would come along carrying a shovel. He would cut the stump at the base. Having cut it at the base, he would dig it out. Having dug it out, he would pull out the roots, down to the rootlets. Then he would cut the stump into pieces. Having cut it into pieces, he would split the pieces. Having split the pieces, he would make them into splinters. Having made them into splinters, he would dry them in the wind & sunlight. Having dried them in the wind & sunlight, he would burn them with fire. Having burned them with fire, he would make them into ashes. Having made them into ashes, he would winnow them before a high wind or dump them into a swift-flowing stream. Thus the shadow dependent on the stump would be destroyed at the root, made like a palmyra stump, deprived of the conditions of development, not destined for future arising.

"In the same way, Vappa, for a monk whose mind is thus rightly released, six continual dwellings have been attained. When seeing a form via the eye.... When hearing a sound via the ear.... When smelling an aroma via the nose.... When tasting a flavor via the tongue.... When feeling a tactile sensation via the body.... When cognizing an idea via the mind, he is neither glad nor sad, but dwells equanimous, mindful, & alert.

"When sensing a feeling limited to the body, he discerns that 'I am sensing a feeling limited to the body.' When sensing a feeling limited to life, he discerns that 'I am sensing a feeling limited to life.' He discerns that 'With the breakup of the body, after the termination of life, all that is sensed, not being relished, will grow cold right here.'"

When this was said, Vappa the Sakyan, the disciple of the Niganthas, said to the Blessed One, "Lord, suppose that there were a man desiring profit who raised horses for sale but he didn't gain any profit, and furthermore had his

share of trouble & torment. In the same way, I—desiring profit—have attended to the foolish Nigaṇṭhas but I haven't gained any profit, and furthermore have had my share of trouble & torment. From this day forward, lord, I take my faith in the foolish Nigaṇṭhas and winnow it before a high wind or dump it into a swift-flowing stream." — *AN 4:195*

§ 110. "Monks, for anyone who says, 'In whatever way a person makes kamma, that is how it is experienced,' there is no living of the celibate 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 celibate life, there is the opportunity for the right ending of stress.

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

"Now, a trifling evil act done by what sort of individual takes him to hell? There is the case where a certain individual is undeveloped in the body [i.e., pleasant feelings can invade the mind and stay there—see MN 36], undeveloped in virtue, undeveloped in mind [i.e., painful feelings can invade the mind and stay there], undeveloped in discernment: restricted, small-hearted, dwelling with suffering. A trifling evil act done by this sort of individual takes him to hell.

"Now, a trifling evil act 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 the body [i.e., pleasant feelings cannot invade the mind and stay there], developed in virtue, developed in mind [i.e., painful feelings cannot invade the mind and stay there], developed in discernment: unrestricted, large-hearted, dwelling with the unlimited. A trifling evil act done by this sort of individual is experienced in the here & now, and for the most part barely appears for a moment.

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

"Yes, lord...."

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

"No, lord...."

"In the same way, there is the case where a trifling evil act done by one individual [the first] takes him to hell; and there is the case where the very same sort of trifling act done by the other individual is experienced in the here & now, and for the most part barely appears for a moment." — *AN 3:101*

§ 111. Now, on that occasion Ven. Sāriputta was wandering in the Southern Mountains with a large community of monks. Then a certain monk who had spent the Rains in Rājagaha went to the Southern Mountains, to Ven. Sāriputta. On arrival, he exchanged courteous greetings with Ven. Sāriputta and—after an exchange of friendly greetings & courtesies—sat to one side. As he was sitting there, Ven. Sāriputta said to him, "I trust, friend, that the Blessed One is strong & free from illness?"

"The Blessed One, friend, is strong & free from illness."

"I trust that the community of monks is strong & free from illness?"

"The community of monks is also strong & free from illness."



“At the Taṇḍulapāla Gate is a brahman named Dhanañjāni. I trust that he is strong & free from illness?”

“Dhanañjāni the brahman is also strong & free from illness.”

“And I trust that Dhanañjāni the brahman is heedful?”

“From where would our Dhanañjāni the brahman get any heedfulness, friend? Relying on the king, he plunders brahmans & householders. Relying on the brahmans & householders, he plunders the king. His wife—a woman of faith, fetched from a family with faith—has died. He has fetched another wife—a woman of no faith—from a family with no faith.”

“What a bad thing to hear, my friend—when we hear that Dhanañjāni the brahman is heedless. Perhaps sooner or later we might meet with Dhanañjāni the brahman. Perhaps there might be some discussion.”

Then Ven. Sāriputta, having stayed in the Southern Mountains as long as he liked, wandered in the direction of Rājagaha. After wandering by stages, he arrived at Rājagaha. There he stayed near Rājagaha in the Squirrels’ Sanctuary.

Then early in the morning, Ven. Sāriputta put on his robes and, carrying his bowl & outer robe, went into Rājagaha for alms. And on that occasion Dhanañjāni the brahman was milking cows in a cow pen outside the city. Then Ven. Sāriputta, having gone for alms in Rājagaha, after his meal, on his way back from his almsround, went to Dhanañjāni the brahman. Dhanañjāni the brahman saw Ven. Sāriputta coming from afar. On seeing him, he went to him and said, “Drink some of this fresh milk, Master Sāriputta. It must be time for your meal.”

“That’s all right, brahman. I have finished my meal for today. My day’s abiding will be under that tree over there. You may come there.”

“As you say, master,” Dhanañjāni responded to Ven. Sāriputta. Then after he had finished his morning meal, he went to Ven. Sāriputta. On arrival, he exchanged courteous greetings with Ven. Sāriputta and—after an exchange of friendly greetings & courtesies—sat to one side. As he was sitting there, Ven. Sāriputta said to him, “I trust, Dhanañjāni, that you are heedful?”

“From where would we get any heedfulness, master?—when parents are to be supported, wife & children are to be supported, slaves & workers are to be supported, friend-&-companion duties are to be done for friends & companions, kinsmen-&-relative duties for kinsmen & relatives, guest duties for guests, departed-ancestor duties for departed ancestors, devatā duties for devatās, king duties for the king, and this body also has to be refreshed & nourished.”

“What do you think, Dhanañjāni? There is the case where a certain person, for the sake of his mother & father, does what is unrighteous, does what is discordant. Then, because of his unrighteous, discordant behavior, hell-wardens drag him off to hell. Would he gain anything by saying, ‘I did what is unrighteous, what is discordant, for the sake of my mother & father. Don’t [throw] me into hell, hell-wardens!’ Or would his mother & father gain anything for him by saying, ‘He did what is unrighteous, what is discordant, for our sake. Don’t [throw] him into hell, hell-wardens!’?”

“No, Master Sāriputta. Even right while he was wailing, they’d cast him into hell.”

“What do you think, Dhanañjāni? There is the case where a certain person, for the sake of his wife & children.... his slaves & workers.... his friends & companions.... his kinsmen & relatives.... his guests.... his departed ancestors.... the devatās.... the king, does what is unrighteous, does what is discordant. Then, because of his unrighteous, discordant behavior, hell-wardens drag him off to hell. Would he gain anything by saying, ‘I did what is unrighteous, what is discordant, for the sake of the king. Don’t [throw] me into hell, hell-wardens!’ Or would the king gain anything for him by saying, ‘He did what is unrighteous, what is discordant, for our sake. Don’t [throw] him into hell, hell-wardens!’?”

“No, Master Sāriputta. Even right while he was wailing, they’d cast him into hell.”

“What do you think, Dhanañjāni? There is the case where a certain person, for the sake of refreshing & nourishing his body, does what is unrighteous, does what is discordant. Then, because of his unrighteous, discordant behavior, hell-wardens drag him off to hell. Would he gain anything by saying, ‘I did what is unrighteous, what is discordant, for the sake of refreshing & nourishing my body. Don’t [throw] me into hell, hell-wardens!’ Or would others gain anything for him by saying, ‘He did what is unrighteous, what is discordant, for the sake of refreshing & nourishing his body. Don’t [throw] him into hell, hell-wardens!’?”

“No, Master Sāriputta. Even right while he was wailing, they’d cast him into hell.”

“Now, what do you think, Dhanañjāni? Which is the better: one who, for the sake of his mother & father, would do what is unrighteous, what is discordant; or one who, for the sake of his mother & father, would do what is righteous, what is concordant?”

“Master Sāriputta, the one who, for the sake of his mother & father, would do what is unrighteous, what is discordant, is not the better one. The one who, for the sake of his mother & father, would do what is righteous, what is concordant would be the better one there. Righteous behavior, concordant behavior, is better than unrighteous behavior, discordant behavior.”

“Dhanañjāni, there are other activities—reasonable, righteous—by which one can support one’s mother & father, and at the same time both not do evil and practice the practice of merit.

“What do you think, Dhanañjāni? Which is the better: one who, for the sake of his wife & children.... his slaves & workers.... his friends & companions.... his kinsmen & relatives.... his guests.... his departed ancestors.... the devatās.... the king... refreshing & nourishing his body, would do what is unrighteous, what is discordant; or one who, for the sake of refreshing & nourishing his body, would do what is righteous, what is concordant?”

“Master Sāriputta, the one who, for the sake of refreshing & nourishing his body, would do what is unrighteous, what is discordant, is not the better one. The one who, for the sake of refreshing & nourishing his body, would do what is righteous, what is concordant would be the better one there. Righteous behavior, concordant behavior, is better than unrighteous behavior, discordant behavior.”

“Dhanañjāni, there are other activities—reasonable, righteous—by which one can refresh & nourish one’s body, and at the same time both not do evil and practice the practice of merit.”

Then Dhanañjāni the brahman, delighting & rejoicing in Ven. Sāriputta’s words, got up from his seat and left. — MN 97

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

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

“Yes, lord.”

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

“Yes, lord.”

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

“No, lord.”

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

“No, lord.”

“And what do you think? When the strings of your vina were neither too taut nor too loose, but tuned to be right on pitch, was your vina in tune & playable?”

“Yes, lord.”

“In the same way, Soṇa, over-aroused persistence leads to restlessness, overly slack persistence leads to laziness. Thus you should determine the right pitch for your persistence, attune the pitch of the (five) faculties<sup>1</sup> (to that), and there pick up your theme.”

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

So after that, Ven. Soṇa determined the right pitch for his persistence, attuned the pitch of the (five) faculties (to that), and there picked up his theme. Dwelling alone, secluded, heedful, ardent, & resolute, he in no long time reached & remained in the supreme goal of the holy life for which clansmen rightly go forth from home into homelessness, knowing & realizing it for himself in the here & now. He knew: “Birth is ended, the holy life fulfilled, the task done. There is nothing further for the sake of this world.” And thus Ven. Soṇa became another one of the arahants. — AN 6:55

NOTE: 1. The five faculties are conviction, persistence, mindfulness, concentration, and discernment. These are explained in detail in SN 48:10. The Buddha's explanation here parallels the way a multi-stringed instrument is tuned. First one string is tuned, and then the others are tuned to it. The point is that the level of one's energy / persistence has to be the determining factor in how intense one's conviction, etc., can skillfully be developed at any particular time.

## HYPOTHETICALS: UNDERSTANDING PLEASURE & PAIN

§ 113. Then Gandhabhaka the headman went to the Blessed One and, on arrival, having bowed down to him, sat to one side. As he was sitting there, he said to the Blessed One: “It would be good, lord, if the Blessed One would teach me the origination & ending of stress.”

"Headman, if I were to teach you the origination & ending of stress with reference to the past, saying, 'Thus it was in the past,' you would be doubtful & confused. If I were to teach you the origination & ending of stress with reference to the future, saying, 'Thus it will be in the future,' you would be doubtful & confused. So instead, I—sitting right here—will teach you sitting right there the origination & ending of stress. Listen & pay close attention. I will speak."

"As you say, lord," Gandhabhaka the headman replied.

The Blessed One said, "Now, what do you think, headman? Are there any people in Uruvelakappa who, if they were murdered or imprisoned or fined or censured, would cause sorrow, lamentation, pain, distress, or despair to arise in you?"

"Yes, lord, there are people in Uruvelakappa who, if they were murdered or imprisoned or fined or censured, would cause sorrow, lamentation, pain, distress, or despair to arise in me."

"And are there any people in Uruvelakappa who, if they were murdered or imprisoned or fined or censured, would cause no sorrow, lamentation, pain, distress, or despair to arise in you?"

"Yes, lord, there are people in Uruvelakappa who, if they were murdered or imprisoned or fined or censured, would cause no sorrow, lamentation, pain, distress, or despair to arise in me."

"Now, what is the cause, what is the reason, why the murder, imprisonment, fining, or censure of some of the people in Uruvelakappa would cause you sorrow, lamentation, pain, distress, or despair, whereas the murder, imprisonment, fining, or censure of others would cause you no sorrow, lamentation, pain, distress, or despair?"

"Those people in Uruvelakappa whose murder, imprisonment, fining, or censure would cause me sorrow, lamentation, pain, distress, or despair are those for whom I feel desire & passion. Those people in Uruvelakappa whose murder, imprisonment, fining, or censure would cause me no sorrow, lamentation, pain, distress, or despair are those for whom I feel no desire or passion."

"Now, headman, from what you have realized, fathomed, attained right now in the present, without regard to time, you may draw an inference with regard to the past and future: 'Whatever stress, in arising, arose for me in the past, all of it had desire as its root, had desire as its cause—for desire is the cause of stress. And whatever stress, in arising, will arise for me in the future, all of it will have desire as the root, will have desire as its cause—for desire is the cause of stress.'"

"How amazing, lord! How astounding! How well the Blessed One has put it: 'Whatever stress, in arising, arose for me in the past, all of it had desire as its root, had desire as its cause—for desire is the cause of stress. And whatever stress, in arising, will arise for me in the future, all of it will have desire as the root, will have desire as its cause—for desire is the cause of stress.' I have a son, lord, named Ciravāsin, who lives far away from here. When I get up in the morning, I send a man, saying, 'Go, learn how Ciravāsin is doing.' And as long as that man has not returned, I am simply beside myself, (thinking), 'Don't let Ciravāsin be sick!'"

"Now, what do you think, headman? If Ciravāsin were to be murdered or imprisoned or fined or censured, would you feel sorrow, lamentation, pain, distress, & despair?"

"Lord, if my son Ciravāsin were to be murdered or imprisoned or fined or censured, my very life would be altered. So how could I not feel sorrow, lamentation, pain, distress, & despair?"

"Thus, headman, by this line of reasoning it may be realized how stress, when arising, arises: All of it has desire as its root, has desire as its cause—for desire is the cause of stress.

“Now, what do you think, headman? Before you had seen or heard of Cīravāsin’s mother, did you feel desire, passion, or love for her?”

“No, lord.”

“And after you had seen or heard of Cīravāsin’s mother, did you feel desire, passion, or love for her?”

“Yes, lord.”

“What do you think? If Cīravāsin’s mother were to be murdered or imprisoned or fined or censured, would you feel sorrow, lamentation, pain, distress, & despair?”

“Lord, if Cīravāsin’s mother were to be murdered or imprisoned or fined or censured, my very life would be altered. So how could I not feel sorrow, lamentation, pain, distress, & despair?”

“Thus, headman, by this line of reasoning it may be realized how stress, when arising, arises: All of it has desire as its root, has desire as its cause—for desire is the cause of stress.” — *SN 42:11*

§ 114. “Māgaṇḍiya, suppose that there was a leper covered with sores and infections, devoured by worms, picking the scabs off the openings of his wounds with his nails, cauterizing his body over a pit of glowing embers. His friends, companions, & relatives would take him to a doctor. The doctor would concoct medicine for him, and thanks to the medicine he would be cured of his leprosy: well & happy, free, master of himself, going wherever he liked. Then suppose two strong men, having seized hold of him by both arms, were to drag him to a pit of glowing embers. What do you think? Wouldn’t he twist his body this way & that?”

“Yes, Master Gotama. Why is that? The fire is painful to the touch, very hot & scorching.”

“Now, what do you think, Māgaṇḍiya? Is the fire painful to the touch, very hot & scorching, only now, or was it also that way before?”

“Both now & before is it painful to the touch, very hot & scorching, Master Gotama. It’s just that when the man was a leper covered with sores and infections, devoured by worms, picking the scabs off the openings of his wounds with his nails, his faculties were impaired, which was why, even though the fire was actually painful to the touch, he had the skewed perception of ‘pleasant.’”

“In the same way, Māgaṇḍiya, sensual pleasures in the past were painful to the touch, very hot & scorching; sensual pleasures in the future will be painful to the touch, very hot & scorching; sensual pleasures at present are painful to the touch, very hot & scorching; but when beings are not free from passion for sensual pleasures—devoured by sensual craving, burning with sensual fever—their faculties are impaired, which is why, even though sensual pleasures are actually painful to the touch, they have the skewed perception of ‘pleasant.’

“Now suppose that there was a leper covered with sores & infections, devoured by worms, picking the scabs off the openings of his wounds with his nails, cauterizing his body over a pit of glowing embers. The more he cauterized his body over the pit of glowing embers, the more disgusting, foul-smelling, & putrid the openings of his wounds would become, and yet he would feel a modicum of enjoyment & satisfaction because of the itchiness of his wounds. In the same way, beings not free from passion for sensual pleasures—devoured by sensual craving, burning with sensual fever—indulge in sensual pleasures. The more they indulge in sensual pleasures, the more their sensual craving increases and the more they burn with sensual fever, and yet they feel a modicum of enjoyment & satisfaction dependent on the five strings of sensuality.

“Now, what do you think, Māgaṇḍiya? Have you ever seen or heard of a

king or king's minister—enjoying himself, provided & endowed with the five strings of sensuality, without abandoning sensual craving, without removing sensual fever—who has dwelt or will dwell or is dwelling free from thirst, his mind inwardly at peace?"

"No, Master Gotama."

"Very good, Māgaṇḍiya. Neither have I ever seen or heard of a king or king's minister—enjoying himself, provided & endowed with the five strings of sensuality, without abandoning sensual craving, without removing sensual fever—who has dwelt or will dwell or is dwelling free from thirst, his mind inwardly at peace. But whatever contemplatives or brahmins who have dwelt or will dwell or are dwelling free from thirst, their minds inwardly at peace, all have done so having realized—as it has come to be—the origination & disappearance, the allure, the danger, & the escape from sensual pleasures, having abandoned sensual craving and removed sensual fever."

Then at that moment the Blessed One exclaimed,

"Freedom from disease:	the foremost good fortune.
Unbinding:	the foremost ease.
The eightfold:	the foremost of paths
	going to the
	deathless,
	safe."

When this was said, Māgaṇḍiya the wanderer said to the Blessed One, "How amazing, Master Gotama! How astounding!—how this too is well-stated by Master Gotama: 'Freedom from disease: the foremost good fortune. Unbinding: the foremost ease.' We have also heard this said by earlier wanderers in the lineage of our teachers: 'Freedom from disease: the foremost good fortune. Unbinding: the foremost ease.' This agrees with that."

"But as for what you have heard said by earlier wanderers in the lineage of your teachers, Māgaṇḍiya—'Freedom from disease: the foremost good fortune. Unbinding: the foremost ease'—which freedom from disease is that, which unbinding?"

When this was said, Māgaṇḍiya the wanderer rubbed his own limbs with his hand. "This is that freedom from disease, Master Gotama," he said. "This is that unbinding. For I am now free from disease, at ease, and nothing afflicts me."

"Māgaṇḍiya, it's just as if there were a man blind from birth who couldn't see black objects... white... blue... yellow... red... or pink objects; who couldn't see even or uneven places, the stars, the sun, or the moon. He would hear a man with good eyesight saying, 'How wonderful, good sirs, is a white cloth—beautiful, spotless, & clean.' He would go in search of something white. Then another man would fool him with a grimy, oil-stained rag: 'Here, my good man, is a white cloth—beautiful, spotless, & clean.' The blind man would take it and put it on. Having put it on, gratified, he would exclaim words of gratification, 'How wonderful, good sirs, is a white cloth—beautiful, spotless, & clean.' Now, what do you think, Māgaṇḍiya? When that man blind from birth took the grimy, oil-stained rag and put it on; and, having put it on, gratified, exclaimed words of gratification, 'How wonderful, good sirs, is a white cloth—beautiful, spotless, & clean': Did he do so knowing & seeing, or out of faith in the man with good eyesight?"

"Of course he did it not knowing & not seeing, Master Gotama, but out of faith in the man with good eyesight."

"In the same way, Māgaṇḍiya, the wanderers of other sects are blind & eyeless. Without knowing freedom from disease, without seeing unbinding, they still speak this verse:

Freedom from disease:       the foremost good fortune.  
Unbinding:                   the foremost ease.'

This verse was stated by earlier arahants, fully self-awakened:

Freedom from disease:       the foremost good fortune.  
Unbinding:                   the foremost ease.

The eightfold:   the foremost of paths  
                          going to the  
                          deathless,  
                          safe.'

"But now it has gradually become a verse of run-of-the-mill people.

"This body, Māgaṇḍiya, is a disease, a cancer, an arrow, painful, an affliction. And yet you say, with reference to this body, which is a disease, a cancer, an arrow, painful, an affliction: 'This is that freedom from disease, Master Gotama. This is that unbinding,' for you don't have the noble vision with which you would know freedom from disease and see unbinding."

"I'm convinced, Master Gotama, that you can teach me the Dhamma in such a way that I would know freedom from disease, that I would see unbinding."

"Māgaṇḍiya, it's just as if there were a man blind from birth who couldn't see black objects... white... blue... yellow... red... the sun or the moon. His friends, companions, & relatives would take him to a doctor. The doctor would concoct medicine for him, but in spite of the medicine his eyesight would not appear or grow clear. What do you think, Māgaṇḍiya? Would that doctor have nothing but his share of weariness & disappointment?"

"Yes, Master Gotama."

"In the same way, Māgaṇḍiya, if I were to teach you the Dhamma—'This is that freedom from disease; this is that unbinding'—and you on your part did not know freedom from disease or see unbinding, that would be wearisome for me; that would be troublesome for me."

"I'm convinced, Master Gotama, that you can teach me the Dhamma in such a way that I would know freedom from disease, that I would see unbinding."

"Māgaṇḍiya, it's just as if there were a man blind from birth who couldn't see black objects... white... blue... yellow... red... the sun or the moon. Now suppose that a certain man were to take a grimy, oil-stained rag and fool him, saying, 'Here, my good man, is a white cloth—beautiful, spotless, & clean.' The blind man would take it and put it on.

"Then his friends, companions, & relatives would take him to a doctor. The doctor would concoct medicine for him: purges from above & purges from below, ointments & counter-ointments and treatments through the nose. And thanks to the medicine his eyesight would appear & grow clear. Then together with the arising of his eyesight, he would abandon whatever passion & delight he felt for that grimy, oil-stained rag. And he would regard that man as an enemy & no friend at all, and think that he deserved to be killed. 'My gosh, how long have I been fooled, cheated, & deceived by that man & his grimy, oil-stained rag!—'Here, my good man, is a white cloth—beautiful, spotless, & clean.'"

"In the same way, Māgaṇḍiya, if I were to teach you the Dhamma—'This is that freedom from Disease; this is that unbinding'—and you on your part were to know that freedom from Disease and see that unbinding, then together with the arising of your eyesight you would abandon whatever passion & delight you felt with regard for the five clinging-aggregates. And it would occur to you, 'My gosh, how long have I been fooled, cheated, & deceived by this mind! For in clinging, it was just form that I was clinging to... it was just feeling... just

perception... just fabrications... just consciousness that I was clinging to. With my clinging as a requisite condition, there arises becoming... birth... aging-&-death... sorrow, lamentation, pains, distresses, & despairs. And thus is the origin of this entire mass of stress.”

“I’m convinced, Master Gotama, that you can teach me the Dhamma in such a way that I might rise up from this seat cured of my blindness.”

“In that case, Māgaṇḍiya, associate with men of integrity. When you associate with men of integrity, you will hear the true Dhamma. When you hear the true Dhamma, you will practice the Dhamma in accordance with the Dhamma. When you practice the Dhamma in accordance with the Dhamma, you will know & see for yourself: ‘These things are diseases, cancers, arrows. And here is where diseases, cancers, & arrows cease without trace. With the cessation of my clinging comes the cessation of becoming. With the cessation of becoming comes the cessation of birth. With 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.’ — MN 75

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

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

“But cold, lord, is the winter night. The ‘Between-the-Eights’ [the coldest part of winter, between the eighth night of the waxing moon and the eighth night of the waning moon in February] is a time of snowfall. Hard is the ground trampled by cattle hooves. Thin is the spread of leaves. Sparse are the leaves in the trees. Thin are your ochre robes. And cold blows the Veramba wind. Yet still the Blessed One says, ‘Yes, young man. I have slept in ease. Of those in the world who sleep in ease, I am one.’”

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

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

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

“Yes, lord.”

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

“Now, what do you think, young man? Might there arise in that householder



or householder's son any bodily fevers or fevers of mind born of aversion so that—burned with those aversion-born fevers—he would sleep miserably?"

"Yes, lord."

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

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

"Yes, lord."

"As for those delusion-born fevers—burned with which the householder or householder's son would sleep miserably—that delusion has been abandoned by the Tathāgata, its root destroyed, made like a palmyra stump, deprived of the conditions of development, not destined for future arising. Therefore he sleeps in ease." — AN 3:35

§ 116. [Some Nigaṇṭhas:] "'But, friend Gotama, it's not the case that pleasure is to be attained through pleasure. Pleasure is to be attained through pain. For if pleasure were to be attained through pleasure, then King Seniya Bimbisāra of Magadha would attain pleasure, for he lives in greater pleasure than you, friend Gotama.'

"Surely the venerable Nigaṇṭhas said that rashly and without reflecting... for instead, I should be asked, 'Who lives in greater pleasure: King Seniya Bimbisāra of Magadha or venerable Gotama?'"

"Yes, friend Gotama, we said that rashly and without reflecting... but let that be. We now ask you, venerable Gotama: Who lives in greater pleasure: King Seniya Bimbisāra of Magadha or venerable Gotama?"

"Very well then, Nigaṇṭhas, I will cross-question you on this matter. Answer as you see fit. What do you think? Can King Seniya Bimbisāra of Magadha—without moving his body, without uttering a word—dwell sensitive to unalloyed pleasure for seven days & nights?"

"No, friend.'

"... for six days & nights... for five days & nights... for a day & a night?"

"No, friend.'

"Now, I—without moving my body, without uttering a word—can dwell sensitive to unalloyed pleasure for a day and a night... for two days & nights... for three... four... five... six... seven days & nights. So what do you think? That being the case, who dwells in greater pleasure: King Seniya Bimbisāra of Magadha or me?"

"That being the case, venerable Gotama dwells in greater pleasure than King Seniya Bimbisāra of Magadha." — MN 14 [See also §78]

#### PEOPLE WORTH TALKING TO (& NOT)

§ 117. "Let an observant person come, one without guile or deceit, one of straightforward nature. I instruct him, I teach him the Dhamma. Practicing as instructed, he in no long time rightly knows, rightly sees, 'So this, it appears, is liberation from the bond, i.e., the bond of ignorance.'" — MN 80

§ 118. "Monks, it's through his way of participating in a discussion that a

person can be known as fit to talk with or unfit to talk with. If a person, when asked a question, doesn't give a categorical answer to a question deserving a categorical answer, doesn't give an analytical answer to a question deserving an analytical answer, doesn't cross-question a question deserving cross-questioning, doesn't put aside a question deserving to be put aside, then—that being the case—he is a person unfit to talk with. But if a person, when asked a question, gives a categorical answer to a question deserving a categorical answer, gives an analytical answer to a question deserving an analytical answer, cross-questions a question deserving cross-questioning, and puts aside a question deserving to be put aside, then—that being the case—he is a person fit to talk with.

“Monks, it's through his way of participating in a discussion that a person can be known as fit to talk with or unfit to talk with. If a person, when asked a question, doesn't stand by what is possible and impossible, doesn't stand by agreed-upon assumptions, doesn't stand by teachings known to be true,<sup>1</sup> doesn't stand by standard procedure, then—that being the case—he is a person unfit to talk with. But if a person, when asked a question, stands by what is possible and impossible, stands by agreed-upon assumptions, stands by teachings known to be true, stands by standard procedure, then—that being the case—he is a person fit to talk with.

“Monks, it's through his way of participating in a discussion that a person can be known as fit to talk with or unfit to talk with. If a person, when asked a question, wanders from one thing to another, pulls the discussion off the topic, shows anger & aversion and sulks, then—that being the case—he is a person unfit to talk with. But if a person, when asked a question, doesn't wander from one thing to another, doesn't pull the discussion off the topic, doesn't show anger or aversion or sulk, then—that being the case—he is a person fit to talk with.

“Monks, it's through his way of participating in a discussion that a person can be known as fit to talk with or unfit to talk with. If a person, when asked a question, puts down [the questioner], crushes him, ridicules him, grasps at his little mistakes, then—that being the case—he is a person unfit to talk with. But if a person, when asked a question, doesn't put down [the questioner], doesn't crush him, doesn't ridicule him, doesn't grasp at his little mistakes, then—that being the case—he is a person fit to talk with.

“Monks, it's through his way of participating in a discussion that a person can be known as drawing near or not drawing near. One who lends ear draws near; one who doesn't lend ear doesn't draw near. Drawing near, one clearly knows one quality, comprehends one quality, abandons one quality, and realizes one quality.<sup>2</sup> Clearly knowing one quality, comprehending one quality, abandoning one quality, and realizing one quality, one touches right release. For that's the purpose of discussion, that's the purpose of counsel, that's the purpose of drawing near, that's the purpose of lending ear: i.e., the liberation of the mind through no clinging.

Those who discuss  
 when angered, dogmatic, arrogant,  
 following what's not the noble ones' way,  
     seeking to expose each other's faults,  
     delight in each other's misspoken word,  
         slip, stumble, defeat.

Noble ones  
 don't speak in that way.

If wise people, knowing the right time,  
 want to speak,

then, words connected with justice,  
 following the ways of the noble ones:  
 That's what the enlightened ones speak,  
 without anger or arrogance,  
 with a mind not boiling over,  
 without vehemence, without spite.

Without envy,  
 they speak from right knowledge.  
 They would delight in what's well-said  
 and not disparage what's not.  
 They don't study to find fault,  
 don't grasp at little mistakes,  
 don't put down, don't crush,  
 don't speak random words.

For the purpose of knowledge,  
 for the purpose of [inspiring] clear confidence,  
 counsel that's true:

That's how noble ones give counsel,  
 That's the noble ones' counsel.

Knowing this, the wise  
 should give counsel without arrogance. — AN 3:68

#### NOTES

1. Reading *aññātavāda* with the Burmese edition. An alternate translation would be, "the teachings of those who know."

2. According to the Commentary, these qualities are, respectively, the noble truth of the path, the noble truth of stress, the noble truth of the origination of stress, and the noble truth of the cessation of stress.

§ 119. There are some who dispute  
 corrupted at heart,  
 and those who dispute  
 their hearts set on truth,  
 but a sage doesn't enter  
 a dispute that's arisen,  
 which is why he is  
 nowhere constrained.

Now, how would one  
 led on by desire,  
 entrenched in his likes,  
 forming his own conclusions,  
 overcome his own views?  
 He'd dispute in line  
 with the way that he knows...

Because entrenchments in views  
 aren't easily overcome  
 when considering what's grasped  
 among doctrines,  
 that's why  
 a person embraces or rejects a doctrine—  
 in light of these very  
 entrenchments.

Now, one who is cleansed  
 has no preconceived view  
 about states of becoming  
   or not-  
 anywhere in the world.  
 Having abandoned conceit & illusion,  
 by what means would he go?  
   He isn't involved.

  For one who's involved  
 gets into disputes  
 over doctrines,  
 but how—in connection with what—  
 would you argue  
 with one uninvolved?  
   He has nothing  
 embraced or rejected,  
 has sloughed off every view  
   right here—every one. — *Sn 4:3*

§ 120. "Only here is there purity"  
   —that's what they say—  
 "No other doctrines are pure"  
   —so they say.

Insisting that what they depend on is good,  
 they are deeply entrenched in their personal truths.  
 Seeking controversy, they plunge into an assembly,  
 regarding one another as fools.

Relying on others' authority,  
 they speak in debate.

Desiring praise, they claim to be skilled.

Engaged in disputes in the midst of the assembly,  
   —anxious, desiring praise—

the one defeated is  
 chagrined.

Shaken with criticism, he seeks for an opening.

He whose doctrine is [judged as] demolished,  
 defeated, by those judging the issue:

He laments, he grieves—the inferior exponent.

"He beat me," he mourns.

These disputes have arisen among contemplatives.

  In them are elation,  
   dejection.

Seeing this, one should abstain from disputes,  
 for they have no other goal  
 than the gaining of praise.

He who is praised there  
 for expounding his doctrine  
 in the midst of the assembly,  
 laughs on that account & grows haughty,  
 attaining his heart's desire.

That haughtiness will be his grounds for vexation,  
 for he'll speak in pride & conceit.

Seeing this, one should abstain from debates.

No purity is attained by them, say the skilled.  
 Like a strong man nourished on royal food,  
 you go about, roaring, searching out an opponent.  
 Wherever the battle is,  
     go there, strong man.  
 As before, there's none here.  
 Those who dispute, taking hold of a view,  
 saying, "This, and this only, is true,"  
     those you can talk to.  
 Here there is nothing—  
     no confrontation  
     at the birth of disputes.  
 Among those who live above confrontation  
     not pitting view against view,  
     whom would you gain as opponent, Pasūra,  
 among those here  
 who are grasping no more?  
 So here you come,  
     conjecturing,  
 your mind conjuring  
     viewpoints.  
 You're paired off with a pure one  
     and so cannot proceed. — *Sn* 4:8

§ 121. "Dwelling on  
 their own views,  
 quarreling,  
 different skilled people say:  
 'Whoever knows this, understands Dhamma.  
 Whoever rejects this, is  
     imperfect.'  
 Thus quarreling, they dispute:  
 'My opponent's a fool & unskilled.'  
 Which of these statements is true  
 when all of them say they are skilled?"

"If, in not accepting  
 an opponent's doctrine,  
 one's a fool, a beast of inferior discernment,  
 then *all* are fools  
 of inferior discernment—  
 all of these  
 who dwell on their views.  
 But if, in siding with a view,  
 one's cleansed,  
 with discernment made pure,  
     intelligent, skilled,  
 then none of them  
 are of inferior discernment,  
 for all of them  
 have their own views.

I don't say, 'That's how it is,'  
 the way fools say to one another.

They each make out their views to be true  
and so regard their opponents as fools."

"What some say is true  
—'That's how it is'—  
others say is 'falsehood, a lie.'  
Thus quarreling, they dispute.  
Why can't contemplatives  
say one thing & the same?"

"The truth is one,  
                        there is no second  
about which a person who knows it  
would argue with one who knows.  
Contemplatives promote  
their various personal truths,  
that's why they don't say  
one thing & the same."

"But why do they say  
various truths,  
those who say they are skilled?  
Have they learned many various truths  
or do they follow conjecture?"

"Apart from their perception  
there are no  
        many  
        various  
        constant truths  
        in the world.

Preconceiving conjecture  
with regard to views,  
they speak of a pair: true  
        & false.  
Dependent on what's seen,  
                        heard,  
                        & sensed,  
dependent on habits & practices,  
one shows disdain [for others].  
Taking a stance on his decisions,  
praising himself, he says,  
'My opponent's a fool & unskilled.'

        That by which  
he regards his opponents as fools  
        is that by which  
                he says he is skilled.  
Calling himself skilled  
he despises another  
who speaks the same way.

Agreeing on a view gone out of bounds,  
drunk with conceit, thinking himself perfect,  
he has consecrated, with his own mind,

himself  
as well as his view.

If, by an opponent's word,  
one's inferior,  
the opponent's  
of inferior discernment as well.  
But if, by one's own word  
one's an attainer-of-wisdom, enlightened,  
no one  
among contemplatives  
is a fool.

'Those who teach a doctrine other than this  
are lacking in purity,  
imperfect.'

That's what the many sectarians say,  
for they're smitten with passion  
for their own views.

'Only here is there purity,'  
that's what they say.

'In no other doctrine  
is purity,' they say.

That's how the many sectarians  
are entrenched,  
speaking firmly there  
concerning their own path.  
Speaking firmly concerning your own path,  
what opponent here would you take as a fool?  
You'd simply bring quarrels on yourself  
if you said your opponent's a fool  
with an impure doctrine.

Taking a stance on your decisions,  
& yourself as your measure,  
you dispute further down  
into the world.

But one who's abandoned  
all decisions  
creates in the world  
quarrels no more." — *Sn 4:12*

§ 122. "Those who, dwelling on views,  
dispute, saying, 'Only this is true':  
do they all incur blame,  
or also earn praise there?"

"[The praise:] It's such a little thing,  
not at all appeasing.  
I speak of two fruits of dispute;  
and seeing this, you shouldn't dispute—  
seeing the state  
where there's no dispute  
as safe.

One who knows  
 doesn't get involved  
 in whatever are  
     commonplace  
     conventional  
 views.  
 One who is uninvolved:  
 When he's forming no preference  
 for what's seen, for what's heard,  
 why would he get  
 involved?" — *Sn* 4:13

§ 123. I have heard that on one occasion the Blessed One was living among the Sakyans near Kapilavatthu in the Banyan Park. Then in the early morning, having put on his robes and carrying his bowl & outer robe, he went into Kapilavatthu for alms. Having gone for alms in Kapilavatthu, after the meal, returning from his alms round, he went to the Great Wood for the day's abiding. Plunging into the Great Wood, he sat down at the root of a bilva sapling for the day's abiding.

Daṇḍapāṇin ["Stick-in-hand"] the Sakyan, out roaming & rambling for exercise, also went to the Great Wood. Plunging into the Great Wood, he went to where the Blessed One was under the bilva sapling. On arrival, he 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, "What is the contemplative's doctrine? What does he proclaim?"

"The sort of doctrine, friend, where one does not keep quarreling with anyone in the cosmos with its devas, Māras, & Brahmās, with its contemplatives & brahmans, its royalty & commonfolk; the sort [of doctrine] where perceptions no longer obsess the brahman who remains dissociated from sensual pleasures, free from perplexity, his uncertainty cut away, devoid of craving for becoming & non-becoming. Such is my doctrine, such is what I proclaim."

When this was said, Daṇḍapāṇin the Sakyan—shaking his head, wagging his tongue, raising his eyebrows so that his forehead was wrinkled in three furrows—left, leaning on his stick. — *MN* 18

## DEBATES

§ 124. As he was sitting to one side, Upāli the householder said to the Blessed One, "Lord, did Dīgha Tapassin the Nigaṇṭha come here?"

"Yes, householder, Dīgha Tapassin the Nigaṇṭha came here."

"And did you have any discussion with him?"

"I had some discussion with him."

"What sort of discussion did you have with him?"

Then the Blessed One related the entire extent of his discussion with Dīgha Tapassin the Nigaṇṭha [in which Dīgha Tapassin had asserted that the bodily "rod," i.e., bodily action, was more reprehensible for the doing of evil action than the mental "rod"].

When this was said, Upāli the householder said to the Blessed One, "That was good, very good of Tapassin. The way an instructed disciple would rightly understand the message of the Teacher is how Dīgha Tapassin the Nigaṇṭha answered the Blessed One. For what does the trivial mental rod count for in comparison with the gross bodily rod? On the contrary, the bodily rod is more greatly reprehensible for the doing of evil action, for the perpetration of evil



action, not so much the verbal rod, not so much the mental rod.”

“If, householder, you will confer taking a stand on the truth, we might have some discussion here.”

“Lord, I will confer 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 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 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 more greatly reprehensible for the doing of evil action, for the perpetration of evil action, 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 goes back and forth, he brings many small beings to destruction. What (kammic) result would Nigaṇṭha Nāṭaputta describe for him?”

“What is unintended, lord, Nigaṇṭha Nāṭaputta does not describe as greatly reprehensible.”

“But if he intends it?”

“Greatly reprehensible, 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 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 more greatly reprehensible for the doing of evil action, for the perpetration of evil action, not so much the verbal rod, not so much the mental rod.”

“What do you think, householder? Is this Nālandā powerful & rich, populous & crowded with people?”

“Yes, lord.”

“What do you think? There is the case where a man might come with uplifted sword. He would say, ‘In a single moment, in a single instant, I will turn whatever beings there are in this Nālandā into a single pile of flesh, a single heap of flesh.’ What do you think? Would that man be able—in a single moment, in a single instant—to turn whatever beings there are in this Nālandā into a single pile of flesh, a single heap of flesh?”

“Lord, not even ten men, twenty men, thirty men, forty men, fifty men would be able—in a single moment, in a single instant—to turn whatever beings there are in this Nālandā into a single pile of flesh, a single heap of flesh. So what would one trivial man count for?”

“What do you think, householder? There is the case where a contemplative or brahman with supernormal power, attained to mastery of mind, might come. He would say, ‘With a single mental act of hatred, I will turn this Nālandā to ash.’”

What do you think? Would that contemplative or brahman with supernormal power, attained to mastery of mind, be able—with a single mental act of hatred—to turn this Nālandā to ash?”

“Lord, with a single mental act of hatred he would be able to turn even ten Nālandās, twenty Nālandās, thirty Nālandās, forty Nālandās, fifty Nālandās to ash. So what would one trivial Nālandā count for?”

“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 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 more greatly reprehensible for the doing of evil action, for the perpetration of evil action, not so much the verbal rod, not so much the mental rod.”

“What do you think, householder? Have you heard how the Daṇḍakī wilderness, the Kāliṅga wilderness, the Mejjha wilderness, and the Mātaṅga wilderness became wildernesses?”

“Yes, lord, I have....”

“What do you think, householder? From what you have heard, how did the Daṇḍakī wilderness, the Kāliṅga wilderness, the Mejjha wilderness, and the Mātaṅga wilderness become wildernesses?”

“Lord, I have heard that it was through a mental act of hatred on the part of seers that the Daṇḍakī wilderness, the Kāliṅga wilderness, the Mejjha wilderness, and the Mātaṅga wilderness became wildernesses.”

“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 taking a stand on the truth; let us have some discussion here.’”

“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 community 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.” — MN 56

§ 125. Now on that occasion 500 brahmans from various provinces were staying at Sāvattḥi on some business or other. The thought occurred to them, “This Gotama the contemplative prescribes purity for the four castes. Now who is capable of disputing with him on this statement?” And on that occasion the brahman student Assalāyana was staying at Sāvattḥi. Young, shaven-headed, 16 years old, he was a master of the Three Vedas with their vocabularies, liturgy, phonology, etymology, & histories as a fifth; skilled in philology & grammar, he was fully versed in cosmology and in the marks of a Great Man. The thought occurred to the brahmans, “This brahman student Assalāyana is staying in Sāvattḥi... He is capable of disputing with Gotama the contemplative on this statement.”

So the brahmans went to the brahman student Assalāyana and said to him, “Master Assalāyana, this Gotama the contemplative prescribes purity for the

four castes. Come and dispute with him on this statement.”

When this was said, the brahman student Assalāyana said to the brahmins, “Sirs, Gotama the contemplative is one who speaks Dhamma. And those who speak Dhamma are hard to dispute with. I can’t dispute with him on this statement.”

A second time.... A third time, the brahmins said to the brahman student Assalāyana, “Master Assalāyana, this Gotama the contemplative prescribes purity for the four castes. Come and dispute with him on this statement, for you have lived the life of a wanderer. Don’t be defeated without being defeated in battle.”

When this was said, the brahman student Assalāyana said to the brahmins, “Apparently, sirs, I don’t get leave from you [to avoid the matter by saying], ‘Gotama the contemplative is one who speaks Dhamma. And those who speak Dhamma are hard to dispute with. I can’t dispute with him on this statement.’ But at your bidding I will go.”

Then the brahman student Assalāyana went with a large group of brahmins 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 brahmins say, ‘Brahmins are the superior caste; any other caste is inferior. Only brahmins are the fair caste; any other caste is dark. 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 does Master Gotama have to say with regard to that?”

“But, Assalāyana, the brahmins’ brahman-women are plainly seen having their periods, becoming pregnant, giving birth, and nursing [their children]. And yet the brahmins, being born through the birth canal, say, ‘Brahmins are the superior caste; any other caste is inferior. Only brahmins are the fair caste; any other caste is dark. 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... the sons & offspring of Brahmā: born of his mouth, born of Brahmā, created by Brahmā, heirs of Brahmā.’”

“What do you think, Assalāyana? Have you heard that in Yona & Kamboja and other outlying countries there are only two castes—masters & slaves—and that having been a master one (can) become a slave, and that having been a slave one (can) become a master?”

“Yes, Master Gotama....”

“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 noble warrior who—taking life, stealing, engaging in sexual misconduct, telling lies, speaking divisive speech, speaking coarse speech, engaging in idle chatter, covetous, bearing thoughts of ill will, & holding wrong views—on the breakup of the body, after death, reappears in the plane of deprivation, the bad destination, the lower realms, in 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 divisive speech, speaking coarse speech, engaging in idle chatter, covetous, bearing thoughts of ill will, and holding wrong views—on the breakup of the body, after

death, reappears in the plane of deprivation, the bad destination, the lower realms, in 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 divisive speech, speak coarse speech, engage in idle chatter, are covetous, bear thoughts of ill will, & hold wrong views—on the breakup of the body, after death, reappear in the plane of deprivation, the bad destination, the lower realms, in 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 divisive speech, from coarse speech, & from idle chatter, not covetous, bearing no thoughts of ill will, & holding to right view—on the breakup of the body, after death, reappears in the good destination, the 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 divisive speech, from coarse speech, & from idle chatter, are not covetous, bear no thoughts of ill will, & hold to right view—on the breakup of the body, after death, reappear in the good destination, the 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 good will—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 good will—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 a consecrated noble warrior king might call together 100 men of different births (and say to them), ‘Come, masters. Those of you there born from a noble warrior clan, from a brahmin clan, or from a royal clan: taking an upper fire-stick of sāla wood, salala wood, sandalwood, or padumaka wood, produce fire & make heat appear. And come, masters. Those of you there born from an outcast clan, a trapper clan, a wicker workers’ clan, a cartwrights’ clan, or a scavengers’ clan: taking an upper fire-stick from a dog’s drinking trough, from a pig’s trough, from a dustbin, or of castor-oil wood, produce fire & make heat appear.’ What do you think, Assalāyana? Would the fire made by those born from a noble warrior clan, a brahmin clan, or a royal clan—who had produced fire & made heat appear by taking an upper fire-stick of sāla wood, salala wood, sandalwood, or padumaka wood—be the only one with flame, color, & radiance, able to do whatever a fire might be needed to do? And would the fire made by those born from an outcast clan, a trapper clan, a wicker workers’ clan, a cartwrights’ clan, or a scavengers’ clan—who had produced fire & made heat appear by taking an upper fire-stick from a dog’s drinking trough, from a pig’s trough, from a dustbin, or of castor-oil wood—be without flame, color, & radiance, unable to do what a fire might be needed to do?”

“No, Master Gotama. The fire made by those born from a noble warrior clan, a brahmin clan, or a royal clan... would have flame, color, & radiance, able to do whatever a fire might be needed to do. And the fire made by those born from an outcast clan, a trapper clan, a wicker workers’ clan, a cartwrights’ clan, or a scavengers’ clan... would have flame, color, & radiance, able to do whatever a fire might be needed to do. For all fire has flame, color, & radiance, and is able to do whatever a fire might be needed to do.”

“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 a noble warrior youth might cohabit with a brahmin maiden, and from their cohabitation a son would be born. Would the son born from the noble warrior youth & brahmin maiden be like the father and like the mother? Should he be called a noble warrior & a brahmin?”

“Yes, Master Gotama....”

“What do you think, Assalāyana? There is the case where a brahmin youth might cohabit with a noble warrior maiden, and from their cohabitation a son would be born. Would the son born from the brahmin youth & noble warrior maiden be like the father and like the mother? Should he be called a noble warrior & a brahmin?”

“Yes, Master Gotama....”

“What do you think, Assalāyana? There is the case where a mare might mate with a donkey, and from their mating a foal would be born. Would the foal born from the mare & the donkey be like the father and like the mother? Should it be

called a horse & a donkey?"

"Master Gotama, from the mixed breeding it would be a mule. Here I see that it [the mixed breeding] makes a difference, but there [in the other two cases] I don't see that it makes a difference."

"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, 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 brahmins 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."

When this was said, the brahman student Assalāyana sat silent, abashed, his shoulders drooping, his head down, brooding, at a loss for words.

Then the Blessed One—seeing that the brahman student Assalāyana was sitting silent, abashed, his shoulders drooping, his head down, brooding, at a loss for words—said to him, "Once, Assalāyana, this evil viewpoint arose in the seven brahman seers as they were consulting together in leaf huts in the wilderness: 'Brahmins are the superior caste; any other caste is inferior. Only brahmins are the fair caste; any other caste is dark. 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.' Then the seer Devala the Dark heard, 'This evil viewpoint has arisen in the seven brahman seers as they are consulting together in leaf huts in the wilderness: "Brahmins are the superior caste; any other caste is inferior.... Only brahmins are the sons & offspring of Brahmā: born of his mouth, born of Brahmā, created by Brahmā, heirs of Brahmā.'" So, arranging his hair & beard, putting on crimson garments, wearing multi-layered sandals, and carrying a staff made of gold, he appeared in the courtyard of the seven brahman seers. Then he walked back & forth in the courtyard of the seven brahman seers saying, 'Well, now, where have these masters, the brahman seers, gone? Well, now, where have these masters, the brahman seers, gone?'

"Then the seven brahman seers said to the seer Devala the Dark, 'Now who is this, walking back & forth in the courtyard of the seven brahman seers like a village lout, saying, "Well, now, where have these masters, the brahman seers, gone? Well, now, where have these masters, the brahman seers, gone?" Let's curse him!' So the seven brahman seers cursed the seer Devala the Dark: 'Be ashes, dribble-spit (*capali*)! Be ashes, dribble-spit! Be ashes, dribble-spit! But the more they cursed him, the more beautiful, good-looking, & inspiring he became. Then the thought occurred to the seven brahman seers, 'Our asceticism is in vain! Our holy-life is fruitless! For before, whenever we cursed anyone, "Be ashes, dribble-spit!" he would always become ashes. But the more we curse this one, the more beautiful, good-looking, & inspiring he becomes!'

"Masters, your asceticism is not in vain, and your holy-life not fruitless.

Please, masters, abandon your hatred toward me.'

"We abandon our hatred toward you, master. Who are you?"

"Have you heard of the seer Devala the Dark?"

"Yes, master.'

"I am he.'

"Then the seven brahman seers approached him to bow down to him, and he said to them, 'I have heard that this evil viewpoint has arisen in the seven brahman seers as they are consulting together in leaf huts in the wilderness:

"Brahmans are the superior caste; any other caste is inferior.... Only brahmans are the sons & offspring of Brahmā: born of his mouth, born of Brahmā, created by Brahmā, heirs of Brahmā.'"

"That is so, master.'

"But do you know, masters, if the mother who bore you went only with a brahman, and not with a non-brahman?"

"No, master.'

"And do you know if the mothers of the mother who bore you—back seven generations of mothers—went only with brahmans, and not with non-brahmans?"

"No, master.'

"And do you know if the father who sired you went only with a brahman woman, and not with a non-brahman woman?"

"No, master.'

"And do you know if the fathers of the father who bore you—back seven generations of fathers—went only with brahman women, and not with non-brahman women?"

"No, master.'

"Do you know how there is the descent of an embryo?"

"Yes, master, we know how there is the descent of an embryo. There is the case where the mother & father have come together, the mother is fertile, and a gandhabba [the being about to be reborn] is standing present. The coming together of these three is the descent of the embryo.'

"But do you know for sure whether the gandhabba is a noble warrior, a brahman, a merchant, or a worker?"

"No, master.'

"That being the case, do you know who you are?"

"That being the case, master, we don't know who we are.'

"Now, Assalāyana, when those seven brahman seers couldn't defend their own birth-statement when interrogated, pressed, & rebuked by the seer Devala the Dark, how can you now defend your own birth-statement when interrogated, pressed, & rebuked by me—you, their lineage holder, but not [the equal of] Puṇṇa, their ladle holder?" — MN 93

§ 126. Then Saccaka the Nigaṇṭha-son together with a large group of Licchavis plunged into the Great Wood and went to the Blessed One [after announcing to the Licchavis that he would drag the Buddha back and forth in a debate]. 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, "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....’”

“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.”

“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 of Kosala or King Ajātasattu Vedehiputta of Magadha—wield the power in his own domain to execute those who deserve execution, to fine those who deserve to be fined, and to banish those who deserve to be banished?”

“Yes, Master Gotama, he would... Even these oligarchic groups, such as the Vajjians & Mallans, wield the power in their own domains to execute those who deserve execution, to fine those who deserve to be fined, and to banish those who deserve to be banished, to say nothing of a consecrated, noble-warrior king such as King Pasenadi of Kosala, or King Ajātasattu Vedehiputta of Magadha. 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 the spirit (*yakkha*) Vajirapāṇin [Thunderbolt-in-Hand], 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 the spirit Vajirapāṇin, as did Saccaka the Nigaṇṭha-son. So Saccaka—afraid, terrified, his hair standing on end—seeking shelter in the



Blessed One, seeking a cave/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.”

“...Is feeling constant or inconstant?”

“Inconstant, Master Gotama.” ...

“...Is perception constant or inconstant?”

“Inconstant, Master Gotama.” ...

“...Are fabrications constant or inconstant?”

“Inconstant, Master Gotama.” ...

“What do you think, Aggivessana? Is consciousness 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.”

“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 Vesāli: ‘I see no contemplative, 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... said to the Blessed One, “Lord, a simile has occurred to me.”

“Let it occur 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 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. 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....” — MN 35

§ 127. As he was sitting there, Uṇṇabhā the brahman said to Ven. Ānanda: “Master Ānanda, what is the aim of this holy life lived under Gotama the contemplative?”

“Brahman, the holy life is lived under the Blessed One with the aim of abandoning desire.”

“Is there a path, is there a practice, for the abandoning of that desire?”

“Yes, there is a path, there is a practice, for the abandoning of that desire.”

“What is the path, the practice, for the abandoning of that desire?”

“Brahman, there is the case where a monk develops the base of power endowed with concentration founded on desire & the fabrications of exertion. He develops the base of power endowed with concentration founded on persistence... concentration founded on intent... concentration founded on discrimination & the fabrications of exertion. This, brahman, is the path, this is the practice for the abandoning of that desire.”

“If that’s so, Master Ānanda, then it’s an endless path, and not one with an end, for it’s impossible that one could abandon desire by means of desire.”

“Very well then, brahman, I will cross-question you on this matter. Answer as you see fit. What do you think? Didn’t you first have desire, thinking, ‘I’ll go to the park,’ and then when you reached the park, wasn’t the corresponding desire allayed?”

“Yes, sir.”

“Didn’t you first have persistence, thinking, ‘I’ll go to the park,’ and then when you reached the park, wasn’t the corresponding persistence allayed?”

“Yes, sir.”

“Didn’t you first have the intent, thinking, ‘I’ll go to the park,’ and then when you reached the park, wasn’t the corresponding intent allayed?”

“Yes, sir.”

“Didn’t you first have [an act of] discrimination, thinking, ‘I’ll go to the park,’ and then when you reached the park, wasn’t the corresponding act of discrimination allayed?”

“Yes, sir.”

“So it is with an arahant whose fermentations are ended, who has reached fulfillment, done the task, laid down the burden, attained the true goal, totally destroyed the fetter of becoming, and who is released through right gnosis. Whatever desire he first had for the attainment of arahantship, on attaining arahantship the corresponding desire is allayed. Whatever persistence he first had for the attainment of arahantship, on attaining arahantship the corresponding persistence is allayed. Whatever intent he first had for the attainment of arahantship, on attaining arahantship the corresponding intent is allayed. Whatever discrimination he first had for the attainment of arahantship, on attaining arahantship the corresponding discrimination is allayed. So what do you think, brahman? Is this an endless path, or one with an end?”

“You’re right, Master Ananda. This is a path with an end, and not an endless one.” — *SN 51:15*

## *Cross-questioning: II*

The standard passage in praise of the Buddha's Dhamma states that it is *sanditṭhiko*: "to be seen here & now." AN 6:47 [§89] explains this term with an illustration: One can see when the dhammas he teaches about—skillful and unskillful qualities—are present or absent in the mind.

The practical implication of this principle is that doubt about the Dhamma cannot be overcome simply through force of conviction. Instead, it is overcome through investigation into the mind in the present, equipped with questions that focus on the issue of what events in the mind are skillful or not. The Buddha makes this point by implication in SN 46:51 [§23], where he states that uncertainty is starved by the same activity that feeds the analysis of qualities (*dhamma-vicaya*) as a factor for awakening: fostering appropriate attention to "qualities that are skillful & unskillful, blameworthy & blameless, gross & refined, siding with darkness & with light."

Thus the proper investigation of the mind in the present is done with questions framed in terms that deserve categorical answers. And, as it turns out, these are precisely the sorts of questions that the Buddha encourages in the final two situations in which he employs the strategy of cross-questioning: the questions he asks his listeners about their experience in the present, and the questions he recommends they ask themselves. Because the questions appropriate to these two situations are so similar—and in many instances actually overlap—we will discuss the two situations as one: self cross-examination.

Given that skillful questions of self cross-examination foster the analysis of qualities as a factor of awakening, and given that this factor is equated with discernment, it is only fitting that these questions build on the questions that MN 135 [§43] says are most conducive to the arising of discernment:

"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 benefit & happiness?"

On the beginning level, the questions of self cross-examination continue the thrust of these questions, seeking to identify what is skillful and unskillful in general terms. Then they shift focus more to the particulars of one's own activities, showing how to observe one's intentions and actions, and the results of those intentions and actions, both in the immediate present and over time, so as to judge whether they are actually skillful or not. Ultimately they pursue this line of inquiry into more and more subtle levels of activity in the mind until they can uproot the subtlest levels of attachment, thus bringing about the total freedom of unbinding.

When we compare these types of cross-questioning with the sixth and seventh types listed in the preceding chapter—exploring hypotheticals—we see that their formal relationship parallels the relationship between the two major stages in the first type: cross-examining a monk accused of an offense against the Vinaya. In the preliminary stage of a Vinaya cross-examination, a learned monk is questioned about the rules relevant to the planned accusation in a way that (1) establishes, for those who may have not yet learned it, the general framework of principles on which the specific action is to be judged; and (2) reminds those who

*have* learned the framework of points they may have forgotten. In a similar way, the act of cross-questioning a listener about a hypothetical analogy or example is meant to remind the listener of a framework or pattern with which he is already familiar and to establish the fact that the framework is useful for understanding a specific teaching or answer. In other words, this type of cross-questioning is an aid to mindfulness, in the canonical sense of the word: calling something to mind and keeping it there. The obvious difference is that in a Vinaya cross-examination the framework is provided by a set body of rules, whereas in the act of exploring a hypothetical it's provided by the listener's personal range of knowledge and skills.

However, in the second stage of a Vinaya cross-examination—the actual cross-examination of the accused—the questions are aimed at ferreting out particular actions so that they can be judged against general principles as to whether they constitute an offense. This is the basic pattern of the self cross-examination covered in this chapter: Particular actions and mind-states—also viewed as actions—are ferreted out so that they can be judged as skillful or not. The major difference here is that, in a Vinaya cross-examination, if the action is judged as an offense, the monk is penalized by his fellows so that he can achieve restraint in the future; whereas in self cross-examination, when an activity is judged as unskillful, the response is largely an individual matter. Seeing the harm the action entails, one tries to achieve restraint—preferably in the present, but if not, in the future—on one's own initiative.

Thus, in simple terms, the exploration of hypotheticals uses cross-questioning to remind the listener of general principles and to establish their relevance, whereas self cross-examination uses cross-questioning to ferret out specific actions with the purpose of judging them against general principles that have already been established but whose implications in practice are still being mastered. Although both types of cross-questioning aim ultimately at greater discernment, they approach that discernment through different proximate aims: improved understanding and mindfulness in the case of exploring hypotheticals, and heightened alertness in the case of self cross-examination. When this trio of mental qualities—understanding, mindfulness, and alertness—is combined with ardency in abandoning unskillful qualities and developing skillful ones, the mind is imbued with the qualities it needs to develop the path factor of right mindfulness [§33] leading to right concentration and release. This is how the process of self cross-examination fosters the standard factors of the path.

As we noted in the Introduction, self cross-examination can function as a way of testing the initial frame of one's questions: If all the possible answers suggested by a particular way of framing questions do not pass the test, the frame has to be readjusted or replaced. This was one of the ways the bodhisatta had to employ this sort of questioning in his quest for awakening, as he kept refining his ideas of what is skillful and not. When he became the Buddha, he was thus able to provide his students with a reliable way of framing the initial questions related to the issue of stress and its end. Because he was so confident in the reliability of those questions, he invited his students to test them through self cross-examination for themselves—although this testing often measures not only the validity of the Buddha's framework of categorical questions, but also the validity of one's own comprehension of that framework. This is one of the uses of self cross-examination on the path.

The other is to employ self cross-examination as a strategy for determining how best to apply the Buddha's teachings in actual practice. The questions the Buddha recommends in this area perform this task in two ways: by investigating how one is actually applying those teachings, and by providing standards for measuring the success of that application. Thus self cross-examination, when

conducted skillfully, is the process by which a student of the Buddha's teaching can develop the level of alertness and discernment needed to become independent in the Dhamma.

It so happens that when we extract from the discourses the passages giving instruction in self cross-examination and arrange them in ascending order, from the most basic to those resulting immediately in release, we find that they begin and end with passages in which the Buddha, when asked a question, puts the question aside and then proceeds to lead his listeners in the process of self cross-examination [§149, §142]. In the first passage, the listeners end up taking refuge in the Triple Gem; in the second, many of the listeners reach full awakening. There is apparently no intended symmetry in these two passages—they are widely separated in the Canon—but this formal parallel does draw attention to the point that questions to be put aside are put aside for just this reason: They get in the way of the self-examination that is most effective for progress on the path.

In the first instance—AN 3:66 [§149], the famous discourse to the Kālāmas—the Kālāmas inform the Buddha that they have heard many teachers disparaging one another's teachings, and would like to know which of these teachers are lying and which are telling the truth. The Buddha puts the question aside and questions the Kālāmas about which activities they have observed to be skillful and unskillful. The way in which he conducts the questioning shows that these activities are to be judged by the beneficial or harmful results they lead to, and whether those results are praised or blamed by the wise.

The implications of this line of cross-questioning are twofold. On the one hand, the Buddha is asserting the pragmatic principle that a teaching is to be judged by the results that come from putting it into practice. This is a principle he expands on in §§129-130. On the other hand, he is also implying that a teacher is to be judged by his or her actions. After all, if the counsel of the wise is to be taken into consideration, one must have some criteria for judging who is wise and who isn't. Thus in MN 95 [§128] he provides some of these criteria, and here it is important to note that these criteria are expressed in the form of self cross-examination. One is responsible for observing a potential teacher's behavior, and so—instead of asking a teacher point-blank as to whether he or she can be trusted—is encouraged to quiz oneself as to what one has observed in the teacher's behavior in these terms: "Are there in this venerable one any such qualities based on greed... aversion... delusion that, with his mind overcome by these qualities, he might say, 'I know,' while not knowing, or say, 'I see,' while not seeing; or that he might urge another to act in a way that was for his/her long-term harm & pain?"

As the Buddha points out in AN 4:192 [§55], one can come to a reliable conclusion on these questions only when one is highly observant, and only after observing the other person in a wide variety of situations over a long period of time. Thus, in the act of choosing a teacher, one must be judicious rather than judgmental, taking the responsibility of being both observant and willing to invest a fair amount of time in assessing the teacher's behavior. Some later schools of Buddhism argued that a student would be in no position to judge a teacher, and that the act of judging others is unskillful in any event, but the Buddha himself did not adopt that attitude at all. The pursuit of truth requires a responsible attitude, which begins by taking responsibility for one's choice of a teacher. If the teacher's behavior is clearly unskillful, and one chooses that person for a teacher nevertheless, one is showing a highly irresponsible attitude toward the issue of skillful behavior in general. If one is willing to turn a blind eye to a teacher's unskillful behavior, one will probably also want to turn a blind eye to one's own.

With the questions of MN 95 we move from the area of defining skillful and unskillful in general terms, and into the area of judging the skillfulness of particular actions. MN 61 [§131] is probably the most important discourse on this level of self cross-examination, in that it not only frames the questions that one should ask when judging the skillfulness of one's actions, but also places these questions in a larger context to show how they can best be used to learn from one's mistakes and purify one's actions through practice and observation.

To begin with, one's actions—physical, verbal, and mental—are to be examined at three points in time: when intending to do them, while doing them, and after they are done. This sequence relates to two important points in understanding the nature of action. It follows (a) the principle that intention constitutes the action and (b) the principle of this/that conditionality [§19, note 1], that actions can show their results both in the immediate present and over time. As we noted in Chapter Four, the way in which the Buddha encourages judging one's actions both by the intention motivating them and by the results they yield parallels the way a craftsperson judges a work in progress, learning from mistakes in a way that yields ever-improving results and heightened skill.

Second, this examination is to be done not alone, but with the help of a teacher. When one finds that one's physical or verbal actions have been unskillful, one should consult a teacher or knowledgeable friend on the path. This consultation accomplishes two things. It encourages a truthful attitude toward admitting one's mistakes, and it opens the opportunity to gain helpful advice from the knowledgeable friend. In this way the practice of skillfulness, like the act of teaching and learning in general, becomes a cooperative effort. At the same time, this consultation saves time and energy in that one is not forced to reinvent the Dhamma wheel after every mistake.

Perhaps most important of all, the context outlined in MN 61 shows the proper attitudes to bring to bear in the self cross-examination of one's actions. The first is truthfulness. Right before outlining the questions to use in self cross-examination, the Buddha uses a series of vivid images to impress on his son, Rāhula, how important truthfulness is.

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

"Yes sir."

"That's how little of a contemplative there is in anyone who feels no shame at telling a deliberate lie."

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

"Yes, sir."

"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 will just hold back its trunk. The elephant trainer notices that and thinks, ‘This royal elephant has not given up its life to the king.’ But when the royal elephant... having gone into battle, uses its forefeet & hindfeet, its forequarters & hindquarters, its head & ears & tusks & tail & his trunk, the trainer notices that and thinks, ‘This royal elephant has given up its life to the king. There is nothing it will not do.’

“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.’” — *MN 61*

Just as with other forms of cross-questioning, self cross-examination needs to be based on the intellectual/ethical virtue of truthfulness if it is to succeed in getting at the truth of one’s unskillful habits and replacing them with skillful ones.

Another quality basic to self cross-examination is conviction in four things: in the power of one’s actions to yield results, in one’s ability to evaluate those results, in the importance of making these judgments, and in one’s ability to learn and benefit from them. We noted above that conviction on its own cannot overcome doubt about the Dhamma. Nevertheless, the process of investigation cannot get off the ground without the conviction that it is a worthwhile—or even feasible—activity. This is why the Buddha took such pains to refute those who taught doctrines, such as determinism, that deny the efficacy of action, for in a universe devoid of choice or immune to the effects of action, there is no possibility of learning from one’s mistakes. This is also why he stated in AN 2:19 [§26] that if it weren’t possible or beneficial to abandon unskillful behavior and develop skillful behavior, he wouldn’t have advocated these courses of action.

The discourses as a whole, as in SN 48:10 and AN 10:92, define conviction as conviction in the Buddha’s awakening. This does not mean conviction simply in the fact of his awakening, but also in the path that took him there. As we noted in Chapter Two, this path was a path of self cross-examination. Thus an important component of conviction in the Buddha’s awakening is that self cross-examination of one’s actions is not only possible, but also the only way to true happiness.

Other attitudes implicit in the strategy of self cross-examination advocated in MN 61 include compassion, in the desire not to harm oneself or others; integrity, in the ability to take responsibility for one’s mistakes; and a healthy sense of shame—i.e., the shame toward unworthy actions that grows from high self-esteem.

Above all, however, this process of self cross-examination is motivated by an attitude of heedfulness: a sense of the importance of one’s actions, of the dangers of unskillful action, of the rewards of developing skillful actions, and of the care needed to develop what is skillful and to abandon what is not. Without this heedfulness, the examination of one’s actions would not necessarily lead to any improvement in one’s behavior. One would simply note the presence or absence of skillful qualities and leave it at that.

This is why the Buddha said that heedfulness is the root of all skillfulness [§132]. Goodness comes, not from any innate goodness in the mind, but from a keen sense of the dangers of the unskillful habits already there, and the benefits of the skillful habits that one can develop in their place. Thus many of the



questions recommended on this level of self cross-examination [§§133-135] build on MN 61 by inducing an urgent sense of heedfulness in uncovering unskillful mental actions and abandoning them as quickly and effectively as possible. And it's important to note that the role of mindfulness in this self cross-examination [§133, §135] is not simply to note the presence or absence of particular mental states. Just as its role in MN 117 [§39] is to keep in mind the need to abandon the factors of the wrong path and develop the factors of the right, here its role is to stay focused relentlessly on the need to abandon any unskillful states that appear.

An important feature of the self cross-examination outlined in MN 61 is that it treats mental actions under the same framework as physical and verbal actions. In other words, events in the mind are to be regarded as a form of kamma: deriving from intentions, either skillful or not, and leading to results, either desirable or not. As with physical and verbal actions, these causal relationships can be observed and used as lessons in the pursuit of ever-higher levels of skillful mental action.

AN 10:51 [§135] shows how this can be done in a general way, highlighting with a list of cross-questions features of mental activity that are important to keep in mind for this purpose. SN 47:8 [§136] and SN 47:10 [§137] show how a similar process can be applied specifically to the practice of meditation, showing how to read the mind to see which meditative approaches are working and which are not, so as to use that knowledge in developing the practice of mindfulness to ever more refined levels of concentration. Even though these passages don't list explicit questions, implicit questions obviously lie behind the points the meditator should look for in reading his or her own mind: Is the mind settling down? Are the hindrances being abandoned? If not, what alternative approaches might work in bringing the mind to stillness?

The habit of looking at meditative states in the context of kamma—intention and result—is an important habit to develop, for without it there is a tendency to view states of stillness, and especially the formless states, as embodying metaphysical principles. For example, an experience of the dimension of the infinitude of consciousness can easily be misread as an experience of the oneness of the cosmos, or a ground of being. An experience of the dimension of nothingness can be misread as a confirmation that nothing really exists. But as MN 121 [§138] shows, these states are best viewed as a form of action, intentionally focused on a perception, which—because of the element of intention—inevitably involves stress or disturbance, however subtle. If, after learning how to settle into a meditative state, the meditator can focus on the questions implicit in this approach—“Where is the element of stress or disturbance here? How does it compare with the degree of disturbance in other modes of perception? What action is causing it?”—these questions can prevent any metaphysical misinterpretations of the states attained, and can instead focus on how to abandon actions that are causing subtle levels of stress. As MN 121 shows, this process can lead all the way to release. In other words, cross-questioning the results of meditation in this manner fulfills two functions: It carries the questions of MN 61 to the most subtle levels of mental action and it brings the duties of the four noble truths all the way to their completion in full awakening.

A striking feature of the Buddha's recommended course of self cross-examination in general is the frequency with which the questions are framed in terms of “I,” “me,” “my,” and “self”: “What, having been done by *me*, will be for *my* long-term benefit & happiness?” [§43] ... “This bodily action *I* want to perform—would it lead to *self*-affliction...?” [§131] ... “Are there any evil,

unskillful qualities unabandoned by *me* that would be an obstruction for *me* were *I* to die in the night?" [§133] ... "Can *I* fault myself with regard to *my* virtue?" ... "What am *I* becoming as the days & nights fly past?" [§134] Beginning with the first of these questions—which the Buddha identified as most basic for the development of discernment—the perception of self is used in its two primary modes: as the potential producer of happiness ("What, having been done *by me*," ) and as the consumer or experiencer of happiness ("*my* long-term benefit & happiness"). Anyone familiar with the Buddha's teachings on not-self might find this way of framing questions strange, and yet it is not merely an artifact of grammatical conventions. These two modes of self-perception surround every desire: the sense that I—or those I cherish—will benefit from achieving the desired result (this is the "consumer"), and the sense that I (as the "producer") will need to possess powers to bring it about. Because the path factor of right effort involves generating desire to develop skillful qualities and abandon unskillful ones, it inevitably involves the production of these two modes of self in a skillful, capable form. And passages in the discourses explicitly recommend doing just that.

First, "I" as the consumer of happiness:

"And what is the self as a governing principle? There is the case where a monk, having gone to a wilderness, to the root of a tree, or to an empty dwelling, reflects on this: 'It's not for the sake of robes that I have gone forth from the home life into homelessness; it's not for the sake of alms food, for the sake of lodgings, or for the sake of this or that state of [future] becoming that I have gone forth from the home life into homelessness. Simply that I am beset by birth, aging, & death; by sorrows, lamentations, pains, distresses, & despairs; beset by stress, overcome with stress, [and I hope,] "Perhaps the end of this entire mass of suffering & stress might be known!" Now, if I were to seek the same sort of sensual pleasures that I abandoned in going forth from home into homelessness—or a worse sort—that would not be fitting for me.' So he reflects on this: 'My persistence will be aroused & not lax; my mindfulness established & not confused; my body calm & not aroused; my mind centered & unified.' Having made his self his governing principle, he abandons what is unskillful, develops what is skillful, abandons what is blameworthy, develops what is unblameworthy, and looks after himself in a pure way. This is called the self as a governing principle." — AN 3:40

And then "I" as the producer of happiness:

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

As these examples show, perceptions of self—if used skillfully—are an important motivator for developing heedfulness and pursuing the process of self cross-examination that fosters skillfulness in one's thoughts, words, and deeds.

In the terms of Ven. Khemaka's analogy [§81], a skillful sense of "I am" is like the salt earth or lye or cow-dung used to wash a dirty cloth. However, in this process of self cross-examination, the perception of self is not the prime focus of inquiry. Instead, the questions shift the focus from concern for self to concern for mastering the principle of cause and effect as it governs the results of actions.

At the same time, the questions help blur the line between concern for one's own happiness and concern for the happiness of others. MN 61 recommends avoiding not only actions that would lead to self-affliction, but also those that would lead to the affliction of others, or of both. The qualities encouraged by the inquiry in AN 10:51—being "uncovetous, without thoughts of ill will, free of sloth & drowsiness, not restless, gone beyond uncertainty, not angry, with unsoiled thoughts, with [one's] body unaroused, with persistence aroused, & concentrated"—benefit not only the person practicing but also all the people with whom he or she comes into contact. The same holds true for the practices of generosity and virtue, on which the practice of meditation is based. Thus happiness is not viewed as a zero-sum prospect. The more skillful one becomes, the wider the happiness spread by one's skill, and the more blurred the lines originally drawn by the categories of objectification between self and others.

Because the process of self cross-examination uses perceptions of self in this way to focus primary attention on actions, it inevitably leads the meditator to start viewing the perceptions of self as a type of action: what the texts call "I-making" and "my-making." Because actions are judged by their skillfulness in producing desirable results, there inevitably comes the point where the question arises: "To what extent is the activity of I-making and my-making genuinely skillful?" In the course of the practice, one has been able to recognize many unskillful ways of creating a perception of "I" and "my," and—in the process of recognizing them—to drop them for more skillful ways of identifying oneself. But, as the practice progresses, does one reach a point where any activity of I-making and my-making, regardless of how skillful, becomes an obstacle to further progress? Obviously, it has been useful in getting the mind firmly concentrated, but as MN 113 notes, if skill in the practice of concentration becomes a cause of self-exaltation, it interferes with further advances on the path. And as MN 102 [§53] notes, any sense of "I am" related to even the subtlest levels of concentration hides a remnant of clinging that stands in the way of full release.

Thus the process of self cross-examination must now turn to examine the activities of I-making and my-making to take them apart. In the terms of Ven. Khemaka's analogy, now that the salt earth or lye or cow-dung has succeeded in washing the cloth, the cloth has to be put away in a perfumed hamper so that the lingering scent of the cleaning agents will fade away. As Ven. Khemaka says, this is done by focusing on the arising and passing away of the five clinging-aggregates—the raw material both for concentrated states of mind and for the construction of any sense of self—in a way that removes any clinging around them.

The questions of self cross-examination designed to accomplish this task thus shift their framework to three perceptions—inconstancy, stress, and not-self—which are applied either to the aggregates [§140, §142] or to the sense media [§141] as they are directly experienced. In the case of the aggregates, each aggregate is examined with questions in this order: "Is this constant or inconstant?" "Inconstant." "And is that which is inconstant easeful or stressful?" "Stressful." "And is it valid to regard what is inconstant, stressful, subject to change as: 'This is mine. This is my self. This is what I am'?" "No." To see in terms of these perceptions ultimately leads to a total abandoning of clinging for any of the aggregates—including the perception-aggregate that accomplished

this task—and the mind is released.

In the case of the sense media, the same questionnaire is applied to each sense medium, and to the events dependent on it, in this order: the internal sense medium (e.g., the eye), the corresponding external sense medium (e.g., forms), consciousness at that medium, contact at that medium, and anything that arises dependent on that contact as a mode of feeling, perception, fabrication, or consciousness. Because the five physical senses are instances of the form aggregate, this version of the questionnaire—though focused on the sense media—manages to encompass all five aggregates as well.

Notice that although this level of cross-examination has dropped any reference to self, it has maintained the framework of skillful and unskillful action. The last question in the series does not demand the conclusion that there is no self. Instead, it asks simply whether it is valid—skillful—to identify an inconstant, stressful event as one's self. In other words, the Buddha is not asking one to come to a metaphysical conclusion on the question, created by objectification, as to the existence or non-existence of the self. After all, as we saw in the discussion of SN 12:15 in Chapter Three, the mind on the verge of awakening doesn't see the world in terms of existence or non-existence in any event, so the question of the existence or non-existence of the self would be irrelevant. So, instead of pushing the questioning into the realm of objectification, the Buddha is simply pushing the line of inquiry about skillful action to its subtlest level—the act of self-identification—at the same time raising the pragmatic standard of what counts as skillful so as to abandon all acts of self-identification and attain total freedom.

This point is made dramatically in MN 109 [§142]—which we identified above as the concluding passage where the Buddha puts aside a question and proceeds to lead his listeners in the process of self cross-examination leading to release. In this passage, a monk—hearing that the five aggregates are not-self—asks himself the sort of question that is often heard in introductory academic courses on Buddhism: “If there is no self, then...” In this case, the monk's question is: “So—form is not-self, feeling is not-self, perception is not-self, fabrications are not-self, consciousness is not-self. Then what self will be touched by the actions done by what is not-self?” In other words, the monk apparently sees in the not-self teaching an opening to deny that anyone will receive the results of kamma—a notion that can short-circuit any attempt to abandon unskillful kamma and to develop skillful kamma in its place. The Buddha, reading the monk's mind, denounces the question and, putting it aside, engages all the monks in the line of cross-questioning introduced in SN 22:59 [§140]. In doing so, he is demonstrating the proper way to use the perception of not-self: not to draw metaphysical conclusions, but to question the skillfulness of the actions of I-making and my-making, so that those actions can be dropped and liberation found. This is precisely what happens during this discourse. Sixty monks gain total release.

A similar process is recorded more systematically in AN 9:36 [§139]. There the Buddha recommends that when a meditator has mastered any of the meditative absorptions, he/she should look for the way in which that absorption is composed of the activities of the aggregates. Once these activities are detected, they should be viewed not only as inconstant, stressful, and not-self, but also as “a disease, a cancer, an arrow, painful, an affliction, alien, a disintegration, an emptiness.” In other words, one should learn to regard them in a way that induces a sense of disenchantment and dispassion for them, so that one will lose all interest in continuing to engage in the attempt to find happiness in anything at all that is intended or fabricated. (A similar point is made at the end of MN 121 [§138].) Because all other avenues toward happiness have now been shut off, the mind inclines toward a happiness totally unfabricated. If it can maintain that

stance, an opening to full awakening can occur.

Now, it is entirely possible that the mind pursuing this line of cross-questioning may not have the powers of concentration and discernment needed to abandon all clinging. As AN 9:36 points out, even if one can maintain a stance inclined toward the deathless, a remnant of passion and delight for that Dhamma might still prevent full awakening, leading instead to the penultimate attainment of non-return. And as MN 106 shows, there are cases where the perception of not-self doesn't even lead that far, arriving instead only at refined states of concentration. Thus the final set of questions in self cross-examination gives guidelines for evaluating one's attainment [§§143-144]. Although the criteria for coming to the conclusion that one is an arahant, as phrased in §144, are not expressed as questions, there are questions implicit behind them. And although the evaluation employs the terms "I am," this is one case where this phrase is purely a grammatical convention, for the arahant has no further use for conceit at all.

In this way, the process of cross-questioning functions not only to yield progress on the path, but also to evaluate the goal after it is reached. In other words, there is no level of the practice where it is inappropriate to pose questions in a skillful way. Anything that cannot stand up to questioning can't be genuine Dhamma; if anything is genuine Dhamma, it is sure to pass the test.

As we saw in Chapter Two, the Buddha's quest for awakening was primarily a process of cross-questioning in various forms. The same is true for anyone following the Buddha's path. And as a number of discourses show, the various forms of cross-questioning are mutually supportive in this endeavor. A primary example is MN 109 [§142]: It begins with an anonymous monk cross-questioning the Buddha on the meaning of his teachings. The Buddha's openness to questioning, in turn, provides an atmosphere conducive for the monks to gain awakening as he cross-questions them on the activity of I-making and my-making occurring in their minds.

Three other discourses show how the Buddha's students were also able to combine various forms of cross-questioning to good effect. In MN 84 [§100], King Koravya cross-questions Ven. Raṭṭhapāla about the meaning of the Buddha's teachings that led the latter to ordain. The king is portrayed as an amiable but very unenlightened individual—something of a spiritual innocent. To make his points, Ven. Raṭṭhapāla is forced to draw simple examples from the king's own life and to cross-question him about them. And as often happens when innocent people ask questions on basic matters, the discussion reveals a fundamental point—in this case, the parallel between the facts of aging, illness, and death on the one hand, and the perceptions of inconstancy, stress, and not-self on the other. Nowhere else in the discourses is this parallel drawn so clearly.

In MN 146 [§77], Ven. Nandaka teaches a group of nuns with what he calls a "cross-questioning talk," inviting them to question him on any statement they don't understand. None of them take advantage of the invitation but, as they remark, they appreciate his openness. He then employs two other types of cross-questioning: (1) asking them to examine the activity of I-making with regard to the six sense media; and (2) cross-questioning them on the analogies with which he illustrates his points. The discourse states that the first time he does this, the nuns do not achieve awakening. However, the Buddha asks him to repeat the talk two weeks later, and this time even the most backward of the nuns achieves stream-entry.

A similar atmosphere of openness prevails in SN 22:89 [§81], where a group of elder monks cross-question Ven. Khemaka about his level of attainment—apparently a common occurrence among the monks when one of them was

seriously ill. As they ask him to explain what is essentially the non-returner's remnant of conceit, he illustrates his points with hypothetical analogies, on which he cross-questions them. The process proves so clarifying that monks on both sides of the exchange—sixty of the elders and Ven. Khemaka himself—achieve full awakening.

These examples illustrate three important points. The first is that the various modes of cross-questioning are mutually reinforcing, establishing an atmosphere of respect, trust, and openness in which the responsible exchange of ideas is conducive to clarity. The second is that, although self cross-examination is the primary mode leading directly to awakening, other modes of cross-questioning—such as questioning a speaker and exploring hypotheticals—can lead directly to awakening as well. However, it is likely that these modes of cross-questioning inspired the individuals involved to engage simultaneously in self cross-examination, reflecting on how the lessons they were learning applied directly to what they were experiencing in their minds.

Finally, these examples show that the Buddha was able to pass some of his skill in cross-questioning on to his students, as a distinctive rhetorical approach conducive to keeping the quest for awakening alive.

## READINGS

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

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

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

“When, on observing that the monk is purified with regard to qualities based on aversion, he next observes him with regard to qualities based on delusion: ‘Are there in this venerable one any such qualities based on delusion that, with his mind overcome by these qualities, he might say, “I know,” while not

knowing, or say, "I see," while not seeing; or that he might urge another to act in a way that was for his/her long-term harm & suffering?" As he observes him, he comes to know, "There are in this venerable one no such qualities based on delusion.... His bodily behavior & verbal behavior are those of one not deluded. And the Dhamma he teaches is deep, hard to see, hard to realize, tranquil, refined, beyond the scope of conjecture, subtle, to-be-experienced by the wise. This Dhamma can't easily be taught by a person who's deluded."

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

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

"Yes, Master Gotama, to this extent there is an awakening to the truth. To this extent one awakens to the truth. We regard this as an awakening to the truth. But to what extent is there the final attainment of the truth? To what extent does one finally attain the truth? We ask Master Gotama about the final attainment of the truth."

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

"Yes, Master Gotama, to this extent there is the final attainment of the truth. To this extent one finally attains the truth. We regard this as the final attainment of the truth. But what quality is most helpful for the final attainment of the truth? We ask Master Gotama about the quality most helpful for the final attainment of the truth."

"Exertion is most helpful for the final attainment of the truth, Bhāradvāja. If one didn't make an exertion, one wouldn't finally attain the truth. Because one makes an exertion, one finally attains the truth. Therefore, exertion is most helpful for the final attainment of the truth."

"But what quality is most helpful for exertion? We ask Master Gotama about the quality most helpful for exertion."

"Contemplating is most helpful for exertion, Bhāradvāja. If one didn't contemplate, one wouldn't make an exertion. Because one contemplates, one makes an exertion. Therefore, contemplating is most helpful for exertion."

"But what quality is most helpful for contemplating?..."

"Being willing.... If one weren't willing, one wouldn't contemplate...."

"But what quality is most helpful for being willing?..."

"Desire.... If desire didn't arise, one wouldn't be willing...."

"But what quality is most helpful for desire?..."

"Coming to an agreement through pondering dhammas.... If one didn't come to an agreement through pondering dhammas, desire wouldn't arise...."

"But what quality is most helpful for coming to an agreement through pondering dhammas?..."

"Penetrating the meaning.... If one didn't penetrate the meaning, one wouldn't come to an agreement through pondering dhammas...."

“But what quality is most helpful for penetrating the meaning?...”

“Remembering the Dhamma.... If one didn’t remember the Dhamma, one wouldn’t penetrate the meaning....”

“But what quality is most helpful for remembering the Dhamma?... ”

“Hearing the Dhamma.... If one didn’t hear the Dhamma, one wouldn’t remember the Dhamma....”

“But what quality is most helpful for hearing the Dhamma?... ”

“Lending ear.... If one didn’t lend ear, one wouldn’t hear the Dhamma....”

“But what quality is most helpful for lending ear?... ”

“Growing close.... If one didn’t grow close, one wouldn’t lend ear....”

“But what quality is most helpful for growing close?... ”

“Visiting.... If one didn’t visit, one wouldn’t grow close....”

“But what quality is most helpful for visiting? We ask Master Gotama about the quality most helpful for visiting.”

“Conviction is most helpful for visiting, Bhāradvāja. If conviction [in a person] didn’t arise, one wouldn’t visit [that person]. Because conviction arises, one visits. Therefore, conviction is most helpful for visiting.”

“We have asked Master Gotama about safeguarding the truth, and Master Gotama has answered about safeguarding the truth. We like that & agree with that, and so we are gratified. We have asked Master Gotama about awakening to the truth, and Master Gotama has answered about awakening to the truth. We like that & agree with that, and so we are gratified. We have asked Master Gotama about finally attaining the truth, and Master Gotama has answered about finally attaining the truth. We like that & agree with that, and so we are gratified. We have asked Master Gotama about the quality most helpful for finally attaining the truth, and Master Gotama has answered about the quality most helpful for finally attaining the truth. We like that & agree with that, and so we are gratified. Whatever we have asked Master Gotama, Master Gotama has answered it. We like that & agree with that, and so we are gratified.

“We used to think, ‘Who are these bald-headed “contemplatives,” these menial, dark offspring of [Brahmā,] the Kinsman’s feet? Who are they to know the Dhamma?’ But now Master Gotama has inspired within us a contemplative-love for contemplatives, a contemplative-confidence in contemplatives, a contemplative-respect for contemplatives. Magnificent, Master Gotama! Magnificent! Just as if he were to place upright what was overturned, to reveal what was hidden, to show the way to one who was lost, or to carry a lamp into the dark so that those with eyes could see forms, in the same way has Master Gotama—through many lines of reasoning—made the Dhamma clear. I go to Master Gotama for refuge, to the Dhamma, & to the community of monks. May Master Gotama remember me as a lay follower who has gone for refuge from this day forward, for life.” — MN 95

§ 129. “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 hold categorically, ‘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 hold categorically, 'This is the Dhamma, this is the Vinaya, this is the Teacher's instruction.'" — AN 8:53

§ 130. "Upāli, the qualities of which you may know, 'These qualities do not lead to utter disenchantment, to dispassion, to cessation, to calm, to direct knowledge, to self-awakening, nor to unbinding': You may hold categorically, '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 utter disenchantment, to dispassion, to cessation, to calm, to direct knowledge, to self-awakening, to unbinding': You may hold categorically, 'This is the Dhamma, this is the Vinaya, this is the Teacher's instruction.'" — AN 7:80

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

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

"Having performed a bodily action, you should reflect on it: 'This bodily action I did—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 happy consequences, happy results, then you should stay mentally refreshed & joyful, training day & night in skillful qualities.

[Similarly with verbal actions.]

"Whenever you want to perform a mental action, you should reflect on it: 'This mental action I want to perform—would it lead 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 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 happy consequences, happy results, then any mental action of that sort is fit for you to do.

“While you are performing 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 performed a mental action, you should reflect on it: ‘This mental action I did—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... you should exercise restraint in the future. But if on reflection you know that it did not lead to affliction... it was a skillful mental action with happy consequences, happy results, then you should stay mentally refreshed & joyful, training day & night in skillful 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.” — *MN 61 [See also §138]*

§ 132. “Just as the footprints of all legged animals are encompassed by the footprint of the elephant, and the elephant’s footprint is reckoned the foremost among them in terms of size; in the same way, all skillful qualities are rooted in heedfulness, converge in heedfulness, and heedfulness is reckoned the foremost among them.” — *AN 10:15*

§ 133. “Monks, mindfulness of death—when developed & pursued—is of great fruit & great benefit. It gains a footing in the deathless, has the deathless as its final end. And how is mindfulness of death developed & pursued so that it is of great fruit & great benefit, gains a footing in the deathless, and has the deathless as its final end?

“There is the case where a monk, as day departs and night returns, reflects: ‘Many are the [possible] causes of my death. A snake might bite me, a scorpion might sting me, a centipede might bite me. That would be how my death would come about. That would be an obstruction for me. Stumbling, I might fall; my food, digested, might trouble me; my bile might be provoked, my phlegm... piercing wind forces [in the body] might be provoked. That would be how my death would come about. That would be an obstruction for me.’ Then the monk

should investigate: 'Are there any evil, unskillful qualities unabandoned by me that would be an obstruction for me were I to die in the night?'

"If, on reflecting, he realizes that there are evil, unskillful qualities unabandoned by him that would be an obstruction for him were he to die in the night, then he should put forth extra desire, effort, diligence, endeavor, relentlessness, mindfulness, & alertness for the abandoning of those very same evil, unskillful qualities. Just as when a person whose turban or head was on fire would put forth extra desire, effort, diligence, endeavor, relentlessness, mindfulness, & alertness to put out the fire on his turban or head, in the same way the monk should put forth extra desire, effort, diligence, endeavor, relentlessness, mindfulness, & alertness for the abandoning of those very same evil, unskillful qualities.

"But if, on reflecting, he realizes that there are no evil, unskillful qualities unabandoned by him that would be an obstruction for him were he to die in the night, then for that very reason he should dwell in joy & rapture, training himself day & night in skillful qualities.

"Furthermore, there is the case where a monk, as night departs and day returns, reflects: 'Many are the [possible] causes of my death. A snake might bite me, a scorpion might sting me, a centipede might bite me. That would be how my death would come about. That would be an obstruction for me. Stumbling, I might fall; my food, digested, might trouble me; my bile might be provoked, my phlegm... piercing wind forces [in the body] might be provoked. That would be how my death would come about. That would be an obstruction for me.' Then the monk should investigate: 'Are there any evil, unskillful qualities unabandoned by me that would be an obstruction for me were I to die during the day?'

"If, on reflecting, he realizes that there are evil, unskillful qualities unabandoned by him that would be an obstruction for him were he to die during the day, then he should put forth extra desire, effort, diligence, endeavor, relentlessness, mindfulness, & alertness for the abandoning of those very same evil, unskillful qualities. Just as when a person whose turban or head was on fire would put forth extra desire, effort, diligence, endeavor, relentlessness, mindfulness, & alertness to put out the fire on his turban or head, in the same way the monk should put forth extra desire, effort, diligence, endeavor, relentlessness, mindfulness, & alertness for the abandoning of those very same evil, unskillful qualities.

"But if, on reflecting, he realizes that there are no evil, unskillful qualities unabandoned by him that would be an obstruction for him were he to die during the day, then for that very reason he should dwell in joy & rapture, training himself day & night in skillful qualities.

"This, monks, is how mindfulness of death is developed & pursued so that it is of great fruit & great benefit, gains a footing in the deathless, and has the deathless as its final end." — *AN 6:20*

§ 134. "There are these ten things that a person gone-forth should reflect on often. Which ten?

"'I have become casteless': A person gone forth should often reflect on this.

"'My life is dependent on others'....

"'My behavior should be different [from that of householders]'....

"'Can I fault myself with regard to my virtue?'...

"'Can my knowledgeable fellows in the holy life, on close examination, fault me with regard to my virtue?'...

"'I will grow different, separate from all that is dear & appealing to me'....

“I am the owner of actions (*kamma*), heir to actions, born of actions, related through actions, and have actions as my arbitrator. Whatever I do, for good or for evil, to that will I fall heir’....

“What am I becoming as the days & nights fly past?’...

“Do I delight in an empty dwelling?’...

“Have I attained a superior human attainment, a truly noble distinction of knowledge & vision, such that—when my fellows in the holy life question me in the last days of my life—I won’t feel abashed?: A person gone forth should often reflect on this.

“These are the ten things that a person gone-forth should reflect on often.” — AN 10:48

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

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

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

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

§ 136. “Suppose that a foolish, inexperienced, unskillful cook has presented a king or a king’s minister with various kinds of curry: mainly sour, mainly bitter, mainly peppery, mainly sweet, alkaline or non-alkaline, salty or non-salty. He doesn’t read [lit: “pick up the theme of”] his master, thinking, ‘Today my master likes this curry, or he reaches out for that curry, or he takes a lot of this curry, or he praises that curry’.... As a result, he isn’t rewarded with clothing or wages or gifts. Why is that? Because the foolish, inexperienced, unskillful cook doesn’t read his own master.

“In the same way, there are cases where a foolish, inexperienced, unskillful

monk remains focused on the body in & of itself—ardent, alert, & mindful—subduing greed & distress with reference to the world. As he remains thus focused on the body in & of itself, his mind doesn't become concentrated, his defilements [Comm: the five hindrances] aren't abandoned. He doesn't read that fact. He remains focused on feelings in & of themselves... the mind in & of itself... qualities in & of themselves—ardent, alert, & mindful—subduing greed & distress with reference to the world. As he remains thus focused on qualities in & of themselves, his mind doesn't become concentrated, his defilements aren't abandoned. He doesn't read that fact. As a result, he isn't rewarded with a pleasant abiding here & now, nor with mindfulness & alertness. Why is that? Because the foolish, inexperienced, unskillful monk doesn't read his own mind.

“Now suppose that a wise, experienced, skillful cook has presented a king or a king's minister with various kinds of curry.... He reads his master, thinking, 'Today my master likes this curry, or he reaches out for that curry, or he takes a lot of this curry or he praises that curry'.... As a result, he is rewarded with clothing, wages, & gifts. Why is that? Because the wise, experienced, skillful cook reads his own master.

“In the same way, there are cases where a wise, experienced, skillful monk remains focused on the body in & of itself... feelings in & of themselves... the mind in & of itself... qualities in & of themselves—ardent, alert, & mindful—subduing greed & distress with reference to the world. As he remains thus focused on qualities in & of themselves, his mind becomes concentrated, his defilements are abandoned. He reads that fact. As a result, he is rewarded with a pleasant abiding here & now, together with mindfulness & alertness. Why is that? Because the wise, experienced, skillful monk reads his own mind.” — SN 47:8

§ 137. “Ānanda, if a monk or nun remains with mind well established in the four establishings of mindfulness, he/she may be expected to realize greater-than-ever distinction.

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

“Furthermore, he remains focused on feelings... mind... qualities in & of themselves—ardent, alert, & mindful—subduing greed & distress with reference to the world. As he remains thus focused on qualities in & of themselves, a fever based on qualities arises within his body, or there is sluggishness in his awareness, or his mind becomes scattered externally. He should then direct his mind to any inspiring theme. As his mind is directed to any inspiring theme, delight arises within him. In one who feels delight, rapture arises. In one whose mind is enraptured, the body grows serene. His body serene, he is sensitive to pleasure. As he feels pleasure, his mind grows concentrated. He reflects, 'I have attained the aim to which my mind was directed. Let me withdraw.' He

withdraws & engages neither in directed thought nor in evaluation. He discerns, 'I am not thinking or evaluating. I am inwardly mindful & at ease.'

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

"When not directing his mind to external things, he discerns, 'My mind is not directed to external things. It is not attentive to what is in front or behind. It is released & undirected. And furthermore, I remain focused on feelings... mind... qualities in & of themselves. I am ardent, alert, mindful, & at ease.'

"This, Ānanda, is development based on not directing.

"Now, Ānanda, I have taught you development based on directing and development based on not directing. What a teacher should do out of compassion for his disciples, seeking their benefit, that I have done for you. Over there are [places to sit at] the roots of trees. Over there are empty dwellings. Do jhāna, Ānanda. Don't be heedless. Don't be remorseful in the future. That is our instruction to you all." — *SN 47:10*

§ 138. "Ānanda, just as this palace of Migāra's mother [in the monastery constructed by Lady Visākhā near Sāvatti] 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 community of monks; even so, Ānanda, a monk—not attending to the perception [mental label] 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... 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.

"Furthermore, Ānanda, the monk—not attending to the perception of human being, not attending to the perception of wilderness—attends to the singleness based on the perception of earth. His mind takes pleasure, finds satisfaction, settles, & indulges in its perception of earth. Just as a bull's hide is stretched free from wrinkles with a hundred stakes, even so—without attending to all the ridges & hollows, the river ravines, the tracts of stumps & thorns, the craggy irregularities of this earth—he attends to the singleness based on the perception of earth. His mind... settles & indulges in its perception of earth.

"He discerns that 'Whatever disturbances that would exist based on the perception of human being... that would exist based on the perception of wilderness, are not present. There is only this modicum of disturbance: the singleness based on the perception of earth.' He discerns that 'This mode of perception is empty of the perception of human being... empty of the perception of wilderness. There is only this non-emptiness: the singleness based on the perception of earth.' 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.

“Furthermore, Ānanda, the monk—not attending to the perception of wilderness, not attending to the perception of earth—attends to the singleness based on the perception of the dimension of the infinitude of space.... [and so on through the four formless attainments. Then:]

“Furthermore, 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 themeless concentration of awareness. His mind takes pleasure, finds satisfaction, settles, & indulges in its themeless concentration of awareness.

“He discerns that ‘Whatever disturbances that would exist based on the perception of the dimension of nothingness... on the perception of the dimension of neither perception nor non-perception, 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....[etc.]’

“Furthermore, 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 themeless concentration of awareness. His mind takes pleasure, finds satisfaction, settles, & indulges in its themeless concentration of awareness.

“He discerns that ‘This themeless concentration of awareness is fabricated & mentally fashioned.’ And he discerns that ‘Whatever is fabricated & mentally fashioned is inconstant & subject to cessation.’ For him—thus knowing, thus seeing—the mind is released from the fermentation of sensuality, the fermentation of becoming, the fermentation 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 that would exist based on the fermentation of sensuality... the fermentation of becoming... the fermentation 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 fermentation of sensuality... the fermentation of becoming... the fermentation of 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.” — *MN 121*

§ 139. “Suppose that an archer or archer’s apprentice were to practice on a straw man or mound of clay, so that after a while he would become able to shoot long distances, to fire accurate shots in rapid succession, and to pierce great masses. In the same way, there is the case where a monk... enters & remains in the first jhāna: rapture & pleasure born 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 resolution of all fabrications; the relinquishment of all acquisitions; the ending of craving; dispassion; cessation; unbinding.’

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

[Similarly with the second, third, and fourth jhāna.]

“.... Suppose that an archer or archer's apprentice were to practice on a straw man or mound of clay, so that after a while he would become able to shoot long distances, to fire accurate shots in rapid succession, and to pierce great masses. In the same way, there is the case where a monk... enters & remains in the dimension of the infinitude of space. He regards whatever phenomena there that are connected with 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 resolution of all fabrications; the relinquishment of all acquisitions; the ending of craving; dispassion; cessation; unbinding.’

“Staying right there, he reaches the ending of fermentations. Or, if not, then—through this very Dhamma-passion, this very Dhamma-delight, and from the total wasting away of the first five fetters—he is due to be reborn [in the Pure Abodes], there to be totally unbound, never again to return from that world....

[Similarly with the dimension of the infinitude of consciousness and the dimension of nothingness.]” — AN 9:36

§ 140. “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 valid 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 valid to regard what is inconstant, stressful, subject to change as: ‘This is mine. This is my self. This is what I am’?”

“No, lord.”

“Thus, monks, any form whatsoever that is past, future, or present; internal or external; blatant or subtle; common or sublime; far or near: every form is to be seen 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 no clinging [not being sustained], were released from fermentations. — *SN 22:59*

§ 141. I have heard that on one occasion the Blessed One was staying at Sāvattḥi, in Jeta’s Grove, Anāthapiṇḍika’s Monastery. Then, as he was alone in seclusion, this line of thinking arose in the Blessed One’s awareness: “The qualities that ripen in release have ripened in Rāhula. What if I were to lead Rāhula further to the ending of fermentations?”

Then the Blessed One, early in the morning, put on his robes and, carrying his bowl & outer robe, went into Sāvattḥi for alms. Having gone for alms in Sāvattḥi, after the meal, returning from his alms round, he said to Ven. Rāhula, “Fetch your sitting cloth, Rāhula. We will go to the Grove 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 fermentations.”

Then the Blessed One, having plunged into the Grove of the Blind, sat down on a seat made ready 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?”

“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? Is eye-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.”

“What do you think? Is eye-contact 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? Whatever there is that arises in dependence on eye-contact 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.”

“What do you think, Rāhula? Is the ear constant or inconstant?”

“Inconstant, lord” ...

“What do you think, Rāhula? Is the nose constant or inconstant?”

“Inconstant, lord” ...

“What do you think, Rāhula? Is the tongue constant or inconstant?”

“Inconstant, lord” ...

“What do you think, Rāhula? Is the body constant or inconstant?”

“Inconstant, lord” ...

“What do you think, Rāhula? Is the intellect constant or inconstant?”

“Inconstant, lord.”

“And is that which is inconstant easeful or stressful?”

“Stressful, lord.”

“And is it fitting to regard what is inconstant, stressful, subject to change as:

“This is mine. This is my self. This is what I am?”

“No, lord.”

“What do you think? Are ideas 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? Is intellect-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.”

“What do you think? Is intellect-contact 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? Whatever there is that arises in dependence on intellect-contact 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.”

“Seeing thus, Rāhula, the instructed disciple of the noble ones grows disenchanted with the eye, disenchanted with forms, disenchanted with eye-consciousness, disenchanted with eye-contact. And whatever there is that arises in dependence on eye-contact 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...

“He grows disenchanted with the nose...

“He grows disenchanted with the tongue...

“He grows disenchanted with the body...

“He grows disenchanted with the intellect, disenchanted with ideas, disenchanted with intellect-consciousness, disenchanted with intellect-contact. And whatever there is that arises in dependence on intellect-contact 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 [not being sustained], was released from fermentations. 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*

§ 142. [A certain monk] asked the Blessed One a further question: “Knowing in what way, seeing in what way, is there—with regard to this body endowed with consciousness, and with regard to all external signs—no longer any I-making, or my-making, or obsession with conceit?”

“Monk, one sees any form whatsoever—past, future, or present; internal or external; blatant or subtle; common or sublime; far or near—every form, as it actually is with right discernment: ‘This is not mine. This is not my self. This is not what I am.’

“One sees any feeling whatsoever... any perception whatsoever... any fabrications whatsoever...

“One sees any consciousness whatsoever—past, future, or present; internal or external; blatant or subtle; common or sublime; far or near—every consciousness—as it actually is with right discernment: ‘This is not mine. This is not my self. This is not what I am.’

“Monk, knowing in this way, seeing in this way, there is—with regard to this body endowed with consciousness, and with regard to all external signs—no longer any I-making, or my-making, or obsession with conceit.”

Now at that moment this line of thinking appeared in the awareness of a certain monk: “So—form is not-self, feeling is not-self, perception is not-self,

fabrications are not-self, consciousness is not-self. Then what self will be touched by the actions done by what is not-self?"

Then the Blessed One, realizing with his awareness the line of thinking in that monk's awareness, addressed the monks: "It's possible that a senseless person—immersed in ignorance, overcome with craving—might think that he could outsmart the Teacher's message in this way: 'So—form is not-self, feeling is not-self, perception is not-self, fabrications are not-self, consciousness is not-self. Then what self will be touched by the actions done by what is not-self?' Now, monks, haven't I trained you in cross-questioning with regard to this & that topic here & there? What do you think? Is form constant or inconstant?"

"Inconstant, lord."

"And is that which is inconstant easeful or stressful?"

"Stressful, lord."

"And is it fitting to regard what is inconstant, stressful, subject to change as: 'This is mine. This is my self. This is what I am'?"

"No, lord."

"... Is feeling constant or inconstant?"

"Inconstant, lord."....

"... Is perception constant or inconstant?"

"Inconstant, lord."....

"... Are fabrications constant or inconstant?"

"Inconstant, lord."....

"What do you think, monks? Is consciousness constant or inconstant?"

"Inconstant, lord."

"And is that which is inconstant easeful or stressful?"

"Stressful, lord."

"And is it fitting to regard what is inconstant, stressful, subject to change as: 'This is mine. This is my self. This is what I am'?"

"No, lord."

"Thus, monks, any form whatsoever that is past, future, or present; internal or external; blatant or subtle; common or sublime; far or near: every form is to be seen as it actually is with right discernment as: 'This is not mine. This is not my self. This is not what I am.'

"Any feeling whatsoever....

"Any perception whatsoever....

"Any fabrications whatsoever....

"Any consciousness whatsoever that is past, future, or present; internal or external; blatant or subtle; common or sublime; far or near: every consciousness is to be seen as it actually is with right discernment as: 'This is not mine. This is not my self. This is not what I am.'

"Seeing thus, the instructed disciple of the noble ones grows disenchanted with form, disenchanted with feeling, disenchanted with perception, disenchanted with fabrications, disenchanted with consciousness. Disenchanted, he becomes dispassionate. Through dispassion, he is released. With release, there is the knowledge, 'Released.' He discerns that 'Birth is ended, the holy life fulfilled, the task done. There is nothing further for this world.'"

That is what the Blessed One said. Gratified, the monks delighted in the Blessed One's words. And while this explanation was being given, the minds of sixty monks, through no clinging [not being sustained], were released from fermentations. — *MN 109*

§ 143. "There is the case where a monk, having gone to the wilderness, to the root of a tree, or to an empty dwelling, considers thus: 'Is there any internal

enthrallment unabandoned in me that, enthralled with which, my enthralled mind would not know or see things as they have come to be? If a monk is enthralled with sensual passion, then his mind is enthralled. If he is enthralled with ill will, then his mind is enthralled. If he is enthralled with sloth and torpor, then his mind is enthralled. If he is enthralled with restlessness and anxiety, then his mind is enthralled. If he is enthralled with uncertainty, then his mind is enthralled. If a monk is absorbed in speculation about this world, then his mind is enthralled. If a monk is absorbed in speculation about the other world, then his mind is enthralled. If a monk is given to arguing and quarreling and disputing, stabbing others with weapons of the mouth, then his mind is enthralled.

“He discerns that, ‘There is no enthrallment unabandoned in me that, enthralled with which, my enthralled mind would not know and see things as they have come to be. My mind is well directed for awakening to the truths.’ This is the first knowledge attained by him that is noble, transcendent, not held in common with run-of-the-mill people.

“Furthermore, the disciple of the noble ones considers thus: ‘When I cultivate, develop, and pursue this view, do I personally obtain serenity, do I personally obtain unbinding?’

“He discerns that, ‘When I cultivate, develop, and pursue this view, I personally obtain serenity, I personally obtain unbinding.’ This is the second knowledge attained by him that is noble, transcendent, not held in common with run-of-the-mill people.

“Furthermore, the disciple of the noble ones considers thus: ‘Is there, outside of this [Dhamma & Vinaya], any other contemplative or brahman endowed with the sort of view with which I am endowed?’

“He discerns that, ‘There is no other contemplative or brahman outside of this [Dhamma & Vinaya] endowed with the sort of view with which I am endowed.’ This is the third knowledge attained by him that is noble, transcendent, not held in common with run-of-the-mill people.

“Furthermore, the disciple of the noble ones considers thus: ‘Am I endowed with the character of a person consummate in view?’ What is the character of a person consummate in view? This is the character of a person consummate in view: Although he may commit some kind of offence for which a means of rehabilitation has been laid down, still he immediately confesses, reveals, and discloses it to the Teacher or to wise companions in the holy life; having done that, he undertakes restraint for the future. Just as a young, tender infant lying on his back, when he has hit a live ember with his hand or his foot, immediately draws back; in the same way, this is the character of a person consummate in view: Although he may commit some kind of offence for which a means of rehabilitation has been laid down, still he immediately confesses, reveals, and discloses it to the Teacher or to wise companions in the holy life; having done that, he undertakes restraint for the future.

“He discerns that, ‘I am endowed with the character of a person consummate in view.’ This is the fourth knowledge attained by him that is noble, transcendent, not held in common with run-of-the-mill people.

“Furthermore, the disciple of the noble ones considers thus: ‘Am I endowed with the character of a person consummate in view?’ What is the character of a person consummate in view? This is the character of a person consummate in view: Although he may be active in the various affairs of his companions in the holy life, he still has a keen regard for training in heightened virtue, training in heightened mind, & training in heightened discernment. Just as a cow with a new calf watches after her calf all the while she is grazing on grass, in the same way, this is the character of a person consummate in view: Although he may be active in the various affairs of his companions in the holy life, he still has a keen regard

for training in heightened virtue, training in heightened mind, & training in heightened discernment.

“He discerns that, ‘I am endowed with the character of a person consummate in view.’ This is the fifth knowledge attained by him that is noble, transcendent, not held in common with run-of-the-mill people.

“Furthermore, the disciple of the noble ones considers thus: ‘Am I endowed with the strength of a person consummate in view?’ What is the strength of a person consummate in view? This is the strength of a person consummate in view: When the Dhamma & Vinaya proclaimed by the Tathāgata is being taught, he heeds it, gives it attention, engages it with all his mind, hears the Dhamma with eager ears.

“He discerns that, ‘I am endowed with the strength of a person consummate in view.’ This is the sixth knowledge attained by him that is noble, transcendent, not held in common with run-of-the-mill people.

“Furthermore, the disciple of the noble ones considers thus: ‘Am I endowed with the strength of a person consummate in view?’ What is the strength of a person consummate in view? This is the strength of a person consummate in view: When the Dhamma & Vinaya proclaimed by the Tathāgata is being taught, he gains understanding in the meaning, gains understanding in the Dhamma, gains gladness connected with the Dhamma.

“He discerns that, ‘I am endowed with the strength of a person consummate in view.’ This is the seventh knowledge attained by him that is noble, transcendent, not held in common with run-of-the-mill people.

“A disciple of the noble ones thus possessed of seven factors has well examined the character for the realization of the fruit of stream entry. A disciple of the noble ones thus possessed of seven factors is endowed with the fruit of stream entry.” — MN 48

§ 144. “There is a manner of reckoning whereby a monk who is a learner, standing at the level of a learner [i.e., a stream-winner, once-returner, or non-returner], can discern that ‘I am a learner,’ and whereby a monk who is an adept [i.e., an arahant], standing at the level of an adept, can discern that ‘I am an adept.’

“And what is the manner of reckoning whereby a monk who is a learner, standing at the level of a learner, can discern that ‘I am a learner?’ There is the case where a monk is a learner. He discerns, as it has come to be, that ‘*This is stress... This is the origination of stress... This is the cessation of stress... This is the path of practice leading to the cessation of stress.*’ This is a manner of reckoning whereby a monk who is a learner, standing at the level of a learner, can discern that ‘I am a learner.’

“Furthermore, the monk who is a learner reflects, ‘Is there outside of this [Dhamma & Vinaya] any contemplative or brahman who teaches the true, genuine, & accurate Dhamma like the Blessed One?’ And he discerns, ‘No, there is no contemplative or brahman outside of this [Dhamma & Vinaya] who teaches the true, genuine, & accurate Dhamma like the Blessed One.’ This too is a manner of reckoning whereby a monk who is a learner, standing at the level of a learner, can discern that ‘I am a learner.’

“Furthermore, the monk who is a learner discerns the five faculties: the faculty of conviction... persistence... mindfulness... concentration... discernment. Having penetrated them with discernment, he sees what their destiny, excellence, rewards, & consummation are, but he does not dwell touching them with his body. This too is a manner of reckoning whereby a monk who is a learner, standing at the level of a learner, can discern that ‘I am a

learner.'

"And what is the manner of reckoning whereby a monk who is an adept, standing at the level of an adept, can discern that 'I am an adept'? There is the case where a monk who is an adept discerns the five faculties: the faculty of conviction... persistence... mindfulness... concentration... discernment. Having penetrated them with discernment, he sees what their destiny, excellence, rewards, & consummation are, and he dwells touching them with his body. This is a manner of reckoning whereby a monk who is an adept, standing at the level of an adept, can discern that 'I am an adept.'

"Furthermore, the monk who is an adept discerns the six sense faculties: the faculty of the eye... ear... nose... tongue... body... intellect. He discerns, 'These six sense faculties will cease entirely, everywhere, & in every way without remainder, and no other set of six sense faculties will arise anywhere or in any way.' This too is a manner of reckoning whereby a monk who is an adept, standing at the level of an adept, can discern that 'I am an adept.'" — *SN 48:53*