

A golden Buddha statue in a meditative pose, seated with hands in Anjali Mudra (prayer position). The statue is set against a background of intricate, carved patterns. The text "BEYOND COPING" is overlaid in white, serif capital letters.

BEYOND  
COPING

# *Beyond Coping*

*A Study Guide*

*on Aging, Illness, Death, & Separation*

prepared by

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# Introduction

An anthropologist once questioned a native Alaskan shaman about his tribe's belief system. After putting up with the anthropologist's questions for a while, the shaman finally told him: "Look. We don't believe. We fear."

In a similar way, Buddhism starts, not with a belief, but with a fear of very present dangers. As the Buddha himself reported, his initial impetus for leaving home and seeking awakening was his comprehension of the great dangers that inevitably follow on birth: aging, illness, death, and separation. The awakening he sought was one that would lead him to a happiness not subject to these things. After finding that happiness, and in attempting to show others how to find it for themselves, he frequently referred to the themes of aging, illness, death, and separation as useful objects for contemplation. Because of this, his teaching has often been called pessimistic, but this emphasis is actually like that of a doctor focusing on the symptoms and causes of disease as part of an effort to bring about a cure. The Buddha is not afraid to dwell on these topics, because the awakening he teaches brings about a total release from them.

This study guide provides an introduction to the Buddha's teachings on aging, illness, death, and separation. The passages included here—all taken from the Pali Canon—are arranged in five sections.

(1) The first section presents medical metaphors for the teaching, showing how the Buddha was like a doctor and how his teaching is like a course of therapy offering a cure for the great dangers in life.

(2) The second section diagnoses the problems of aging, illness, death, and separation. This section touches briefly on the Buddha's central teaching, the four noble truths. For more information on this subject, see *The Path to Freedom* and the study guide, *The Four Noble Truths*. See also the articles, *The Weight of Mountains*, *Five Piles of Bricks*, and *Untangling the Present*.

(3) The third section contains passages that use aging, illness, death, and separation as reminders for heedfulness and diligence in the practice. The central passage here is a set of five recollections, in which recollection of aging, illness, death, and separation forms a background for a fifth

recollection: the power of one's actions to shape one's experience. In other words, the first four recollections present the dangers of life; the fifth indicates the way in which those dangers may be overcome, through developing skill in one's own thoughts, words, and deeds. Useful articles to read in conjunction with this section are *Affirming the Truths of the Heart*, *Karma*, *The Road to Nirvana is Paved with Skillful Intentions*, *Faith in Awakening*, and *The Practice in a Word*.

(4) The fourth section contains passages that give specific advice on how to deal with problems of aging, etc. The Buddha's teachings on kamma provide an important underpinning for how problems of pain and illness are approached in this section. Given the fact that the experience of the present moment is shaped both by past and by present intentions, it is possible that—if an illness is the result of present intentions—a change of mind can effect a cure in the illness; but if the illness is the result of past intentions, a change of mind may have no effect on the illness but can at least protect the mind from being adversely affected by it. Thus some of the passages focus on how practicing the Dhamma can cure a person of illness, whereas others focus on how the Dhamma can ensure that, even though a person may die from an illness, the illness will make no inroads on the mind. A useful article to read in conjunction with this section is *Educating Compassion*.

(5) The fifth section gives examples of how the Buddha and his disciples skillfully negotiated the problems of aging, illness, death, and separation.

# The Buddha as Doctor, the Dhamma as Medicine

§1. This was said by the Blessed One, said by the Arahant, so I have heard: “I am a brahman, responsive to requests, open-handed, bearing my last body, an unsurpassed doctor & surgeon. You are my children, my sons, born from my mouth, born of the Dhamma, created by the Dhamma, heirs to the Dhamma, not heirs in material things.”

—[\*Iti 100\*](#)

§2. “Both formerly & now, it is only stress that I describe, and the cessation of stress.”

—[\*SN 22:86\*](#)

§3. Once the Blessed One was staying at Kosambi in the simsapa forest. Then, picking up a few simsapa leaves with his hand, he asked the monks, “How do you construe this, monks: Which are more numerous, the few simsapa leaves in my hand or those overhead in the simsapa forest?”

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

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

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

“Therefore your duty is the contemplation, ‘This is stress ... This is the origination of stress ... This is the cessation of stress.’ Your duty is the

contemplation, “This is the path of practice leading to the cessation of stress.”

—[SN 56:31](#)

§4. Then the monks went to Ven. Sariputta. On arrival, they exchanged courteous greetings with him. After an exchange of friendly greetings & courtesies, they sat to one side. As they were sitting there, they said to Ven. Sariputta, “Friend Sariputta, we want to go to the countryside of the outlying districts and to take up residence there. We have already informed the Teacher.”

“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?’ Have you listened well to the teachings—grasped them well, attended to them well, considered them well, penetrated them well by means of discernment—so that in answering you will speak in line with what the Blessed One has said, will not misrepresent the Blessed One with what is unfactual, will answer in line with the Dhamma, and no one whose thinking is in line with the Dhamma will have grounds for criticizing you?”

“We would come from a long way away to hear the explication of these words in Ven. Sariputta’s presence. It would be good if Ven. Sariputta himself would enlighten us as to their meaning.”

“Then in that case, friends, listen & pay close attention. I will speak.”

“As you say, friend,” the monks responded.

Ven. Sariputta 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.’

"Having thus been answered, there may be wise nobles & brahmans, 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 & brahmans, 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 doesn't 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 doesn't 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 mental qualities were to have a pleasant abiding in the here & now—unthreatened, undespairing, unfeverish—and on the break-up of the body, after death,

could expect a good destination, then the Blessed One would not advocate the abandoning of unskillful mental qualities. But because one who enters & remains in unskillful mental qualities has a stressful abiding in the here & now—threatened, despairing, & feverish—and on the break-up of the body, after death, can expect a bad destination, that is why the Blessed One advocates the abandoning of unskillful mental qualities.

“If one who entered & remained in skillful mental qualities were to have a stressful abiding in the here & now—threatened, despairing, & feverish—and on the break-up of the body, after death, could expect a bad destination, then the Blessed One would not advocate entering into skillful mental qualities. But because one who enters & remains in skillful mental qualities has a pleasant abiding in the here & now—unthreatened, undespairing, unfeverish—and on the break-up of the body, after death, can expect a good destination, that is why the Blessed One advocates entering into skillful mental qualities.”

—[SN 22:2](#)

§5. “Monks, doctors give a purgative for warding off diseases caused by bile, diseases caused by phlegm, diseases caused by the internal wind property. There is a purging there; I don’t say that there’s not, but it sometimes succeeds and sometimes fails. So I will teach you the noble purgative that always succeeds and never fails, a purgative whereby beings subject to birth are freed from birth; beings subject to aging are freed from aging; beings subject to death are freed from death; beings subject to sorrow, lamentation, pain, distress, & despair are freed from sorrow, lamentation, pain, distress, & despair. Listen & pay close attention. I will speak.”

“As you say, lord,” the monks responded.

The Blessed One said: “Now, what is the noble purgative that always succeeds and never fails, a purgative whereby beings subject to birth are freed from birth; beings subject to aging are freed from aging; beings subject to death are freed from death; beings subject to sorrow, lamentation, pain, distress, & despair are freed from sorrow, lamentation, pain, distress, & despair?”

“In one who has right view, wrong view is purged away, and the many evil, unskillful mental qualities that come into play in dependence on

wrong view are purged away as well, while the many skillful mental qualities that depend on right view go to the culmination of their development.

“In one who has right resolve, wrong resolve is purged away ....

“In one who has right speech, wrong speech is purged away ....

“In one who has right action, wrong action is purged away ....

“In one who has right livelihood, wrong livelihood is purged away ....

“In one who has right effort, wrong effort is purged away ....

“In one who has right mindfulness, wrong mindfulness is purged away ....

“In one who has right concentration, wrong concentration is purged away ....

“In one who has right knowledge, wrong knowledge is purged away ....

“In one who has right release, wrong release is purged away, and the many evil, unskillful mental qualities that come into play in dependence on wrong release are purged away as well, while the many skillful mental qualities that depend on right release go to the culmination of their development.

“This, monks, is the noble purgative that always succeeds and never fails, a purgative whereby beings subject to birth are freed from birth; beings subject to aging are freed from aging; beings subject to death are freed from death; beings subject to sorrow, lamentation, pain, distress, & despair are freed from sorrow, lamentation, pain, distress, & despair.”

—[AN 10:108](#)

§6. “There are these three types of sick people to be found existing in the world. Which three?

“There is the case of the sick person who—regardless of whether he does or doesn’t receive amenable food, regardless of whether he does or doesn’t receive amenable medicine, regardless of whether he does or doesn’t receive proper nursing—will not recover from that illness. There is the case of the sick person who—regardless of whether he does or doesn’t receive amenable food, regardless of whether he does or doesn’t receive amenable medicine, regardless of whether he does or doesn’t receive proper nursing—will recover from that illness. There is the case of the sick person who will

recover from that illness if he receives amenable food, amenable medicine, & proper nursing, but not if he doesn't.

"Now, it is because of the sick person who will recover from that illness if he receives amenable food, amenable medicine, & proper nursing—but not if he doesn't—that food for the sick has been allowed, medicine for the sick has been allowed, nursing for the sick has been allowed. And it is because there is this sort of sick person that the other sorts of sick persons are to be nursed as well [on the chance that they may actually turn out to need and benefit from such nursing].

"These are the three types of sick people to be found existing in the world.

"In the same way, these three types of people, like the three types of sick people, are to be found existing in the world. Which three?

"There is the case of the person who—regardless of whether he does or doesn't get to see the Tathagata, regardless of whether he does or doesn't get to hear the Dhamma & Vinaya proclaimed by the Tathagata—will not alight on the lawfulness, the rightness of skillful mental qualities. There is the case of the person who—regardless of whether he does or doesn't get to see the Tathagata, regardless of whether he does or doesn't get to hear the Dhamma & Vinaya proclaimed by the Tathagata—will alight on the lawfulness, the rightness of skillful mental qualities. There is the case of the person who will alight on the lawfulness, the rightness of skillful mental qualities if he gets to see the Tathagata and gets to hear the Dhamma & Vinaya proclaimed by the Tathagata, but not if he doesn't.

"Now, it is because of the person who will alight on the lawfulness, the rightness of skillful mental qualities if he gets to see the Tathagata and gets to hear the Dhamma & Vinaya proclaimed by the Tathagata—but not if he doesn't—that the teaching of the Dhamma has been allowed. And it is because there is this sort of person that the other sorts of persons are to be taught the Dhamma as well [on the chance that they may actually turn out to need and benefit from the teaching].

"These are the three types of people, like the three types of sick people, to be found existing in the world."

—[AN 3:22](#)

§7. 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,  
secure."

When this was said, Magandiya the wanderer said to the Blessed One, "It's amazing, master Gotama. It's 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, Magandiya—'Freedom from disease: the foremost good fortune. Unbinding: the foremost ease'—which freedom from disease is that, which unbinding?"

When this was said, Magandiya 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, happy, and nothing afflicts me."

"Magandiya, 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, clean, & spotless.' 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, clean, & spotless.' 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, clean, & spotless.' Now what do you think, Magandiya? 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, clean,

& spotless': 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, Magandiya, 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 worthy ones, fully self-awakened:

"Freedom from disease: the foremost good fortune.

Unbinding: the foremost ease.

The eightfold: the foremost of paths

going to the

Deathless,

secure.'

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

"This body, Magandiya, 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 have confidence in 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."

"Magandiya, 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, and 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, Magandiya? Would that doctor have nothing but his share of weariness & disappointment?"

"Yes, master Gotama."

"In the same way, Magandiya, 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 have confidence in 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."

"Magandiya, 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, clean, & spotless.' The blind man would take it and put it on.

"Then his friends, companions, & relatives would take him to a doctor, and 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 oil-stained rag!—"Here, my good man, is a white cloth—beautiful, clean, & spotless."

"In the same way, Magandiya, 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 origination of this entire mass of stress."

"I have confidence in 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, Magandiya, 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

§8. “Suppose that a man were wounded with an arrow thickly smeared with poison. His friends & companions, kinsmen & relatives would provide him with a surgeon. The surgeon would cut around the opening of the wound with a knife and then would probe for the arrow with a probe. He then would pull out the arrow and extract the poison, leaving no residue behind. Knowing that no residue was left behind, he would say, ‘My good man, your arrow has been pulled out. The poison has been extracted, with no residue left behind, so it is not enough to do you harm. Eat suitable food. Don’t eat unsuitable food, or else the wound will fester. Wash the wound frequently, smear it with an ointment frequently, so that blood & pus don’t fill the opening of the wound. Don’t walk around in the wind & sun, or else dust & dirt may contaminate the opening of the wound. Keep looking after the wound, my good man, and work for its healing.’

“The thought would occur to the man: ‘My arrow has been pulled out. The poison has been extracted with no residue left behind, so it is not enough to do me harm.’ He would eat suitable food, so the wound wouldn’t fester. He would wash the wound and smear it with an ointment frequently, so blood & pus wouldn’t fill the opening of the wound. He would not walk around in the wind & sun, so dust & dirt wouldn’t contaminate the opening of the wound. He would keep looking after the wound and would work for its healing. Now, both because of these suitable actions of his and because of there being no residue of the poison left behind, the wound

would heal. With the healing of the wound and its being covered with skin, he wouldn't incur death or death-like suffering.

"In the same way, there's the possible case where a certain monk thinks, 'Craving is said by the Contemplative to be an arrow. The poison of ignorance spreads its toxin through desire, passion, & ill will. I have abandoned the arrow. I have expelled the poison of ignorance. I am rightly intent on unbinding.' Because he is rightly intent on unbinding, he wouldn't pursue those things that are unsuitable for a person rightly intent on unbinding. He wouldn't pursue unsuitable forms & sights with the eye. He wouldn't pursue unsuitable sounds with the ear ... unsuitable aromas with the nose ... unsuitable flavors with the tongue ... unsuitable tactile sensations with the body. He wouldn't pursue unsuitable ideas with the intellect. When he doesn't pursue unsuitable forms & sights with the eye ... doesn't pursue unsuitable ideas with the intellect, lust doesn't invade the mind. With his mind not invaded by lust, he doesn't incur death or death-like suffering.

"I have given this simile to convey a meaning. The meaning is this: the wound stands for the six internal sense spheres; the poison, for ignorance; the arrow, for craving; the probe, for mindfulness; the knife, for noble discernment; the surgeon, for the Tathagata, worthy & rightly self-awakened."

—[MN 105](#)

§9. Then, when it was evening, Ven. Malunkya putta arose from seclusion and went to the Blessed One. On arrival, having bowed down, he sat to one side. As he was sitting there he said to the Blessed One, "Lord, just now, as I was alone in seclusion, this train of thought arose in my awareness: 'These positions that are undisclosed, set aside, discarded by the Blessed One—'The cosmos is eternal,' 'The cosmos is not eternal,' 'The cosmos is finite,' 'The cosmos is infinite,' 'The soul & the body are the same,' 'The soul is one thing and the body another,' 'After death a Tathagata exists,' 'After death a Tathagata does not exist,' 'After death a Tathagata both exists & does not exist,' 'After death a Tathagata neither exists nor does not exist'—I don't approve, I don't accept that the Blessed One has not disclosed them to me. I'll go ask the Blessed One about this matter. If he discloses to me that "The cosmos is eternal," ... or that "After death a Tathagata neither

exists nor does not exist," then I will live the holy life under him. If he doesn't disclose to me that "The cosmos is eternal," ... or that "After death a Tathagata neither exists nor does not exist," then I will renounce the training and return to the lower life.'

"Lord, if the Blessed One knows that 'The cosmos is eternal,' then may he disclose to me that 'The cosmos is eternal.' If he knows that 'The cosmos is not eternal,' then may he disclose to me that 'The cosmos is not eternal.' But if he doesn't know or see whether the cosmos is eternal or not eternal, then, in one who is unknowing & unseeing, the straightforward thing is to admit, 'I don't know. I don't see.' .... If he doesn't know or see whether after death a Tathagata exists ... does not exist ... both exists & does not exist ... neither exists nor does not exist,' then, in one who is unknowing & unseeing, the straightforward thing is to admit, 'I don't know. I don't see.'"

"Malunkya-putta, did I ever say to you, 'Come, Malunkya-putta, live the holy life under me, and I will disclose to you that 'The cosmos is eternal,' or 'The cosmos is not eternal,' or 'The cosmos is finite,' or 'The cosmos is infinite,' or 'The soul & the body are the same,' or 'The soul is one thing and the body another,' or 'After death a Tathagata exists,' or 'After death a Tathagata does not exist,' or 'After death a Tathagata both exists & does not exist,' or 'After death a Tathagata neither exists nor does not exist'?"

"No, lord."

"And did you ever say to me, 'Lord, I will live the holy life under the Blessed One and [in return] he will disclose to me that 'The cosmos is eternal,' or 'The cosmos is not eternal,' or 'The cosmos is finite,' or 'The cosmos is infinite,' or 'The soul & the body are the same,' or 'The soul is one thing and the body another,' or 'After death a Tathagata exists,' or 'After death a Tathagata does not exist,' or 'After death a Tathagata both exists & does not exist,' or 'After death a Tathagata neither exists nor does not exist'?"

"No, lord."

"Then that being the case, foolish man, who are you to be claiming grievances/making demands of anyone?"

"Malunkya-putta, if anyone were to say, 'I won't live the holy life under the Blessed One as long as he doesn't disclose to me that "The cosmos is eternal," ... or that "After death a Tathagata neither exists nor does not

exist," the man would die and those things would still remain undisclosed by the Tathagata.

"It's just as if a man were wounded with an arrow thickly smeared with poison. His friends & companions, kinsmen & relatives would provide him with a surgeon, and the man would say, 'I won't have this arrow removed until I know whether the man who wounded me was a noble warrior, a brahman, a merchant, or a worker.' He would say, 'I won't have this arrow removed until I know the given name & clan name of the man who wounded me ... until I know whether he was tall, medium, or short ... until I know whether he was dark, ruddy-brown, or golden-colored ... until I know his home village, town, or city ... until I know whether the bow with which I was wounded was a long bow or a crossbow ... until I know whether the bowstring with which I was wounded was fiber, bamboo threads, sinew, hemp, or bark ... until I know whether the shaft with which I was wounded was wild or cultivated ... until I know whether the feathers of the shaft with which I was wounded were those of a vulture, a stork, a hawk, a peacock, or another bird ... until I know whether the shaft with which I was wounded was bound with the sinew of an ox, a water buffalo, a langur, or a monkey.' He would say, 'I won't have this arrow removed until I know whether the shaft with which I was wounded was that of a common arrow, a curved arrow, a barbed, a calf-toothed, or an oleander arrow.' The man would die and those things would still remain unknown to him.

"In the same way, if anyone were to say, 'I won't live the holy life under the Blessed One as long as he doesn't disclose to me that "The cosmos is eternal," ... or that "After death a Tathagata neither exists nor does not exist," the man would die and those things would still remain undisclosed by the Tathagata.

"Malunkyaputta, it's not the case that when there is the view, 'The cosmos is eternal,' there is the living of the holy life. And it's not the case that when there is the view, 'The cosmos is not eternal,' there is the living of the holy life. When there is the view, 'The cosmos is eternal,' and when there is the view, 'The cosmos is not eternal,' there is still the birth, there is the aging, there is the death, there is the sorrow, lamentation, pain, despair, & distress whose destruction I make known right in the here & now.

"It's not the case that when there is the view, 'The cosmos is finite,' there is the living of the holy life. And it's not the case that when there is the

view, 'The cosmos is infinite,' there is the living of the holy life. When there is the view, 'The cosmos is finite,' and when there is the view, 'The cosmos is infinite,' there is still the birth, there is the aging, there is the death, there is the sorrow, lamentation, pain, despair, & distress whose destruction I make known right in the here & now.

"It's not the case that when there is the view, 'The soul & the body are the same,' there is the living of the holy life. And it's not the case that when there is the view, 'The soul is one thing and the body another,' there is the living of the holy life. When there is the view, 'The soul & the body are the same,' and when there is the view, 'The soul is one thing and the body another,' there is still the birth, there is the aging, there is the death, there is the sorrow, lamentation, pain, despair, & distress whose destruction I make known right in the here & now.

"It's not the case that when there is the view, 'After death a Tathagata exists,' there is the living of the holy life. And it's not the case that when there is the view, 'After death a Tathagata does not exist,' there is the living of the holy life. And it's not the case that when there is the view, 'After death a Tathagata both exists & does not exist,' there is the living of the holy life. And it's not the case that when there is the view, 'After death a Tathagata neither exists nor does not exist' there is the living of the holy life. When there is the view, 'After death a Tathagata exists' ... 'After death a Tathagata does not exist' ... 'After death a Tathagata both exists & does not exist' ... 'After death a Tathagata neither exists nor does not exist,' there is still the birth, there is the aging, there is the death, there is the sorrow, lamentation, pain, despair, & distress whose destruction I make known right in the here & now.

"So, Malunkyaputta, remember what is undisclosed by me as undisclosed, and what is disclosed by me as disclosed. And what is undisclosed by me? 'The cosmos is eternal,' is undisclosed by me. 'The cosmos is not eternal,' is undisclosed by me. 'The cosmos is finite' ... 'The cosmos is infinite' ... 'The soul & the body are the same' ... 'The soul is one thing and the body another' ... 'After death a Tathagata exists' ... 'After death a Tathagata does not exist' ... 'After death a Tathagata both exists & does not exist' ... 'After death a Tathagata neither exists nor does not exist,' is undisclosed by me.

“And why are they undisclosed by me? Because they are not connected with the goal, are not fundamental to the holy life. They do not lead to disenchantment, dispassion, cessation, calming, direct knowledge, self-awakening, unbinding. That’s why they are undisclosed by me.

“And what is disclosed by me? ‘This is stress,’ is disclosed by me. ‘This is the origination of stress,’ is disclosed by me. ‘This is the cessation of stress,’ is disclosed by me. ‘This is the path of practice leading to the cessation of stress,’ is disclosed by me. And why are they disclosed by me? Because they are connected with the goal, are fundamental to the holy life. They lead to disenchantment, dispassion, cessation, calming, direct knowledge, self-awakening, unbinding. That’s why they are disclosed by me.

“So, Malunkyaputta, remember what is undisclosed by me as undisclosed, and what is disclosed by me as disclosed.”

That is what the Blessed One said. Gratified, Ven. Malunkyaputta delighted in the Blessed One’s words.

—[MN 63](#)

*For a comparison with ancient Indian medical theory:*

From the Caraka Saṃhitā, 9.19: “The best physician, one fit to treat a king, is he whose knowledge is fourfold: the cause [hetu], symptom [liṅga], cure [praśamana], and non-recurrence [apunarbhava] of diseases.”

## The Doctor's Diagnosis

§10. On one occasion the Blessed One was staying near Savatthi, in Jeta's Grove, Anathapindika's monastery. Then Rohitassa, the son of a deva, in the far extreme of the night, his extreme radiance lighting up the entirety of Jeta's Grove, went to the Blessed One. On arrival, having bowed down to the Blessed One, he stood to one side. As he was standing there he said to the Blessed One: "Is it possible, lord, by traveling, to know or see or reach a far end of the cosmos where one doesn't take birth, age, die, pass away or reappear?"

"I tell you, friend, that it's not possible by traveling to know or see or reach a far end of the cosmos where one doesn't take birth, age, die, pass away, or reappear."

"It is amazing, lord, and astounding, how well that has been said by the Blessed One: 'I tell you, friend, that it's not possible by traveling to know or see or reach a far end of the cosmos where one doesn't take birth, age, die, pass away, or reappear.' Once I was a seer named Rohitassa, a student of Bhoja, a powerful sky-walker. My speed was as fast as that of a strong archer—well-trained, a practiced hand, a practiced sharp-shooter—shooting a light arrow across the shadow of a palm tree. My stride stretched as far as the east sea is from the west. To me, endowed with such speed, such a stride, there came the desire: 'I will go traveling to the end of the cosmos.' I—with a one-hundred year life, a one-hundred year span—spent one hundred years travelling—apart from the time spent on eating, drinking, chewing & tasting, urinating & defecating, and sleeping to fight off weariness—but without reaching the end of the cosmos I died along the way. So it is amazing, lord, and astounding, how well that has been said by the Blessed One: 'I tell you, friend, that it is not possible by traveling to know or see or reach a far end of the cosmos where one doesn't take birth, age, die, pass away, or reappear.'"

[When this was said, the Blessed One responded:] "I tell you, friend, that it is not possible by traveling to know or see or reach a far end of the cosmos where one doesn't take birth, age, die, pass away, or reappear. But at the same time, I tell you that there is no making an end of suffering &

stress without reaching the end of the cosmos. Yet it is just within this fathom-long body, with its perception & intellect, that I declare that there is the cosmos, the origination of the cosmos, the cessation of the cosmos, and the path of practice leading to the cessation of the cosmos.”

It's not to be reached by traveling,  
the end of the cosmos—  
regardless.

And it's not without reaching  
the end of the cosmos  
that there is release  
from suffering & stress.

So, truly, the wise one,  
an expert with regard to the cosmos,  
a knower of the end of the cosmos,  
having fulfilled the holy life,  
calmed,  
knowing the cosmos' end,  
doesn't long for this cosmos  
or any other.

—[AN 4:45](#)

§11. I have heard that on one occasion the Blessed One was staying at Varanasi in the Game Refuge at Isipatana. There he addressed the group of five monks:

“There are these two extremes that are not to be indulged in by one who has gone forth. Which two? That which is devoted to sensual pleasure with reference to sensual objects: base, vulgar, common, ignoble, unprofitable; and that which is devoted to self-affliction: painful, ignoble, unprofitable. Avoiding both of these extremes, the middle way realized by the Tathagata—producing vision, producing knowledge—leads to calm, to direct knowledge, to self-awakening, to unbinding.

“And what is the middle way realized by the Tathagata that—producing vision, producing knowledge—leads to calm, to direct knowledge, to self-awakening, to unbinding? Precisely this noble eightfold path: right view,

right resolve, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness, right concentration. This is the middle way realized by the Tathagata that—producing vision, producing knowledge—leads to calm, to direct knowledge, to self-awakening, to unbinding.

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

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

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

“And this, monks, is the noble truth of the way of practice leading to the cessation of stress: precisely this noble eightfold path—right view, right resolve, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness, right concentration.

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

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

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

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

“And, monks, as long as this—my three-round, twelve permutation knowledge & vision concerning these four noble truths as they have come to be—was not pure, I did not claim to have directly awakened to the right self-awakening unexcelled in the cosmos with its deities, Maras, & Brahmas, with its contemplatives & brahmans, its royalty & commonfolk. But as soon as this—my three-round, twelve permutation knowledge & vision concerning these four noble truths as they have come to be—was truly pure, then I did claim to have directly awakened to the right self-awakening unexcelled in the cosmos with its deities, Maras & Brahmas, with its contemplatives & brahmans, its royalty & commonfolk. Knowledge & vision arose in me: ‘Unprovoked is my release. This is the last birth. There is now no further becoming.’”

That is what the Blessed One said. Gratified, the group of five monks delighted at his words. And while this explanation was being given, there arose to Ven. Kondañña the dustless, stainless Dhamma eye: Whatever is subject to origination is all subject to cessation.

—[SN 56:11](#)

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

“And what is *birth*? Whatever birth, taking birth, descent, coming-to-be, coming-forth, appearance of aggregates, & acquisition of [sense] spheres of the various beings in this or that group of beings, that is called birth.

“And what is *aging*? Whatever aging, decrepitude, brokenness, graying, wrinkling, decline of life-force, weakening of the faculties of the various beings in this or that group of beings, that is called aging.

"And what is *death*? Whatever deceasing, passing away, breaking up, disappearance, dying, death, completion of time, break up of the aggregates, casting off of the body, interruption in the life faculty of the various beings in this or that group of beings, that is called death.

"And what is *sorrow*? Whatever sorrow, sorrowing, sadness, inward sorrow, inward sadness of anyone suffering from misfortune, touched by a painful thing, that is called sorrow.

"And what is *lamentation*? Whatever crying, grieving, lamenting, weeping, wailing, lamentation of anyone suffering from misfortune, touched by a painful thing, that is called lamentation.

"And what is *pain*? Whatever is experienced as bodily pain, bodily discomfort, pain or discomfort born of bodily contact, that is called pain.

"And what is *distress*? Whatever is experienced as mental pain, mental discomfort, pain or discomfort born of mental contact, that is called distress.

"And what is *despair*? Whatever despair, despondency, desperation of anyone suffering from misfortune, touched by a painful thing, that is called despair.

"And what is the stress of association with the unbeloved? There is the case where undesirable, unpleasing, unattractive sights, sounds, aromas, flavors, or tactile sensations occur to one; or one has connection, contact, relationship, interaction with those who wish one ill, who wish for one's harm, who wish for one's discomfort, who wish one no security from the yoke. This is called the stress of association with the unbeloved.

"And what is the stress of separation from the loved? There is the case where desirable, pleasing, attractive sights, sounds, aromas, flavors, or tactile sensations do not occur to one; or one has no connection, no contact, no relationship, no interaction with those who wish one well, who wish for one's benefit, who wish for one's comfort, who wish one security from the yoke, nor with one's mother, father, brother, sister, friends, companions, or relatives. This is called the stress of separation from the loved.

"And what is the stress of not getting what is wanted? In beings subject to birth, the wish arises, 'O, may we not be subject to birth, and may birth not come to us.' But this is not to be achieved by wishing. This is the stress of not getting what one wants. In beings subject to aging ... illness ... death

... sorrow, lamentation, pain, distress, & despair, the wish arises, 'O, may we not be subject to aging ... illness ... death ... sorrow, lamentation, pain, distress, & despair, and may aging ... illness ... death ... sorrow, lamentation, pain, distress, & despair not come to us.' But this is not to be achieved by wishing. This is the stress of not getting what is wanted.

"And what are the five clinging-aggregates that, in short, are stress? The form clinging-aggregate, the feeling clinging-aggregate, the perception clinging-aggregate, the fabrications clinging-aggregate, the consciousness clinging-aggregate: These are called the five clinging-aggregates that, in short, are stress.

"This is called the noble truth of stress."

—[DN 22](#)

§13. The Blessed One said, "Monks, I will teach you the five aggregates & the five clinging-aggregates. Listen & pay close attention. I will speak."

"As you say, lord," the monks responded.

The Blessed One said, "Now what, monks, are the five aggregates?"

"Whatever form is past, future, or present; internal or external; blatant or subtle, common or sublime, far or near: That is called the form aggregate.

"Whatever feeling is past, future, or present; internal or external; blatant or subtle, common or sublime, far or near: That is called the feeling aggregate.

"Whatever perception is past, future, or present; internal or external; blatant or subtle, common or sublime, far or near: That is called the perception aggregate.

"Whatever (mental) fabrications are past, future, or present; internal or external; blatant or subtle, common or sublime, far or near: Those are called the fabrication aggregate.

"Whatever consciousness is past, future, or present; internal or external; blatant or subtle, common or sublime, far or near: That is called the consciousness aggregate.

"These are called the five aggregates.

"And what are the five clinging-aggregates?"

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

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

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

“Whatever (mental) fabrications—past, future, or present; internal or external; blatant or subtle, common or sublime, far or near—are clingable, offer sustenance, and are accompanied with mental fermentation: Those are called the fabrications clinging-aggregate.

“Whatever consciousness—past, future, or present; internal or external; blatant or subtle, common or sublime, far or near—is clingable, offers sustenance, and is accompanied with mental fermentation: That is called the consciousness clinging-aggregate.

“These are called the five clinging-aggregates.”

—[SN 22:48](#)

§14. As he was sitting there, Ven. Kotthita said to Ven. Sariputta, “Sariputta my friend, which things should a virtuous monk attend to in an appropriate way?”

“A virtuous monk, Kotthita my friend, should attend in an appropriate way to the five clinging-aggregates as inconstant, stressful, a disease, a cancer, an arrow, painful, an affliction, alien, a dissolution, an emptiness, not-self. Which five? The form clinging-aggregate, the feeling ... perception ... fabrications ... consciousness clinging-aggregate. A virtuous monk should attend in an appropriate way to these five clinging-aggregates as inconstant, stressful, a disease, a cancer, an arrow, painful, an affliction, alien, a dissolution, an emptiness, not-self. For it is possible that a virtuous monk, attending in an appropriate way to these five clinging-aggregates as inconstant ... not-self, would realize the fruit of stream-entry.”

“Then which things should a monk who has attained stream-entry attend to in an appropriate way?”

“A monk who has attained stream-entry should attend in an appropriate way to these five clinging-aggregates as inconstant, stressful, a disease, a cancer, an arrow, painful, an affliction, alien, a dissolution, an emptiness, not-self. For it is possible that a monk who has attained stream-entry, attending in an appropriate way to these five clinging-aggregates as inconstant ... not-self, would realize the fruit of once-returning.”

“Then which things should a monk who has attained once-returning attend to in an appropriate way?”

“A monk who has attained once-returning should attend in an appropriate way to these five clinging-aggregates as inconstant, stressful, a disease, a cancer, an arrow, painful, an affliction, alien, a dissolution, an emptiness, not-self. For it is possible that a monk who has attained once-returning, attending in an appropriate way to these five clinging-aggregates as inconstant ... not-self, would realize the fruit of non-returning.”

“Then which things should a monk who has attained non-returning attend to in an appropriate way?”

“A monk who has attained non-returning should attend in an appropriate way to these five clinging-aggregates as inconstant, stressful, a disease, a cancer, an arrow, painful, an affliction, alien, a dissolution, an emptiness, not-self. For it is possible that a monk who has attained non-returning, attending in an appropriate way to these five clinging-aggregates as inconstant ... not-self, would realize the fruit of arahantship.”

“Then which things should an arahant attend to in an appropriate way?”

“An arahant should attend in an appropriate way to these five clinging-aggregates as inconstant, stressful, a disease, a cancer, an arrow, painful, an affliction, alien, a dissolution, an emptiness, not-self. Although, for an arahant, there is nothing further to do, and nothing to add to what has been done, still these things—when developed & pursued—lead both to a pleasant abiding in the here-&-now and to mindfulness & alertness.”

—[SN 22:122](#)

§15. “Suppose there were a householder or householder’s son—rich, wealthy, with many possessions—who was thoroughly well-guarded. Then there came along a certain man, desiring what was not his benefit, desiring

what was not his welfare, desiring his loss of security, desiring to kill him. The thought would occur to this man: 'It would not be easy to kill this person by force. What if I were to sneak in and then kill him?'

"So he would go to the householder or householder's son and say, 'May you take me on as a servant, lord.' With that, the householder or householder's son would take the man on as a servant.

"Having been taken on as a servant, the man would rise in the morning before his master, go to bed in the evening only after his master, doing whatever his master ordered, always acting to please him, speaking politely to him. Then the householder or householder's son would come to regard him as a friend & companion, and would fall into his trust. When the man realizes, 'This householder or householder's son trusts me,' then encountering him in a solitary place, he would kill him with a sharp knife.

"Now what do you think, my friend Yamaka? When that man went to the householder or householder's son and said, 'May you take me on as a servant, lord': wasn't he even then a murderer? And yet although he was a murderer, the householder or householder's son did not know him as 'my murderer.' And when, taken on as a servant, he would rise in the morning before his master, go to bed in the evening only after his master, doing whatever his master ordered, always acting to please him, speaking politely to him: wasn't he even then a murderer? And yet although he was a murderer, the householder or householder's son did not know him as 'my murderer.' And when he encountered him in a solitary place and killed him with a sharp knife: wasn't he even then a murderer? And yet although he was a murderer, the householder or householder's son did not know him as 'my murderer.'"

"Yes, my friend."

"In the same way, an uninstructed, run-of-the-mill person ... assumes form to be the self, or the self as possessing form, or form as in the self, or the self as in form.

"He assumes feeling to be the self ....

"He assumes perception to be the self ....

"He assumes fabrications to be the self ....

"He assumes consciousness to be the self, or the self as possessing consciousness, or consciousness as in the self, or the self as in

consciousness.

"He doesn't discern inconstant form, as it has come to be, as 'inconstant form.' He doesn't discern inconstant feeling, as it has come to be, as 'inconstant feeling.' He doesn't discern inconstant perception .... He doesn't discern inconstant fabrications .... He doesn't discern inconstant consciousness, as it has come to be, as 'inconstant consciousness.'

"He doesn't discern stressful form, as it has come to be, as 'stressful form.' He doesn't discern stressful feeling .... He doesn't discern stressful perception .... He doesn't discern stressful fabrications .... He doesn't discern stressful consciousness, as it has come to be, as 'stressful consciousness.'

"He doesn't discern not-self form, as it has come to be, as 'not-self form.' He doesn't discern not-self feeling .... He doesn't discern not-self perception .... He doesn't discern not-self fabrications .... He doesn't discern not-self consciousness, as it has come to be, as 'not-self consciousness.'

"He doesn't discern fabricated form, as it has come to be, as 'fabricated form.' He doesn't discern fabricated feeling .... He doesn't discern fabricated perception .... He doesn't discern fabricated fabrications .... He doesn't discern fabricated consciousness, as it has come to be, as 'fabricated consciousness.'

"He doesn't discern murderous form, as it has come to be, as 'murderous form.' He doesn't discern murderous feeling .... He doesn't discern murderous perception .... He doesn't discern murderous fabrications .... He doesn't discern murderous consciousness, as it has come to be, as 'murderous consciousness.'

"He gets attached to form, clings to form, & determines it to be 'my self.' He gets attached to feeling .... He gets attached to perception ... He gets attached to fabrications .... He gets attached to consciousness, clings to consciousness, & determines it to be 'my self.' These five aggregates of clinging—attached to, clung to—lead to his long-term loss & suffering.

"Now, the well-instructed, noble disciple ... doesn't assume form to be the self, or the self as possessing form, or form as in the self, or the self as in form.

"He doesn't assume feeling to be the self ....

"He doesn't assume perception to be the self ....

"He doesn't assume fabrications to be the self ....

“He doesn’t assume consciousness to be the self, or the self as possessing consciousness, or consciousness as in the self, or the self as in consciousness.

“He discerns inconstant form, as it has come to be, as ‘inconstant form.’ He discerns inconstant feeling .... He discerns inconstant perception .... He discerns inconstant fabrications .... He discerns inconstant consciousness, as it has come to be, as ‘inconstant consciousness.’

“He discerns stressful form, as it has come to be, as ‘stressful form.’ He discerns stressful feeling .... He discerns stressful perception .... He discerns stressful fabrications .... He discerns stressful consciousness, as it has come to be, as ‘stressful consciousness.’

“He discerns not-self form, as it has come to be, as ‘not-self form.’ He discerns not-self feeling .... He discerns not-self perception .... He discerns not-self fabrications .... He discerns not-self consciousness, as it has come to be, as ‘not-self consciousness.’

“He discerns fabricated form, as it has come to be, as ‘fabricated form.’ He discerns fabricated feeling .... He discerns fabricated perception .... He discerns fabricated fabrications .... He discerns fabricated consciousness, as it has come to be, as ‘fabricated consciousness.’

“He discerns murderous form, as it has come to be, as ‘murderous form.’ He discerns murderous feeling .... He discerns murderous perception .... He discerns murderous fabrications .... He discerns murderous consciousness, as it has come to be, as ‘murderous consciousness.’

“He doesn’t get attached to form, doesn’t cling to form, doesn’t determine it to be ‘my self.’ He doesn’t get attached to feeling .... He doesn’t get attached to perception ... He doesn’t get attached to fabrications ... He doesn’t get attached to consciousness, doesn’t cling to consciousness, doesn’t determine it to be ‘my self.’ These five clinging-aggregates—not attached to, not clung to—lead to his long-term happiness & well-being.”

“Even so, my friend Sariputta, are those who have people like you as their fellows in the holy life, teaching them, admonishing them out of sympathy, desiring their welfare. For now that I have heard this explanation of the Dhamma from you, my mind—through lack of clinging/sustenance—has been released from fermentations.”

—[SN 22:85](#)

§16. “Monks, suppose there were a river, flowing down from the mountains, going far, its current swift, carrying everything with it, and—holding on to both banks—kasa grasses, kusa grasses, reeds, birana grasses, & trees were growing. Then a man swept away by the current would grab hold of the kasa grasses, but they would tear away, and so from that cause he would come to disaster. He would grab hold of the kusa grasses ... the reeds ... the birana grasses ... the trees, but they would tear away, and so from that cause he would come to disaster.

“In the same way, there is the case where an uninstructed, run-of-the-mill person—who has no regard for nobles ones, is not well-versed or disciplined in their Dhamma; who has no regard for men of integrity, is not well-versed or disciplined in their Dhamma—assumes form to be the self, or the self as possessing form, or form as in the self, or the self as in form. That form tears away from him, and so from that cause he would come to disaster.

“He assumes feeling to be the self, or the self as possessing feeling, or feeling as in the self, or the self as in feeling. That feeling tears away from him, and so from that cause he would come to disaster.

“He assumes perception to be the self, or the self as possessing perception, or perception as in the self, or the self as in perception. That perception tears away from him, and so from that cause he would come to disaster.

“He assumes fabrications to be the self, or the self as possessing fabrications, or fabrications as in the self, or the self as in fabrications. Those fabrications tear away from him, and so from that cause he would come to disaster.

“He assumes consciousness to be the self, or the self as possessing consciousness, or consciousness as in the self, or the self as in consciousness. That consciousness tears away from him, and so from that cause he would come to disaster.

“Now, monks, what do you think: Is form constant or inconstant?”

“Inconstant, lord.”

“Is feeling constant or inconstant?”

“Inconstant, lord.”

“Is perception constant or inconstant?”

"Inconstant, lord."

"Are fabrications constant or inconstant?"

"Inconstant, lord."

"Is consciousness constant or inconstant?"

"Inconstant, lord."

"Thus, monks, whatever form is past, future, or present; internal or external; blatant or subtle, common or sublime; far or near: all form is to be seen as it has come to be with right discernment: 'This is not mine. This is not my self. This is not what I am.'

"Whatever feeling .... Whatever perception .... Whatever fabrications ....

"Whatever consciousness is past, future, or present; internal or external; blatant or subtle, common or sublime; far or near: all consciousness is to be seen as it has come to be with right discernment: 'This is not mine. This is not my self. This is not what I am.'

"Seeing thus, the well-instructed noble disciple grows disenchanted with form, disenchanted with feeling, disenchanted with perception, disenchanted with fabrications, disenchanted with consciousness. Disenchanted, he grows 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.'"

—[SN 22:93](#)

§17. Then, early in the morning, Cala the nun put on her robes and, taking her bowl & outer robe, went into Savatthi for alms. When she had gone for alms in Savatthi and had returned from her alms round, after her meal she went to the Grove of the Blind to spend the day. Having gone deep into the Grove of the Blind, she sat down at the foot of a tree for the day's abiding.

Then Mara the Evil One, wanting to arouse fear, horripilation, & terror in her, wanting to make her fall from solitude, approached her & said, "What is it that you don't approve of, nun?"

"I don't approve of birth, my friend."

[Mara:]

"Why don't you approve of birth?  
One who is born  
enjoys sensual pleasures.  
Who on earth  
ever persuaded you:  
'Nun, don't approve of birth?'"

*[Sister Cala:]*

"For one who is born  
there's death.  
One who is born  
sees pain.  
It's a binding, a flogging, a torment.  
That's why one shouldn't approve  
of birth.

The Awakened One taught me the Dhamma  
—the overcoming of birth—  
for the abandoning of all pain,  
he established me in  
the truth.  
But beings who have come to form  
& those with a share in the formless,  
if they don't discern cessation,  
return to becoming-again."

Then Mara the Evil One—sad & dejected at realizing, "Cala the nun knows me"—vanished right there.

—[\*SN 5:6\*](#)

§18. As a cowherd with a rod  
drives cows to the field,  
so aging & death  
drive the life  
of living beings.

—[\*Dhp 135\*](#)

\$19. What laughter, why joy,  
when constantly aflame?  
Enveloped in darkness,  
don't you look for a lamp?

Look at the beautified image,  
a heap of festering wounds, shored up:  
ill, but the object  
of many resolves,  
where there is nothing  
lasting or sure.

Worn out is this body,  
a nest of diseases, dissolving.  
This putrid conglomeration  
is bound to break up,  
for life is hemmed in with death.

On seeing these bones  
discarded  
like gourds in the fall,  
pigeon-gray:  
what delight?

A city made of bones,  
plastered over with flesh & blood,  
whose hidden treasures are:  
pride & contempt,  
aging & death.

Even royal chariots  
well-embellished  
get run down,  
and so does the body  
succumb to old age.  
But the Dhamma of the good  
doesn't succumb to old age:

the good let the civilized know.

This unlistening man  
matures like an ox.

His muscles develop,  
his discernment    not.

—Dhp 146-152

§20. Whether walking, standing,  
sitting, or lying down,  
it flexes & stretches:  
this is the body's movement.  
Joined together with tendons & bones,  
plastered over with muscle & skin,  
hidden by complexion,  
the body isn't seen  
for what it is:  
filled with intestines, filled with stomach,  
with the lump of the liver,  
bladder, lungs, heart,  
kidneys, spleen,  
mucus, sweat, saliva, fat,  
blood, synovial fluid, bile, & oil.  
On top of that,  
in nine streams,  
filth is always flowing from it:  
from the eyes : eye secretions,  
from the ears : ear secretions,  
from the nose : mucus,  
from the mouth : now vomit,  
now phlegm,  
now bile.  
from the body : beads of sweat.  
And on top of that,  
its hollow head is filled with brains.

The fool, beset by ignorance,  
thinks it beautiful.  
But when it lies dead,  
swollen, livid,  
cast away in a charnel ground,  
even relatives don't care for it.  
Dogs feed on it,  
jackals, wolves, & worms.

Crows & vultures feed on it,  
along with any other animals there.

Having heard the Awakened One's words,  
the discerning monk  
comprehends, for he sees it  
for what it is:  
"As this is, so is that.  
As that, so this."  
Within & without,  
he should let desire for the body  
fade away.  
With desire & passion faded away,  
the discerning monk arrives here:  
at the deathless,  
the calm,  
the undying state  
of unbinding.

This two-footed, filthy, evil-smelling,  
filled-with-various-carcasses,  
oozing-out-here-&-there body:  
Whoever would think,  
on the basis of a body like this,  
to exalt himself or disparage another:

What is that  
if not blindness?

§21. How short this life!  
You die this side of a century,  
but even if you live past,  
you die of old age.

People grieve  
for what they see as *mine*,  
for  
nothing possessed is constant,  
nothing is constantly possessed.[1]  
Seeing this separation  
simply as it is,  
one shouldn't follow the household life.  
At death a person abandons  
what he construes as *mine*.  
Realizing this, the wise  
shouldn't incline  
to be devoted to *mine*.

Just as a man doesn't see,  
on awakening,  
what he met in a dream,  
even so he doesn't see,  
when they are dead  
—their time done—  
those he held dear.

When they are seen & heard,  
people are called by this name or that,  
but only the name remains  
to be pointed to  
when they are dead.

Grief, lamentation, & selfishness  
are not let go

by those greedy for *mine*,  
so sages  
letting go of possessions,  
seeing the Secure,  
go wandering forth.

A monk, living    withdrawn,  
enjoying a dwelling    secluded:  
they say it's congenial for him  
he who wouldn't, in any realm,  
display self.

Everywhere  
the sage  
independent  
holds nothing dear or undear.  
In him  
lamentation & selfishness,  
like water on a white lotus,  
do not adhere.  
As a water bead on a lotus leaf,  
as water on a red lily,  
does not adhere,

so the sage  
does not adhere  
to the seen, the heard, or the sensed;

for, cleansed,  
he doesn't construe  
in connection  
with the seen, the heard, or the sensed.

In no other way  
does he wish for purity,  
for he neither takes on passion  
nor puts it away.[2]

## NOTES

1. “Nothing possessed is constant, nothing is constantly possessed”—two readings of the phrase, *na hi santi nicca pariggaha*.
2. Nd.I: An arahant has put passion totally away once and for all, and so has no need to do it ever again.

—Sn 4:6

§22. [*Ven. Kappa:*]

Full of the many clans of impurities,  
the great manufacturer of excrement,  
like a stagnant pool,  
a great tumor,  
great wound,  
full of blood & lymph,  
immersed in a cesspool,  
trickling liquids, the body  
is oozing foulness—always.  
Bound together with sixty sinews,  
plastered with a stucco of muscle,  
wrapped in a jacket of skin,  
this foul body is of no worth at all.  
Linked together with a chain of bones,  
stitched together with tendon-threads,  
it produces its various postures,  
from being hitched up together.  
Headed surely to death,  
in the presence of the King of Mortality,  
the man who learns to discard it right here,  
goes wherever he wants.

Covered with ignorance,  
the body's tied down with a four-fold tie,[1]  
sunk in the floods,[2]  
caught in the net of obsessions,[3]  
conjoined with five hindrances,[4]  
given over to thought,

accompanied with the root of craving,  
roofed with delusion's roofing.  
That's how the body functions,  
compelled by the compulsion of kamma,  
but its attainment ends  
in ruin.  
Its many becomings go  
to ruin.

These who hold to this body as mine  
—blind fools, people run-of-the-mill—  
fill the horrific cemetery,  
taking on further becoming.  
Those who stay uninvolved with this body  
—as they would with a serpent  
smeared with dung—  
disgorging the root of becoming,[5]  
from lack of fermentation,  
with be totally unbound.

#### NOTES

1. The four-fold tie: greed, ill will, attachment to habits & practices, and dogmatic obsession with views.
2. Floods: passion for sensuality, becoming, views, and ignorance.
3. Obsessions: pride, ignorance, lust, aversion, uncertainty, delusion, and craving for becoming.
4. Hindrances: sensual desire, ill will, sloth & torpor, restlessness & anxiety, and uncertainty.
5. The root of becoming: craving.

—*Thag 10:5*

§23. [*Sister Ambapali:*]  
Black was my hair  
—the color of bees—  
& curled at the tips;

with age, it looked like coarse hemp.  
The truth of the Truth-speaker's words  
doesn't change.

Fragrant, like a perfumed basket  
filled with flowers: my coiffure.  
With age it smelled musty,  
like animal fur.  
The truth of the Truth-speaker's words  
doesn't change.

Thick & lush, like a well-tended grove,  
made splendid, the tips elaborate  
with comb & pin.  
With age, it grew thin  
& bare here & there.  
The truth of the Truth-speaker's words  
doesn't change.

Adorned with gold & delicate pins,  
it was splendid, ornamented with braids.  
Now, with age,  
that head has gone bald.  
The truth of the Truth-speaker's words  
doesn't change.

Curved, as if well-drawn by an artist,  
my brows were once splendid.  
With age, they droop down in folds.  
The truth of the Truth-speaker's words  
doesn't change.

Radiant, brilliant like jewels,  
my eyes: elongated, black—deep black.  
With age, they're no longer splendid.  
The truth of the Truth-speaker's words  
doesn't change.

Like a delicate peak, my nose  
was splendid in the prime of my youth.  
With age, it's like a long pepper.  
The truth of the Truth-speaker's words  
doesn't change.

Like bracelets—well-fashioned, well-finished—  
my ears were once splendid.  
With age, they droop down in folds.  
The truth of the Truth-speaker's words  
doesn't change.

Like plaintain buds in their color,  
my teeth were once splendid.  
With age, they're broken & yellowed.  
The truth of the Truth-speaker's words  
doesn't change.

Like that of a cuckoo in the dense jungle,  
flitting through deep forest thickets:  
sweet was the tone of my voice.  
With age, it cracks here & there.  
The truth of the Truth-speaker's words  
doesn't change.

Smooth—like a conch shell well-polished—  
my neck was once splendid.  
With age, it's broken down, bent.  
The truth of the Truth-speaker's words  
doesn't change.

Like rounded door-bars—both of them—  
my arms were once splendid.  
With age, they're like dried-up patali trees.  
The truth of the Truth-speaker's words  
doesn't change.

Adorned with gold & delicate rings,  
my hands were once splendid.  
With age, they're like onions & tubers.  
The truth of the Truth-speaker's words  
doesn't change.

Swelling, round, firm, & high,  
both my breasts were once splendid.  
In the drought of old age, they dangle  
like empty old water bags.  
The truth of the Truth-speaker's words  
doesn't change.

Like a sheet of gold, well-burnished,  
my body was splendid.  
Now it's covered with very fine wrinkles.  
The truth of the Truth-speaker's words  
doesn't change.

Smooth in their lines, like an elephant's trunk,  
both my thighs were once splendid.  
With age, they're like knotted bamboo.  
The truth of the Truth-speaker's words  
doesn't change.

Adorned with gold & delicate anklets,  
my calves were once splendid.  
With age, they're like sesame sticks.  
The truth of the Truth-speaker's words  
doesn't change.

As if they were stuffed with soft cotton,  
both my feet were once splendid.  
With age, they're shriveled & cracked.  
The truth of the Truth-speaker's words  
doesn't change.

Such was this physical heap.  
Now: decrepit, the home of pains, many pains.  
A house with its plaster all fallen off.  
The truth of the Truth-speaker's words  
doesn't change.

—[\*Thig 13:1\*](#)

§24. I have heard that on one occasion the Blessed One was staying near Savatthi in the Eastern Monastery, the palace of Migara's mother. Now on that occasion the Blessed One, on emerging from seclusion in the late afternoon, sat warming his back in the western sun. Then Ven. Ananda went to the Blessed One and, on arrival, having bowed down to the Blessed One, massaged the Blessed One's limbs with his hand and said, "It's amazing, lord. It's astounding, how the Blessed One's complexion is no longer so clear & bright; his limbs are flabby & wrinkled; his back, bent forward; there's a discernible change in his faculties—the faculty of the eye, the faculty of the ear, the faculty of the nose, the faculty of the tongue, the faculty of the body."

"That's the way it is, Ananda. When young, one is subject to aging; when healthy, subject to illness; when alive, subject to death. The complexion is no longer so clear & bright; the limbs are flabby & wrinkled; the back, bent forward; there's a discernible change in the faculties—the faculty of the eye, the faculty of the ear, the faculty of the nose, the faculty of the tongue, the faculty of the body."

That is what the Blessed One said. Having said that, the One Well-gone, the Teacher, said further:

"I spit on you, old age—  
old age that makes for ugliness.  
The bodily image, so charming,  
is trampled by old age.  
Even those who live to a hundred  
are headed—all—to an end in death,  
which spares no one,  
which tramples all."

—[\*SN 48:41\*](#)

§25. [Ven. Kimbila:]  
As if sent by a curse,  
it drops on us—  
aging.  
The body seems other,  
though it's still the same one.  
I'm still here  
& have never been absent from it,  
but I remember my own  
as if somebody else's.

—Thag 1:118

## DEATH

§26. Not up in the air,  
nor in the middle of the sea,  
nor going into a cleft in the mountains  
—nowhere on earth—  
is a spot to be found  
where you could stay & not succumb  
to death.

—Dhp 128

§27. Janussonin: "I hold that there is no one who, subject to death, is not afraid or in terror of death."

The Buddha: "There are those who, subject to death, are afraid and in terror of death. And there are those who, subject to death, are not afraid or in terror of death."

"And who is the person who, subject to death, is afraid and in terror of death? There is the case of the person who has not abandoned passion, desire, fondness, thirst, fever, and craving for sensuality. When he comes down with a serious disease, the thought occurs to him, "O, those beloved sensual pleasures will be taken from me, and I will be taken from them!" He grieves and is tormented, weeps, beats his breast, and grows delirious ....

"Furthermore, there is the case of the person who has not abandoned passion, desire, fondness, thirst, fever, and craving for the body. When he is touched by a serious disease, the thought occurs to him, "O, my beloved body will be taken from me, and I will be taken from my body!" He grieves and is tormented, weeps, beats his breast, and grows delirious ....

"Furthermore, there is the case of the person who has not done what is good, has not done what is skillful, has not given protection to those in fear, and instead has done what is evil, savage, and cruel. When he comes down with a serious disease, the thought occurs to him, "...After death I am headed for the destination of those who have done what is evil, savage, and cruel." He grieves and is tormented, weeps, beats his breast, and grows delirious ....

"Furthermore, there is the case of the person in doubt and perplexity, who has not arrived at certainty with regard to the True Dhamma. When he comes down with a serious disease, the thought occurs to him, "How doubtful and perplexed I am! I have not arrived at any certainty with regard to the True Dhamma!" He grieves and is tormented, weeps, beats his breast, and grows delirious. This is another person who, subject to death, is afraid and in terror of death.

"And who is the person who, subject to death, is not afraid or in terror of death? There is the case of the person who has abandoned passion, desire, fondness, thirst, fever, and craving for sensuality ... who has abandoned passion, desire, fondness, thirst, fever, and craving for the body ... who has done what is good, what is skillful, has given protection to those in fear, and has not done what is evil, savage, or cruel ... who has no doubt or perplexity, who has arrived at certainty with regard to the True Dhamma. When he comes down with a serious disease ... he does not grieve, is not tormented, does not weep or beat his breast or grow delirious. This is another person who, subject to death, is not afraid or in terror of death."

—[AN 4:184](#)

## SEPARATION

§28. "Gain arises for an uninstructed run-of-the-mill person. He doesn't reflect, 'Gain has arisen for me. It is inconstant, stressful, & subject to change.' He doesn't discern it as it has come to be.

"Loss arises .... Status arises .... Disgrace arises .... Censure arises ....  
Praise arises .... Pleasure arises ....

"Pain arises. He doesn't reflect, 'Pain has arisen for me. It is inconstant, stressful, & subject to change.' He doesn't discern it as it has come to be.

"His mind remains consumed with the gain. His mind remains consumed with the loss ... with the status ... the disgrace ... the censure ... the praise ... the pleasure. His mind remains consumed with the pain.

"He welcomes the arisen gain and rebels against the arisen loss. He welcomes the arisen status and rebels against the arisen disgrace. He welcomes the arisen praise and rebels against the arisen censure. He welcomes the arisen pleasure and rebels against the arisen pain. As he is thus engaged in welcoming & rebelling, he is not released from birth, aging, or death; from sorrows, lamentations, pains, distresses, or despairs. He is not released, I tell you, from suffering & stress.

"Now, gain arises for a well-instructed noble disciple. He reflects, 'Gain has arisen for me. It is inconstant, stressful, & subject to change.' He discerns it as it has come to be.

"Loss arises .... Status arises .... Disgrace arises .... Censure arises ....  
Praise arises .... Pleasure arises ....

"Pain arises. He reflects, 'Pain has arisen for me. It is inconstant, stressful, & subject to change.' He discerns it as it has come to be.

"His mind doesn't remain consumed with the gain. His mind doesn't remain consumed with the loss ... with the status ... the disgrace ... the censure ... the praise ... the pleasure. His mind doesn't remain consumed with the pain.

"He doesn't welcome the arisen gain, or rebel against the arisen loss. He doesn't welcome the arisen status, or rebel against the arisen disgrace. He doesn't welcome the arisen praise, or rebel against the arisen censure. He doesn't welcome the arisen pleasure, or rebel against the arisen pain. As he thus abandons welcoming & rebelling, he is released from birth, aging, & death; from sorrows, lamentations, pains, distresses, & despairs. He is released, I tell you, from suffering & stress.

"This is the difference, this the distinction, this the distinguishing factor between the well-instructed noble disciple and the uninstructed run-of-the-mill person."

Gain/loss,  
status/disgrace,  
censure/praise,  
pleasure/pain:  
These conditions among human beings  
are  
inconstant,  
impermanent,  
subject to change.  
Knowing this, the wise person, mindful,  
ponders these changing conditions.  
Desirable things    don't charm the mind,  
undesirable ones    bring no resistance.

His welcoming  
& rebelling  
are scattered,  
gone to their end,  
do not exist.  
Knowing the dustless, sorrowless state,  
he  
discerns rightly,  
has gone, beyond becoming,  
to the Further Shore.

—[AN 8:6](#)

§29. “It’s through adversity that a person’s endurance may be known, and then only after a long period, not a short period; by one who is attentive, not by one who is inattentive; by one who is discerning, not by one who is not discerning’: Thus it was said. And in reference to what was it said?

“There is the case where a person, suffering loss of relatives, loss of wealth, or loss through disease, doesn’t reflect: ‘That’s how it is when living together in the world. That’s how it is when gaining a personal identity (*atta-bhava*, literally “self-state”). When there is living in the world, when there is the gaining of a personal identity, these eight worldly conditions

spin after the world, and the world spins after these eight worldly conditions: gain, loss, status, disgrace, censure, praise, pleasure, & pain.' Suffering loss of relatives, loss of wealth, or loss through disease, he sorrows, grieves, & laments, beats his breast, becomes distraught. And then there is the case where a person, suffering loss of relatives, loss of wealth, or loss through disease, reflects: 'That's how it is when living together in the world. That's how it is when gaining a personal identity. When there is living in the world, when there is the gaining of a personal identity, these eight worldly conditions spin after the world, and the world spins after these eight worldly conditions: gain, loss, status, disgrace, censure, praise, pleasure, & pain.' Suffering loss of relatives, loss of wealth, or loss through disease, he doesn't sorrow, grieve, or lament, doesn't beat his breast or become distraught.

"It's through adversity that a person's endurance may be known, and then only after a long period, not a short period; by one who is attentive, not by one who is inattentive; by one who is discerning, not by one who is not discerning': Thus it was said. And in reference to this was it said."

—[AN 4:192](#)

§30. Now at that time the dear and beloved only son of a certain lay follower had died. So a large number of lay followers—their clothes wet, their hair wet—went to the Blessed One in the middle of the day and, on arrival, having bowed down to him, sat to one side. As they were sitting there the Blessed One said to them: "Why have you come here—your clothes wet, your hair wet—in the middle of the day?"

When this was said, the lay follower said to the Blessed One, "My dear and beloved only son has died. This is why we have come here—our clothes wet, our hair wet—in the middle of the day."

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

Tied down by the allure of what seems dear,  
heavenly beings, most people,  
worn out with misery,  
fall under the sway of the King of Death.  
But those who, day & night,

heedfully abandon what seems dear,  
dig up misery  
by the root—  
Death's bait  
so hard  
to overcome.

—Ud 2:7

§31. I have heard that on one occasion the Blessed One was staying near Savatthi at Jeta's Grove, Anathapindika's monastery. Now at that time a certain householder's dear & beloved little son, his only child, had died. Because of his death, the father had no desire to work or to eat. He kept going to the cemetery and crying out, "Where have you gone, my only little child? Where have you gone, my only little child?"

Then he went to the Blessed One and, on arrival, having bowed down to him, sat to one side. As he was sitting there the Blessed One said to him, "Householder, your faculties are not those of one who is steady in his own mind. There is an aberration in your faculties."

"Lord, how could there not be an aberration in my faculties? My dear & beloved little son, my only child, has died. Because of his death, I have no desire to work or to eat. I keep going to the cemetery and crying out, 'Where have you gone, my only little child? Where have you gone, my only little child?'"

"That's the way it is, householder. That's the way it is—for sorrow, lamentation, pain, distress, & despair are born from one who is dear, come springing from one who is dear."

"But lord, who would ever think that sorrow, lamentation, pain, distress, & despair are born from one who is dear, come springing from one who is dear? Happiness & joy are born from one who is dear, come springing from one who is dear." So the householder, not delighting in the Blessed One's words, rejecting the Blessed One's words, got up from his seat and left.

Now at that time a large number of gamblers were playing dice not far from the Blessed One. So the householder went to them and, on arrival, said to them, "Just now, venerable sirs, I went to Gotama the contemplative and, on arrival, having bowed down to him, sat to one side. As I was sitting

there, Gotama the contemplative said to me, 'Householder, your faculties are not those of one who is steady in his own mind. There is an aberration in your faculties.'

"When this was said, I said to him, 'Lord, how could there not be an aberration in my faculties? My dear & beloved little son, my only child, has died. Because of his death, I have no desire to work or to eat. I keep going to the cemetery and crying out, "Where have you gone, my only little child? Where have you gone, my only little child?"'

"That's the way it is, householder. That's the way it is—for sorrow, lamentation, pain, distress, & despair are born from one who is dear, come springing from one who is dear.'

"But, lord, who would ever think that sorrow, lamentation, pain, distress, & despair are born from one who is dear, come springing from one who is dear? Happiness & joy are born from one who is dear, come springing from one who is dear.' So, not delighting in the words of Gotama the contemplative, rejecting them, I got up from my seat and left."

"That's the way it is, householder [said the gamblers]. That's the way it is. Happiness & joy are born from one who is dear, come springing from one who is dear."

So the householder left, thinking, "I agree with the gamblers."

Eventually, word of this conversation made its way into the king's inner chambers. Then King Pasenadi Kosala addressed Queen Mallika, "Mallika, 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, Mallika 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, Mallika endorses it: 'If that was said by the Blessed One, great king, then that's the way it is.' Go away, Mallika! Out of my sight!"

Then Queen Mallika called for the brahman Nalijangha: "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 Mallika, 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 Tathagatas do not speak what is untrue."

"Yes, madam," the brahman Nalijangha responded to Queen Mallika. 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 Mallika shows reverence with her head to your feet and asks whether you are free from illness & affliction, are carefree, strong, & living in comfort. And she says further: 'Lord, did the Blessed One say that sorrow, lamentation, pain, distress, & despair are born from one who is dear, come springing from one who is dear?'"

"That's the way it is, brahman. That's the way it is. Sorrow, lamentation, pain, distress, & despair are born from one who is dear, come springing from one who is dear. And it's through this sequence of events that it may be understood how sorrow, lamentation, pain, distress, & despair are born from one who is dear, come springing from one who is dear.

"Once in this same Savatthi there was a woman whose mother died. Owing to her mother's death she went mad, out of her mind, and wandering from street to street, crossroads to crossroads, would say, 'Have you seen my mother? Have you seen my mother?' It's through this sequence of events that it may be understood how sorrow, lamentation, pain, distress, & despair are born from one who is dear, come springing from one who is dear.

"Once in this same Savatthi there was a woman whose father died ... whose brother died ... whose sister died ... whose son died ... whose daughter died ... whose husband died. Owing to his death she went mad, out of her mind, and wandering from street to street, crossroads to crossroads, would say, 'Have you seen my husband? Have you seen my husband?' It's through this sequence of events that it may be understood

how sorrow, lamentation, pain, distress, & despair are born from one who is dear, come springing from one who is dear.

“Once in this same Savatthi 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 sequence of events that it may be understood how sorrow, lamentation, pain, distress, & despair are born from one who is dear, come springing from one who is dear.

“Once in this same Savatthi 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 sequence of events that it may be understood how sorrow, lamentation, pain, distress, & despair are born from one who is dear, come springing from one who is dear.

“Once in this same Savatthi there was a wife who went to her relatives’ home. Her relatives, having separated her from her husband, wanted to give her to another against her will. So she said to her husband, ‘These relatives of mine, having separated us, want to give me to another against my will,’ whereupon he cut her in two and slashed himself open, thinking, ‘Dead we will be together.’ It’s through this sequence of events that it may be understood how sorrow, lamentation, pain, distress, & despair are born from one who is dear, come springing from one who is dear.”

Then the brahman Nalijangha, delighting in & approving of the Blessed One’s words, got up from his seat and went to Queen Mallika. On arrival, he told her all that had been said in his conversation with the Blessed One.

Then Queen Mallika went to King Pasenadi Kosala and on arrival said to him, “What do you think, great king? Is Princess Vajiri dear to you?”

“Yes, Mallika, Princess Vajiri is dear to me.”

“And what do you think? Would sorrow, lamentation, pain, distress, & despair arise in you from any change & aberration in Princess Vajiri?”

“Mallika, any change & aberration in Princess Vajiri 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 Vasabha dear to you? .... Is [your son] General Vidudabha dear to you? .... Am I dear to you?"

"Yes, Mallika, 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?"

"Mallika, 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 Kasis & Kosalans dear to you?"

"Yes, Mallika, the Kasis & Kosalans are dear to me. It is through the might of the Kasis & Kosalans that we use Kasi 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 Kasis & Kosalans?"

"Mallika, any change & aberration in the Kasis & 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, Mallika. It's astounding: how deeply the Blessed One sees, having pierced through, as it were, with discernment. Come, Mallika, 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

## Heedfulness

§32. Heedfulness: the path to the Deathless;  
heedlessness: the path to death.  
The heedful do not die;  
the heedless are as if  
already dead.

—[\*Dhp 21\*](#)

§33. “Just as the footprints of all legged animals are encompassed by the footprint of the elephant, and the elephant’s footprint is reckoned their chief in terms of size; in the same way, all skillful qualities are rooted in heedfulness, lie gathered in heedfulness, and heedfulness is reckoned their chief ....

“Just as all the light of the constellations doesn’t equal one sixteenth of the light of the moon, and the light of the moon is reckoned their chief; in the same way, all skillful qualities are rooted in heedfulness, lie gathered in heedfulness, and heedfulness is reckoned their chief.”

—[\*AN 10:15\*](#)

§34. “And what is heedfulness? There is the case where a monk guards his mind against to (mental) fermentations and (mental) qualities accompanied by fermentations. When his mind is guarded against fermentations and qualities accompanied by fermentations, the faculty of conviction goes to the culmination of its development. The faculty of persistence ... mindfulness ... concentration ... discernment goes to the culmination of its development.”

—[\*SN 48:56\*](#)

§35. “There are these five facts that one should reflect on often, whether one is a woman or a man, lay or ordained. Which five?

“‘I am subject to aging, have not gone beyond aging.’ This is the first fact that one should reflect on often ....

“I am subject to illness, have not gone beyond illness’ ....

“I am subject to death, have not gone beyond death’ ....

“I will grow different, separate from all that is dear & appealing to me’

....

“I am the owner of my actions [*kamma*], heir to my actions, born of my actions, related through my actions, and have my actions as my arbitrator. Whatever I do, for good or for evil, to that will I fall heir’ ....

“These are the five facts that one should reflect on often, whether one is a woman or a man, lay or ordained.

“Now, based on what line of reasoning should one often reflect ... that ‘I am subject to aging, have not gone beyond aging’? There are beings who are intoxicated with a [typical] youth’s intoxication with youth. Because of that intoxication with youth, they conduct themselves in a bad way in body ... in speech ... and in mind. But when they often reflect on that fact, that youth’s intoxication with youth will either be entirely abandoned or grow weaker ....

“Now, based on what line of reasoning should one often reflect ... that ‘I am subject to illness, have not gone beyond illness’? There are beings who are intoxicated with a [typical] healthy person’s intoxication with health. Because of that intoxication with health, they conduct themselves in a bad way in body ... in speech ... and in mind. But when they often reflect on that fact, that healthy person’s intoxication with health will either be entirely abandoned or grow weaker ....

“Now, based on what line of reasoning should one often reflect ... that ‘I am subject to death, have not gone beyond death’? There are beings who are intoxicated with a [typical] living person’s intoxication with life. Because of that intoxication with life, they conduct themselves in a bad way in body ... in speech ... and in mind. But when they often reflect on that fact, that living person’s intoxication with life will either be entirely abandoned or grow weaker ....

“Now, based on what line of reasoning should one often reflect ... that ‘I will grow different, separate from all that is dear & appealing to me’? There are beings who feel desire & passion for the things they find dear & appealing. Because of that passion, they conduct themselves in a bad way in body ... in speech ... and in mind. But when they often reflect on that fact,

that desire & passion for the things they find dear & appealing will either be entirely abandoned or grow weaker ....

"Now, based on what line of reasoning should one often reflect ... that 'I am the owner of my actions, heir to my actions, born of my actions, related through my actions, and have my actions as my arbitrator. Whatever I do, for good or for evil, to that will I fall heir'? There are beings who conduct themselves in a bad way in body ... in speech ... and in mind. But when they often reflect on that fact, that bad conduct in body, speech, & mind will either be entirely abandoned or grow weaker ....

"Now, a disciple of the noble ones considers this: 'I am not the only one subject to aging, who has not gone beyond aging. To the extent that there are beings—past & future, passing away & re-arising—all beings are subject to aging, have not gone beyond aging.' When he/she often reflects on this, the [factors of the] path take birth. He/she sticks with that path, develops it, cultivates it. As he/she sticks with that path, develops it, & cultivates it, the fetters are abandoned, the obsessions destroyed.

"Further, a disciple of the noble ones considers this: 'I am not the only one subject to illness, who has not gone beyond illness'.... 'I am not the only one subject to death, who has not gone beyond death'.... 'I am not the only one who will grow different, separate from all that is dear & appealing to me'....

"Further, a disciple of the noble ones considers this: 'I am not the only one who is owner of my actions, heir to my actions, born of my actions, related through my actions, who has my actions as my arbitrator; who—whatever I do, for good or for evil, to that will I fall heir. To the extent that there are beings—past & future, passing away & re-arising—all beings are owner of their actions, heir to their actions, born of their actions, related through their actions, and have their actions as their arbitrator. Whatever they do, for good or for evil, to that will they fall heir.' When he/she often reflects on this, the [factors of the] path take birth. He/she sticks with that path, develops it, cultivates it. As he/she sticks with that path, develops it, & cultivates it, the fetters are abandoned, the obsessions destroyed."

""Subject to birth, subject to aging,  
subject to death,  
run-of-the-mill people

are repelled by those who suffer  
from that to which they are subject.  
And if I were to be repelled  
by beings subject to these things,  
it would not be fitting for me,  
living as they do.'

As I maintained this attitude—  
knowing the Dhamma  
without acquisitions—  
I overcame all intoxication  
with health, youth, & life  
as one who sees  
renunciation as security.

For me, energy arose,  
unbinding was clearly seen.  
There's now no way  
I could partake of sensual pleasures.  
Having followed the holy life,  
I will not return."

—[AN 5:57](#)

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

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

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

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

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

"Monks, there are these three forms of intoxication. Which three? Intoxication with youth, intoxication with health, intoxication with life.

"Drunk with the intoxication of youth, an uninstructed, run-of-the-mill person engages in bodily misconduct, verbal misconduct, & mental misconduct. Having engaged in bodily misconduct, verbal misconduct, & mental misconduct, he—on the break-up of the body, after death—reappears in the plane of deprivation, the bad destination, the lower realms, in hell.

"Drunk with the intoxication of health, an uninstructed, run-of-the-mill person engages in bodily misconduct, verbal misconduct, & mental misconduct. Having engaged in bodily misconduct, verbal misconduct, &

mental misconduct, he—on the break-up of the body, after death—reappears in the plane of deprivation, the bad destination, the lower realms, in hell.

“Drunk with the intoxication of life, an uninstructed, run-of-the-mill person engages in bodily misconduct, verbal misconduct, & mental misconduct. Having engaged in bodily misconduct, verbal misconduct, & mental misconduct, he—on the break-up of the body, after death—reappears in the plane of deprivation, the bad destination, the lower realms, in hell.

“Drunk with the intoxication of youth, a monk leaves the training and returns to the lower life. Drunk with the intoxication of health, a monk leaves the training and returns to the lower life. Drunk with the intoxication of life, a monk leaves the training and returns to the lower life.”

Subject to birth, subject to aging,  
subject to death,  
run-of-the-mill people  
are repelled by those who suffer  
from that to which they are subject.  
And if I were to be repelled  
by beings subject to these things,  
it would not be fitting for me,  
living as they do.’

As I maintained this attitude—  
knowing the Dhamma  
without acquisitions—  
I overcame all intoxication  
with health, youth, & life  
as one who sees  
renunciation as rest.

For me, energy arose,  
unbinding was clearly seen.  
There’s now no way  
I could partake of sensual pleasures.

Having followed the holy life,  
I will not return.

—[AN 3:39](#)

§37. [*Ven. Ratthapala:*]  
I see in the world  
people with wealth  
who, from delusion,  
don't make a gift  
of the treasure they've gained.  
Greedy, they stash it away,  
hoping for even more  
sensual pleasures.

A king who, by force,  
has conquered the world  
and rules over the earth  
to the edge of the sea,  
dissatisfied with the ocean's near shore,  
longs for the ocean's  
far shore as well.

Kings & others  
—plenty of people—  
go to death with craving  
unabated. Unsated  
they leave the body behind,  
having not had enough  
of the world's sensual pleasures.

One's relatives weep  
& pull out their hair.  
'Oh woe, our loved one is dead,' they cry.  
Carrying him off,  
wrapped in a piece of cloth,  
they place him  
on a pyre,

then set him on fire.

So he burns, poked with sticks,  
in just one piece of cloth,  
leaving all his possessions behind.  
They are not shelters for one who has died—  
not relatives,  
friends,  
or companions.

His heirs take over his wealth,  
while the being goes on,  
in line with his kamma.  
No wealth at all  
follows the dead one—  
not children, wives,  
dominion, or riches.

Long life  
can't be gotten with wealth,  
nor aging  
warded off with treasure.  
The wise say this life  
is next to nothing—  
impermanent,  
subject to change.

The rich & the poor  
touch the touch of Death.  
The foolish & wise  
are touched by it, too.  
But while fools lie as if slain by their folly,  
the wise don't tremble  
when touched by the touch.

Thus the discernment by which  
one attains to mastery,

is better than wealth—  
for those who haven't reached mastery  
go from existence to existence,  
out of delusion,  
doing bad deeds.

One goes to a womb  
& to the next world,  
falling into the wandering on  
—one thing  
after another—  
while those of weak discernment,  
trusting in one,  
also go to a womb  
& to the next world.

Just as an evil thief  
caught at the break-in  
is destroyed  
by his own act,  
so evil people  
—after dying, in the next world—  
are destroyed  
by their own acts.

Sensual pleasures—  
variegated,  
enticing,  
sweet—  
in various ways disturb the mind.  
Seeing the drawbacks in sensual objects:  
that's why, O king, I went forth.

Just like fruits, people fall  
—young & old—  
at the break-up of the body.  
Knowing this, O king,

I went forth.  
The contemplative life is better  
for sure.

—MN 82

§38. [*Sister Mittakali:*]  
Going forth through conviction  
from home into homelessness,  
I wandered this place & that,  
greedy for tribute & gains.  
Missing out on the foremost goal,  
I pursued a lowly one.  
Under the sway of defilements  
I surrendered the goal  
of the contemplative life.  
Then, sitting in my dwelling,  
I suddenly came to my senses:

I'm following a miserable path.  
I'm under the sway of  
craving.  
Next to nothing, my life,  
crushed  
by aging & illness.  
Before the body breaks apart,  
I have no time  
for heedlessness.

After watching, as it had come to be,  
the rising & falling of aggregates,  
I stood up with mind released,  
the Awakened One's bidding  
done.

—Thig 5:6

## AGING

§39. King Koravya: "Master Ratthapala, you say, 'The world is swept away. It does not endure.' How is the meaning of this statement to be understood?"

Ven. Ratthapala: "What do you think, great king? When you were twenty or twenty-five years of age—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?"

King Koravya: "Yes, Master Ratthapala, 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."

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

King Koravya: "Not at all, Master Ratthapala. 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."

Ven. Ratthapala: "It was in connection with 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."

—[MN 82](#)

§40. "There is the case where a monk reminds himself of this: 'At present I am young, black-haired, endowed with the blessings of youth in the first stage of life. The time will come, though, when this body is beset by old age. When one is overcome with old age & decay, it is not easy to pay attention to the Buddha's teachings. It is not easy to reside in isolated forest or wilderness dwellings. Before this unwelcome, disagreeable, displeasing thing happens, let me first make an effort for the attaining of the as-yet-unattained, the reaching of the as-yet-unreached, the realization of the as-yet-unrealized, so that—endowed with that Dhamma—I will live in peace even when old.'"

—[AN 5:78](#)

## ILLNESS

§41. King Koravya: "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?"

Ven. Ratthapala: "What do you think, great king? Do you have any recurring illness?"

King Koravya: "Yes, Master Ratthapala, 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.'"

Ven. Ratthapala: "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?"

King Koravya: "Oh, no, Master Ratthapala, 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."

Ven. Ratthapala: "It was in connection with 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."

—[MN 82](#)

§42. "Furthermore, the monk reminds himself of this: 'At present I am free from illness & discomfort, endowed with good digestion: not too cold, not too hot, of medium strength & tolerance. The time will come, though, when this body is beset with illness. When one is overcome with illness, it is not easy to pay attention to the Buddha's teachings. It is not easy to reside in isolated forest or wilderness dwellings. Before this unwelcome, disagreeable, displeasing thing happens, let me first make an effort for the attaining of the as-yet-unattained, the reaching of the as-yet-unreached, the realization of the as-yet-unrealized, so that—endowed with that Dhamma—I will live in peace even when ill.'"

§43. “There is the case where a monk comes down with a slight illness. The thought occurs to him: ‘I have come down with a slight illness. There’s a need to lie down.’ So he lies down. He doesn’t make an effort for the attaining of the as-yet-unattained, the reaching of the as-yet-unreached, the realization of the as-yet-unrealized. This is the seventh grounds for laziness.

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

“Then there is the case where a monk comes down with a slight illness. The thought occurs to him: ‘I have come down with a slight illness. Now, there’s the possibility that it could get worse. Why don’t I make an effort beforehand for the attaining of the as-yet-unattained, the reaching of the as-yet-unreached, the realization of the as-yet-unrealized?’ So he makes an effort for the attaining of the as-yet-unattained, the reaching of the as-yet-unreached, the realization of the as-yet-unrealized. This is the seventh grounds for the arousal of energy.

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

§44. [*Sister Dhamma:*]  
Wandering for alms—

weak, leaning on a staff,  
with trembling limbs—  
I fell down right there on the ground.  
Seeing the drawbacks of the body,  
my mind was then  
set free.

—[\*Thig 1:17\*](#)

## DEATH

§45. King Koravya: “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?”

Ven. Ratthapala: “What do you think, great king? As you now enjoy yourself endowed & replete with the pleasures of the five senses, can you say, ‘Even in the afterlife I will enjoy myself in the same way, endowed & replete with the very same pleasures of the five senses’? Or will this wealth fall to others, while you pass on in accordance with your kamma?”

King Koravya: “Oh, no, Master Ratthapala, I can’t say, ‘Even in the afterlife I will enjoy myself in the same way, endowed & replete with the very same pleasures of the five senses.’ This wealth will fall to others, while I pass on in accordance with my kamma.”

Ven. Ratthapala: “It was in connection with 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.”

—[\*MN 82\*](#)

§46. Then King Pasenadi of Kosala approached the Blessed One in the middle of the day and, on arrival, having bowed down, sat down to one side. As he was sitting there, the Blessed One said to him: “Well now, great king, where are you coming from in the middle of the day?”

“Just now, lord, I was engaged in the sort of royal affairs typical of head-anointed noble-warrior kings intoxicated with the intoxication of

sovereignty, obsessed by greed for sensual pleasures, who have attained stable control in their country, and who rule having conquered a great sphere of territory on earth."

"What do you think, great king? Suppose a man, trustworthy & reliable, were to come to you from the east and on arrival would say: 'If it please your majesty, you should know that I come from the east. There I saw a great mountain, as high as the clouds, coming this way, crushing all living beings [in its path]. Do whatever you think should be done.' Then a second man were to come to you from the west ... Then a third man were to come to you from the north ... Then a fourth man were to come to you from the south and on arrival would say: 'If it please your majesty, you should know that I come from the south. There I saw a great mountain, as high as the clouds, coming this way, crushing all living beings. Do whatever you think should be done.' If, great king, such a great peril should arise, such a terrible destruction of human life—the human state being so hard to obtain—what should be done?"

"If, lord, such a great peril should arise, such a terrible destruction of human life—the human state being so hard to obtain—what else should be done but Dhamma-conduct, right conduct, skillful deeds, meritorious deeds?"

"I inform you, great king, I announce to you, great king: aging & death are rolling in on you. When aging & death are rolling in on you, what should be done?"

"As aging & death are rolling in on me, lord, what else should be done but Dhamma-conduct, right conduct, skillful deeds, meritorious deeds?"

"There are, lord, elephant battles [fought by] head-anointed noble-warrior kings intoxicated with the intoxication of sovereignty, obsessed by greed for sensual pleasures, who have attained stable control in their country, and who rule having conquered a great sphere of territory on earth; but there is no use for those elephant battles, no scope for them, when aging & death are rolling in. There are cavalry battles ... chariot battles ... infantry battles ... but there is no use for those infantry battles, no scope for them, when aging & death are rolling in. In this royal court there are counselors who, when the enemies arrive, are capable of dividing them by their wits; but there is no use for those battles of wits, no scope for them, when aging & death are rolling in. In this royal court there is

abundant bullion & gold stored in vaults & depositories, and with such wealth we are capable of buying off enemies when they come; but there is no use for those battles of wealth, no scope for them, when aging & death are rolling in. As aging & death are rolling in on me, lord, what else should be done but Dhamma-conduct, right conduct, skillful deeds, meritorious deeds?"

"So it is, great king! So it is, great king! As aging & death are rolling in on you, what else should be done but Dhamma-conduct, right conduct, skillful deeds, meritorious deeds?"

That is what the Blessed One said. Having said that, the One Well-Gone, the Teacher, further said this:

"Like massive boulders,  
mountains pressing against the sky,  
moving in from all sides,  
crushing the four directions,  
so aging and death  
come rolling over living beings:  
noble warriors, brahmans, merchants,  
workers, outcastes, scavengers.  
They spare nothing.  
They trample everything.  
Here elephant troops can hold no ground,  
nor can chariots or infantry,  
nor can a battle of wits  
or wealth win out.

So a wise person,  
seeing his own good,  
steadfast, secures confidence  
in the Buddha, Dhamma, & Sangha.

One who practices the Dhamma  
in thought, word, & deed,  
receives praise here on earth  
and after death rejoices in heaven."

—[\*SN 3:25\*](#)

§47. 'Here I'll stay for the rains.  
Here, for the summer & winter.'  
So imagines the fool,  
unaware of obstructions.  
That drunk-on-his-sons-&-cattle man,  
all tangled up in the mind:  
death sweeps him away—  
as a great flood,  
a village asleep.  
There are  
no sons  
to give shelter,  
no father,  
no family  
for one seized by the Ender,  
no shelter among kin.  
Realizing  
this force of reasoning,  
the wise man, restrained by virtue,  
should make the path pure  
—right away—  
that goes all the way to unbinding.

—[\*Dhp 286-289\*](#)

§48. "There are these four types of excellent thoroughbred horses to be found existing in the world. Which four? There is the case where an excellent thoroughbred horse, on seeing the shadow of the goad-stick, is stirred & agitated, [thinking,] 'I wonder what task the trainer will have me do today? What should I do in response?' Some excellent thoroughbred horses are like this. And this is the first type of excellent thoroughbred horse to be found existing in the world.

"Then again there is the case where an excellent thoroughbred horse is not stirred & agitated on seeing the shadow of the goad-stick, but when his hair is pricked [with the goad stick] he is stirred & agitated, [thinking,] 'I

wonder what task the trainer will have me do today? What should I do in response?' Some excellent thoroughbred horses are like this. And this is the second type of excellent thoroughbred horse to be found existing in the world.

"Then again there is the case where an excellent thoroughbred horse is not stirred & agitated on seeing the shadow of the goad-stick, or when his hair is pricked, but when his hide is pricked [with the goad stick] he is stirred & agitated, [thinking,] 'I wonder what task the trainer will have me do today? What should I do in response?' Some excellent thoroughbred horses are like this. And this is the third type of excellent thoroughbred horse to be found existing in the world.

"Then again there is the case where an excellent thoroughbred horse is not stirred & agitated on seeing the shadow of the goad-stick, or when his hair is pricked, or when his hide is pricked, but when his bone is pricked [with the goad stick] he is stirred & agitated, [thinking,] 'I wonder what task the trainer will have me do today? What should I do in response?' Some excellent thoroughbred horses are like this. And this is the fourth type of excellent thoroughbred horse to be found existing in the world.

"These are the four types of excellent thoroughbred horses to be found existing in the world.

"Now, there are these four types of excellent thoroughbred persons to be found existing in the world. Which four?

"There is the case where a certain excellent thoroughbred person hears, 'In that town or village over there a man or woman is in pain or has died.' He is stirred & agitated by that. Stirred, he becomes appropriately resolute. Resolute, he both realizes with his body the highest truth and, having penetrated it with discernment, sees. This type of excellent thoroughbred person, I tell you, is like the excellent thoroughbred horse who, on seeing the shadow of the goad-stick, is stirred & agitated. Some excellent thoroughbred people are like this. And this is the first type of excellent thoroughbred person to be found existing in the world.

"Then again there is the case where a certain excellent thoroughbred person does not hear, 'In that town or village over there a man or woman is in pain or has died.' But he himself sees a man or woman in pain or dead. He is stirred & agitated by that. Stirred, he becomes appropriately resolute. Resolute, he both realizes with his body the highest truth and, having

penetrated it with discernment, sees. This type of excellent thoroughbred person, I tell you, is like the excellent thoroughbred horse who, when its coat is pricked with the goad-stick, is stirred & agitated. Some excellent thoroughbred people are like this. And this is the second type of excellent thoroughbred person to be found existing in the world.

“Then again there is the case where a certain excellent thoroughbred person does not hear, ‘In that town or village over there a man or woman is in pain or has died.’ And he himself does not see a man or woman in pain or dead. But he sees one of his one blood relatives in pain or dead. He is stirred & agitated by that. Stirred, he becomes appropriately resolute. Resolute, he both realizes with his body the highest truth and, having penetrated it with discernment, sees. This type of excellent thoroughbred person, I tell you, is like the excellent thoroughbred horse who, when its hide is pricked with the goad-stick, is stirred & agitated. Some excellent thoroughbred people are like this. And this is the third type of excellent thoroughbred person to be found existing in the world.

“Then again there is the case where a certain excellent thoroughbred person does not hear, ‘In that town or village over there a man or woman is in pain or has died.’ And he himself does not see a man or woman in pain or dead, nor does he see one of his one blood relatives in pain or dead. But he himself is touched by bodily feelings that are painful, fierce, sharp, wracking, repellent, disagreeable, life-threatening. He is stirred & agitated by that. Stirred, he becomes appropriately resolute. Resolute, he both realizes with his body the highest truth and, having penetrated it with discernment, sees. This type of excellent thoroughbred person, I tell you, is like the excellent thoroughbred horse who, when its bone is pricked with the goad-stick, is stirred & agitated. Some excellent thoroughbred people are like this. And this is the fourth type of excellent thoroughbred person to be found existing in the world.

“These are the four types of excellent thoroughbred persons to be found existing in the world.”

—[AN 4:113](#)

§49. “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 mental 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 mental 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 mental 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.

“Further, 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 mental 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 mental 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 mental 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](#)

§50. “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. Therefore you should develop mindfulness of death.”

When this was said, a certain monk addressed the Blessed One, “I already develop mindfulness of death.”

“And how do you develop mindfulness of death?”

“I think, ‘O, that I might live for a day & night, that I might attend to the Blessed One’s instructions. I would have accomplished a great deal.’ This is how I develop mindfulness of death.”

Then another monk addressed the Blessed One, “I, too, already develop mindfulness of death.”

“And how do you develop mindfulness of death?”

“I think, ‘O, that I might live for a day, that I might attend to the Blessed One’s instructions. I would have accomplished a great deal.’ This is how I develop mindfulness of death.”

Then another monk addressed the Blessed One, “I, too, develop mindfulness of death .... “I think, ‘O, that I might live for the interval that it takes to eat a meal, that I might attend to the Blessed One’s instructions. I would have accomplished a great deal’ ....

Then another monk addressed the Blessed One, “I, too, develop mindfulness of death .... “I think, ‘O, that I might live for the interval that it takes to swallow having chewed up four morsels of food, that I might attend to the Blessed One’s instructions. I would have accomplished a great deal’

....

Then another monk addressed the Blessed One, “I, too, develop mindfulness of death .... “I think, ‘O, that I might live for the interval that it takes to swallow having chewed up one morsel of food, that I might attend to the Blessed One’s instructions. I would have accomplished a great deal’

....

Then another monk addressed the Blessed One, “I, too, develop mindfulness of death .... “I think, ‘O, that I might live for the interval that it takes to breathe out after breathing in, or to breathe in after breathing out, that I might attend to the Blessed One’s instructions. I would have accomplished a great deal.’ This is how I develop mindfulness of death.”

When this was said, the Blessed One addressed the monks. “Whoever develops mindfulness of death, thinking, ‘O, that I might live for a day & night ... for a day ... for the interval that it takes to eat a meal ... for the interval that it takes to swallow having chewed up four morsels of food, that I might attend to the Blessed One’s instructions. I would have accomplished a great deal’—they are said to be dwelling heedlessly. They develop mindfulness of death slowly for the sake of ending the fermentations.

“But whoever develops mindfulness of death, thinking, ‘O, that I might live for the interval that it takes to swallow having chewed up one morsel of food ... for the interval that it takes to breathe out after breathing in, or to breathe in after breathing out, that I might attend to the Blessed One’s instructions. I would have accomplished a great deal’—they are said to be dwelling heedfully. They develop mindfulness of death acutely for the sake of ending the fermentations.

“Therefore you should train yourselves: ‘We will dwell heedfully. We will develop mindfulness of death acutely for the sake of ending the fermentations.’ That’s how you should train yourselves.”

That is what the Blessed One said. Gratified, the monks delighted in the Blessed One's words.

—[\*AN 6:19\*](#)

§51. "As if he were to see a corpse cast away in a charnel ground—one day, two days, three days dead—bloated, livid, & festering, the monk applies it to this very body, 'This body, too: Such is its nature, such is its future, such its unavoidable fate'...

"Or again, as if he were to see a corpse cast away in a charnel ground, picked at by crows, vultures, & hawks, by dogs, hyenas, & various other creatures ... a skeleton smeared with flesh & blood, connected with tendons ... a fleshless skeleton smeared with blood, connected with tendons ... a skeleton without flesh or blood, connected with tendons ... bones detached from their tendons, scattered in all directions—here a hand bone, there a foot bone, here a shin bone, there a thigh bone, here a hip bone, there a back bone, here a rib, there a chest bone, here a shoulder bone, there a neck bone, here a jaw bone, there a tooth, here a skull ... the bones whitened, somewhat like the color of shells ... piled up, more than a year old ... decomposed into a powder: He applies it to this very body, 'This body, too: Such is its nature, such is its future, such its unavoidable fate.'

"In this way he remains focused internally on the body in & of itself, or externally on the body in & of itself, or both internally & externally on the body in & of itself. Or he remains focused on the phenomenon of origination with regard to the body, on the phenomenon of passing away with regard to the body, or on the phenomenon of origination & passing away with regard to the body. Or his mindfulness that 'There is a body' is maintained to the extent of knowledge & remembrance. And he remains independent, unsustained by (not clinging to) anything in the world. This is how a monk remains focused on the body in & of itself."

—[\*DN 22\*](#)

§52. [*Ven. Mahakala:*]

This swarthy woman

[preparing a corpse for cremation]

—crow-like, enormous—

breaking a thigh & then the other

thigh,  
breaking an arm & then the other  
arm,  
cracking open the head,  
like a pot of curds,  
she sits with them heaped up beside her.

Whoever, unknowing,  
makes acquisitions  
—the fool—  
returns over & over  
to suffering & stress.  
So, discerning,  
don't make acquisitions.  
May I never lie  
with my head cracked open  
again.

—*Thag 1:16*

§53. [*Sister Nanda:*]  
"Sick, putrid, unclean:  
look, Nanda, at this physical heap.  
Through contemplation of the foul,  
develop your mind,  
make it one, well-centered.

As this [your body], so that.  
As that, so this.  
It gives off a foul stench,  
the delight of fools."  
Considering it thus,  
untiring, both day & night,  
I, with my own discernment  
dissecting it,  
saw.  
And as I, heedful,  
examined it aptly,

*this* body—as it had come to be—  
was seen inside & out.

Then was I disenchanted with the body  
& dispassionate within:  
Heedful, detached,  
calmed was I.  
Unbound.

—Thig 5:4

§54. I have heard that on one occasion the Blessed One was staying in Savatthi, at Jeta's Grove, Anathapindika's monastery. There he addressed the monks: "Monks!"

"Yes, lord," the monks replied.

The Blessed One said: "Monks, I will teach you the summary & exposition of one who has had an auspicious day. Listen & pay close attention. I will speak."

"As you say, lord," the monks replied.

The Blessed One said:

You shouldn't chase after the past,  
or place expectations on the future.  
What is past  
is left behind.  
The future  
is as yet unreached.  
Whatever quality is present  
you clearly see      right there,  
right there.

Not taken in,  
unshaken,  
that's how you develop the heart.

Ardently doing your duty today,  
for—who knows?—tomorrow

death may come.  
There is no bargaining  
with Death & his mighty horde.

Whoever lives thus ardently,  
relentlessly  
both day & night,  
has truly had an auspicious day:  
So says the Peaceful Sage.

"And how, monks, does one chase after the past? One gets carried away with the delight of 'In the past I had such a form (body)' ... 'In the past I had such a feeling' ... 'In the past I had such a perception' ... 'In the past I had such a thought-fabrication' ... 'In the past I had such a consciousness.' This is called chasing after the past.

"And how does one not chase after the past? One doesn't get carried away with the delight of 'In the past I had such a form' ... 'In the past I had such a feeling' ... 'In the past I had such a perception' ... 'In the past I had such a thought-fabrication' ... 'In the past I had such a consciousness.' This is called not chasing after the past.

"And how does one place expectations on the future? One gets carried away with the delight of 'In the future I might have such a form' ... 'In the future I might have such a feeling' ... 'In the future I might have such a perception' ... 'In the future I might have such a thought-fabrication' ... 'In the future I might have such a consciousness.' This is called placing expectations on the future.

"And how does one not place expectations on the future? One doesn't get carried away with the delight of 'In the future I might have such a form' ... 'In the future I might have such a feeling' ... 'In the future I might have such a perception' ... 'In the future I might have such a thought-fabrication' ... 'In the future I might have such a consciousness.'

"This is called not placing expectations on the future.

"And how is one taken in with regard to present qualities? There is the case where an uninstructed run-of-the-mill person who has not seen the noble ones, is not versed in the teachings of the noble ones, is not trained in the teachings of the noble ones, assumes form to be self, or self as possessing form, or form as in self, or self as in form.

"He/she assumes feeling to be self ... perception as self ...thought-fabrications as self ....

"He/she assumes consciousness to be self, or self as possessing consciousness, or consciousness as in self, or self as in consciousness. This is called being taken in with regard to present qualities.

"And how is one not taken in with regard to present qualities? There is the case where a disciple of the noble ones who has seen the noble ones, is versed in the teachings of the noble ones, is well-trained in the teachings of the noble ones, doesn't assume form to be self, or self as possessing form, or form as in self, or self as in form.

"He/she doesn't assume feeling to be self ... perception to be self ... thought-fabrications to be self ....

"He/she doesn't assume consciousness to be self, or self as possessing consciousness, or consciousness as in self, or self as in consciousness.

"This is called not being taken in with regard to present qualities.

You shouldn't chase after the past,  
or place expectations on the future.  
What is past  
is left behind.  
The future  
is as yet unreached.  
Whatever quality is present  
you clearly see        right there,  
right there.

Not taken in,  
unshaken,  
that's how you develop the heart.

Ardently doing your duty today,  
for—who knows?—tomorrow  
death may come.  
There is no bargaining  
with Death & his mighty horde.

Whoever lives thus ardently,  
relentlessly  
both day & night,  
has truly had an auspicious day:  
So says the Peaceful Sage.

—[MN 131](#)

## SEPARATION

§55. “From an inconceivable beginning comes transmigration. A beginning point is not evident, though beings hindered by ignorance and fettered by craving are transmigrating & wandering on. A being who has not been your mother at one time in the past is not easy to find .... A being who has not been your father .... your brother .... your sister .... your son .... your daughter at one time in the past is not easy to find.

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

—[SN 15:14-19](#)

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

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

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

“This is the greater: the tears you have shed while transmigrating & wandering this long, long time—crying & weeping from being joined with

what is displeasing, being separated from what is pleasing—not the water in the four great oceans.

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

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

“Why is that? From an inconceivable beginning comes transmigration. A beginning point is not evident, though beings hindered by ignorance and fettered by craving are transmigrating & wandering on. Long have you thus experienced stress, experienced pain, experienced loss, swelling the cemeteries—enough to become disenchanted with all fabricated things, enough to become dispassionate, enough to be released.”

—[SN 15:3](#)

## KAMMA

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

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

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

And what is kamma that is dark & white with dark & white result? There is the case where a certain person fabricates a bodily fabrication that is injurious & uninjurious ... a verbal fabrication that is injurious & uninjurious ... a mental fabrication that is injurious & uninjurious .... He rearises in an injurious & uninjurious world where he is touched by injurious & uninjurious contacts .... He experiences injurious & uninjurious feelings, pleasure mingled with pain, like those of human beings, some devas, and some beings in the lower realms. This is called kamma that is dark & white with dark & white result.

And what is kamma that is neither dark nor white with neither dark nor white result, leading to the ending of kamma? The intention right there to abandon this kamma that is dark with dark result, the intention right there to abandon this kamma that is white with white result, the intention right there to abandon this kamma that is dark & white with dark & white result. This is called kamma that is neither dark nor white with neither dark nor white result, leading to the ending of kamma.

—AN 4:232

*[AN 4:234 repeats most of the above, defining dark kamma with dark result with the following example: "There is the case of a certain person who kills living beings, steals what is not given, engages in illicit sex, tells lies, and drinks fermented & distilled liquors that are the basis for heedlessness," and white kamma with white result with the following example: "There is the case of a certain person who abstains from killing living beings, abstains from stealing what is not given, abstains from engaging in illicit sex, abstains from telling lies, and abstains from drinking fermented & distilled liquors that are the basis for heedlessness."]*

§58. And what is kamma that is neither dark nor white with neither dark nor white result, leading to the ending of kamma? Right view, right resolve, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness, right concentration.

—[AN 4:237](#)

*[The discourse immediately following this is identical to this except that it replaces the above factors of the noble eightfold path with the following seven factors for awakening: mindfulness as a factor for awakening, analysis of qualities ... persistence ... rapture ... serenity ... concentration ... equanimity as a factor for awakening.]*

§59. I have heard that on one occasion the Blessed One was staying near Rajagaha, at the Bamboo Grove, the Squirrels' Feeding Ground.

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

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

"Yes, sir."

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

Having turned the water dipper upside down, the Blessed One said to Ven. Rahula, "Rahula, do you see how this water dipper is turned upside

down?"

"Yes, sir."

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

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

"Yes, sir."

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

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

"The same holds true with anyone who feels no shame in telling a deliberate lie: There is no evil, I tell you, he will not do. Thus, Rahula, you should train yourself, 'I will not tell a deliberate lie even in jest.'

"What do you think, Rahula? What is a mirror for?"

"For reflection, sir."

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

"Whenever you want to do a bodily action, you should reflect on it: 'This bodily action I want to do—would it lead to self-affliction, to the affliction of others, or to both? 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 doing a bodily action, you should reflect on it: ‘This bodily action I am doing—is it leading to self-affliction, to the affliction of others, or to both? Is it an unskillful bodily action, with painful consequences, painful results?’ If, on reflection, you know that it is leading to self-affliction, to 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 done a bodily action, you should reflect on it .... If, on reflection, you know that it led to self-affliction, to the affliction of others, or to both; it was an unskillful bodily action with painful consequences, painful results, then you should confess it, reveal it, lay it open to the Teacher or to a knowledgeable companion in the holy life. Having confessed it ... you should exercise restraint in the future. But if on reflection you know that it did not lead to affliction ... it was a skillful bodily action with happy consequences, happy results, then you should stay mentally refreshed & joyful, training day & night in skillful mental qualities.

[Similarly with verbal actions.]

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

“Having done a mental action, you should reflect on it .... If, on reflection, you know that it led to self-affliction, to the affliction of others,

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

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

“Thus, Rahula, you should train yourself: ‘I will purify my bodily actions through repeated reflection. I will purify my verbal actions through repeated reflection. I will purify my mental actions through repeated reflection.’ That’s how you should train yourself.”

That is what the Blessed One said. Gratified, Ven. Rahula delighted in the Blessed One’s words.

—[MN 61](#)

## DARK KAMMA, WHITE KAMMA

§60. Then a certain devata, in the far extreme of the night, her extreme radiance lighting up the entirety of Jeta’s Grove, went to the Blessed One and, on arrival, having bowed down to him, stood to one side. As she was standing there, she recited these verses in the Blessed One’s presence:

When a house is on fire,  
the vessel salvaged  
is the one that will be of use,

not the one left there to burn.

So when the world is on fire  
with aging & death,  
one should salvage [one's wealth] by giving:  
what's given is well salvaged.

What's given bears fruit as pleasure.  
What isn't given does not:  
thieves take it away, or kings;  
it gets burnt by fire or lost.

Then in the end  
one leaves the body  
together with one's possessions.  
Knowing this, the intelligent man  
enjoys possessions & gives.  
Having enjoyed & given  
in line with his means,  
uncensured he goes  
to the heavenly state.

— [SN 1:41](#)

§61. As he was sitting to one side, King Pasenadi of Kosala said to the Blessed One: "Just now, lord, while I was alone in seclusion, this train of thought arose in my awareness: 'Who are dear to themselves, and who are not dear to themselves?' Then it occurred to me: 'Those who engage in bodily misconduct, verbal misconduct, & mental misconduct are not dear to themselves. Even though they may say, "We are dear to ourselves," still they aren't dear to themselves. Why is that? Of their own accord, they act toward themselves as an enemy would act toward an enemy; thus they aren't dear to themselves. But those who engage in good bodily conduct, good verbal conduct, & good mental conduct are dear to themselves. Even though they may say, "We aren't dear to ourselves," still they are dear to themselves. Why is that? Of their own accord, they act toward themselves as a dear one would act toward a dear one; thus they are dear to themselves.'"

"That's the way it is, great king! That's the way it is! Those who engage in bodily misconduct, verbal misconduct, & mental misconduct are not dear to themselves. Even though they may say, 'We are dear to ourselves,' still they aren't dear to themselves. Why is that? Of their own accord, they act toward themselves as an enemy would act toward an enemy; thus they aren't dear to themselves. But those who engage in good bodily conduct, good verbal conduct, & good mental conduct are dear to themselves. Even though they may say, 'We aren't dear to ourselves,' still they are dear to themselves. Why is that? Of their own accord, they act toward themselves as a dear one would act toward a dear one; thus they are dear to themselves."

That is what the Blessed One said. Having said that, the One Well-Gone, the Teacher, said further:

"If you hold yourself dear  
then don't fetter yourself  
with evil,  
for happiness isn't easily gained  
by one who commits  
a wrong-doing.

When seized by the End-maker  
as you abandon the human state,  
what's truly your own?  
What do you take along when you go?  
What follows behind you  
like a shadow  
that never leaves?

Both the merit & evil  
that you as a mortal  
perform here:  
that's  
what's truly your own,  
what you take along when you go;  
that's  
what follows behind you

like a shadow  
that never leaves.

So do what is admirable,  
as an accumulation  
for the future life.  
Deeds of merit are the support for beings  
when they arise  
in the other world."

—SN 3:4

§62. "Monks, there are these eight bonanzas of merit, bonanzas of skillfulness, nourishments of happiness, celestial, resulting in happiness, leading to heaven, leading to what is desirable, pleasurable, & appealing, to welfare & happiness. Which eight?

"There is the case where a disciple of the noble ones has gone to the Buddha for refuge. This is the first bonanza of merit ....

"Furthermore, the disciple of the noble ones has gone to the Dhamma for refuge. This is the second bonanza of merit ....

"Furthermore, the disciple of the noble ones has gone to the Sangha for refuge. This is the third bonanza of merit ....

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

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

"Furthermore, abandoning taking what is not given (stealing), the disciple of the noble ones abstains from taking what is not given. In doing so, he gives freedom from danger, freedom from animosity, freedom from oppression to limitless numbers of beings. In giving freedom from danger, freedom from animosity, freedom from oppression to limitless numbers of beings, he gains a share in limitless freedom from danger, freedom from animosity, and freedom from oppression. This is the second gift, the second great gift ... and this is the fifth bonanza of merit ....

"Furthermore, abandoning illicit sex, the disciple of the noble ones abstains from illicit sex. In doing so, he gives freedom from danger, freedom from animosity, freedom from oppression to limitless numbers of beings. In giving freedom from danger, freedom from animosity, freedom from oppression to limitless numbers of beings, he gains a share in limitless freedom from danger, freedom from animosity, and freedom from oppression. This is the third gift, the third great gift ... and this is the sixth bonanza of merit ....

"Furthermore, abandoning lying, the disciple of the noble ones abstains from lying. In doing so, he gives freedom from danger, freedom from animosity, freedom from oppression to limitless numbers of beings. In giving freedom from danger, freedom from animosity, freedom from oppression to limitless numbers of beings, he gains a share in limitless freedom from danger, freedom from animosity, and freedom from oppression. This is the fourth gift, the fourth great gift ... and this is the seventh bonanza of merit ....

"Furthermore, abandoning the use of intoxicants, the disciple of the noble ones abstains from taking intoxicants. In doing so, he gives freedom from danger, freedom from animosity, freedom from oppression to limitless numbers of beings. In giving freedom from danger, freedom from animosity, freedom from oppression to limitless numbers of beings, he gains a share in limitless freedom from danger, freedom from animosity, and freedom from oppression. This is the fifth gift, the fifth great gift—original, long-standing, traditional, ancient, unadulterated, unadulterated from the beginning—that is not open to suspicion, will never be open to suspicion, and is unfaulted by knowledgeable contemplatives & brahmins. And this is the eighth bonanza of merit, bonanza of skillfulness, nourishment of happiness, celestial, resulting in happiness, leading to

heaven, leading to what is desirable, pleasurable, & appealing; to welfare & to happiness.”

—[AN 8:39](#)

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

“Stealing—when indulged in, developed, & pursued—is something that leads to hell, leads to rebirth as a common animal, leads to the realm of the hungry ghosts. The slightest of all the results coming from stealing is that, when one becomes a human being, it leads to the loss of one’s wealth.

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

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

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

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

“Frivolous chattering—when indulged in, developed, & pursued—is something that leads to hell, leads to rebirth as a common animal, leads to the realm of the hungry ghosts. The slightest of all the results coming from

frivolous chattering is that, when one becomes a human being, it leads to words that aren't worth taking to heart.

"The drinking of fermented & distilled liquors—when indulged in, developed, & pursued—is something that leads to hell, leads to rebirth as a common animal, leads to the realm of the hungry ghosts. The slightest of all the results coming from drinking fermented & distilled liquors is that, when one becomes a human being, it leads to mental derangement."

—[AN 8:40](#)

§64. As he was sitting to one side, King Pasenadi of Kosala said to the Blessed One: "Just now, lord, while I was alone in seclusion, this train of thought arose in my awareness: 'Few are those people in the world who, when acquiring lavish wealth, don't become intoxicated & heedless, don't become greedy for sensual pleasures, and don't mistreat other beings. Many more are those who, when acquiring lavish wealth, become intoxicated & heedless, become greedy for sensual pleasures, and mistreat other beings.'"

"That's the way it is, great king! That's the way it is! Few are those people in the world who, when acquiring lavish wealth, don't become intoxicated & heedless, don't become greedy for sensual pleasures, and don't mistreat other beings. Many more are those who, when acquiring lavish wealth, become intoxicated & heedless, become greedy for sensual pleasures, and mistreat other beings."

That is what the Blessed One said. Having said that, the One Well-Gone, the Teacher, said further:

"Impassioned     with sensual possessions,  
greedy, dazed     by sensual pleasures,  
they don't awaken to the fact  
that they've gone too far—  
like deer into trap laid out.  
Afterwards it's bitter for them:  
evil for them  
the result."

—[SN 3:6](#)

§65. As he was sitting to one side, King Pasenadi of Kosala said to the Blessed One: “Just now, lord, as I was sitting in judgment, I saw that even affluent nobles, affluent brahmans, & affluent householders—rich, with great wealth & property, with vast amounts of gold & silver, vast amounts of valuables & commodities, vast amounts of wealth & grain—tell deliberate lies with sensuality as the cause, sensuality as the reason, simply for the sake of sensuality. Then, the thought occurred to me: ‘I’ve had enough of this judging! Let some other fine fellow be known for his judgments!’”

“That’s the way it is, great king! That’s the way it is! Even affluent nobles, affluent brahmans, & affluent householders ... tell deliberate lies ... simply for the sake of sensuality. That will lead to their long-term harm & pain.”

That is what the Blessed One said. Having said that, the One Well-Gone, the Teacher, said further:

“Impassioned with sensual possessions,  
greedy, dazed by sensual pleasures,  
they don’t awaken to the fact  
that they’ve gone too far—  
like fish into a trap set out.  
Afterwards it’s bitter for them:  
evil for them  
the result.”

—[SN 3:7](#)

§66. As he was sitting to one side, King Pasenadi of Kosala said to the Blessed One: “Is there, lord, any one quality that keeps both kinds of benefits secure—those in the present life and those in the future life?”

“There is one quality, great king, that keeps both kinds of benefits secure—those pertaining to the present life and those to the future life.”

“But what, venerable sir, is that one quality ... ?”

“Heedfulness, great king. Just as the footprints of all living beings with legs can be encompassed by the footprint of the elephant, and the elephant’s footprint is declared to be supreme among them in terms of its

great size; in the same way, heedfulness is the one quality that keeps both kinds of benefits secure—those in the present life and those in the future life.”

That is what the Blessed One said. Having said that, the One Well-Gone, the Teacher, said further:

“For one who desires  
long life, health,  
beauty, heaven, & noble birth,  
—lavish delights, one after another—  
the wise praise heedfulness  
in performing of deeds of merit.

The wise person, heedful,  
achieves both benefits:  
those in the here-&-now  
and those in the life to come.  
By breaking through to his benefit,  
he’s called *enlightened*,  
*wise*.”

—[\*SN 3:17\*](#)

§67. “There are these four qualities that lead to a lay person’s happiness and well-being in lives to come. Which four? Being consummate in conviction, being consummate in virtue, being consummate in generosity, being consummate in discernment.

“And what does it mean to be consummate in conviction? There is the case where a disciple of the noble ones has conviction, is convinced of the Tathagata’s awakening: ‘Indeed, the Blessed One is worthy and rightly self-awakened, consummate in knowledge and 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 and human beings, awakened, blessed.’ This is called being consummate in conviction.

“And what does it mean to be consummate in virtue? There is the case where a disciple of the noble ones abstains from taking life, abstains from

stealing, abstains from illicit sexual conduct, abstains from lying, abstains from taking intoxicants that cause heedlessness. This is called being consummate in virtue.

“And what does it mean to be consummate in generosity? There is the case of a disciple of the noble ones, his awareness cleansed of the stain of miserliness, living at home, freely generous, openhanded, delighting in being magnanimous, responsive to requests, delighting in the distribution of alms. This is called being consummate in generosity.

“And what does it mean to be consummate in discernment? There is the case where a disciple of the noble ones is discerning, endowed with discernment of arising and passing away—noble, penetrating, leading to the right ending of stress. This is called being consummate in discernment.

“These, TigerPaw, are the four qualities that lead to a lay person’s happiness and well-being in lives to come.”

—[AN 8:54](#)

§68. Then Ugga, the king’s chief minister, approached the Blessed One and, on arrival, having bowed down, sat down to one side. As he was sitting there, he said to the Blessed One: “It’s amazing, lord, & astounding, how prosperous Migara Rohaneyya is, how great his treasures, how great his resources!”

[The Buddha:] “But what is his property, Ugga? What are his great treasures & great resources?”

“One hundred thousand pieces of gold, lord, to say nothing of his silver.”

“That is treasure, Ugga. I don’t say that it’s not. And that treasure is open to fire, floods, kings, thieves, & hateful heirs. But these seven treasures are not open to fire, flood, kings, thieves, or hateful heirs. Which seven? The treasure of conviction, the treasure of virtue, the treasure of shame, the treasure of compunction, the treasure of listening, the treasure of generosity, the treasure of discernment. These, Ugga, are the seven treasures that are not open to fire, flood, kings, thieves, or hateful heirs.”

—[AN 7:7](#)

§69. “There are these seven treasures. Which seven? The treasure of conviction, the treasure of virtue, the treasure of shame, the treasure of

compunction, the treasure of listening, the treasure of generosity, the treasure of discernment.

“And what is the treasure of conviction? There is the case where a disciple of the noble ones has conviction, is convinced of the Tathagata’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.’ This is called the treasure of conviction.

“And what is the treasure of virtue? There is the case where a disciple of the noble ones abstains from taking life, abstains from stealing, abstains from illicit sexual conduct, abstains from lying, abstains from taking intoxicants that cause heedlessness. This, monks, is called the treasure of virtue.

“And what is the treasure of shame? There is the case where a disciple of the noble ones feels shame at [the thought of engaging in] bodily misconduct, verbal misconduct, mental misconduct. This is called the treasure of shame.

“And what is the treasure of compunction? There is the case where a disciple of the noble ones feels concern for [the suffering that results from] bodily misconduct, verbal misconduct, mental misconduct. This is called the treasure of compunction.

“And what is the treasure of listening? There is the case where a disciple of the noble ones has heard much, has retained what he/she has heard, has stored what he/she has heard. Whatever teachings are admirable in the beginning, admirable in the middle, admirable in the end, that—in their meaning and expression—proclaim the holy life that is entirely complete and pure: those he/she has listened to often, retained, discussed, accumulated, examined with his/her mind, and well-penetrated in terms of his/her views. This is called the treasure of listening.

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

“And what is the treasure of discernment? There is the case where a disciple of the noble ones is discerning, endowed with discernment of arising & passing away—noble, penetrating, leading to the right ending of stress. This is called the treasure of discernment.

“These, monks, are the seven treasures.

“The treasure of conviction,  
the treasure of virtue,  
the treasure of shame & compunction,  
the treasure of listening, generosity,  
& discernment as the seventh treasure:  
Whoever, man or woman, has these treasures  
is said not to be poor, has not lived in vain.  
So conviction & virtue, faith & Dhamma-vision  
should be cultivated by the wise,  
remembering the Buddhas’ instruction.”

—[\*AN 7:6\*](#)

## KAMMA NEITHER DARK NOR WHITE

§70. [*Uttara the deva’s son:*]

“Life is swept along,  
next-to-nothing its span.  
For one swept on by aging  
no shelters exist.  
Perceiving this danger in death,  
one should do deeds of merit  
that bring about bliss.”

[*The Buddha:*]

“Life is swept along,  
next-to-nothing its span.  
For one swept on by aging  
no shelters exist.  
Perceiving this danger in death,  
one should drop the world’s bait

and look for peace.”

—[SN 2:19](#)

§71. “Now what, monks, is the noble eightfold path? Right view, right resolve, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness, right concentration.

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

“And what is right resolve? Being resolved on renunciation, on freedom from ill will, on harmlessness: This is called right resolve.

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

“And what is right action? Abstaining from taking life, abstaining from stealing, abstaining from sexual intercourse [[DN 22](#) defines this last subfactor as abstaining from illicit sex]: This is called right action.

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

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

“And what is right mindfulness? [i] There is the case where a monk remains focused on the body in & of itself—ardent, alert, & mindful—subduing greed & distress with reference to the world. [ii] He remains focused on feelings in & of themselves—ardent, alert, & mindful—

subduing greed & distress with reference to the world. [iii] He remains focused on the mind in & of itself—ardent, alert, & mindful—subduing greed & distress with reference to the world. [iv] He remains focused on mental qualities in & of themselves—ardent, alert, & mindful—subduing greed & distress with reference to the world. This is called right mindfulness.

“And what is right concentration? [i] There is the case where a monk—quite secluded from sensuality, secluded from unskillful qualities—enters & remains in the first jhana: rapture & pleasure born of seclusion, accompanied by directed thought & evaluation. [ii] With the stilling of directed thoughts & evaluations, he enters & remains in the second jhana: rapture & pleasure born of concentration, unification of awareness free from directed thought & evaluation—internal assurance. [iii] With the fading of rapture, he remains equanimous, mindful, & alert, and senses pleasure with the body. He enters & remains in the third jhana, of which the noble ones declare, ‘Equanimous & mindful, he has a pleasant abiding.’ [iv] With the abandoning of pleasure & pain—as with the earlier disappearance of elation & distress—he enters & remains in the fourth jhana: purity of equanimity & mindfulness, neither pleasure nor pain. This is called right concentration.”

—[\*SN 45:8\*](#)

# Advice

## AGING

§72. Then two brahmans—feeble old men, aged, advanced in years, having come to the last stage of life, 120 years old—went to the Blessed One. On arrival, they exchanged courteous greetings with him and, after an exchange of friendly greetings & courtesies, sat to one side. As they were sitting there, they said to him: “Master Gotama, we are brahmans—feeble old men, aged, advanced in years, having come to the last stage of life, 120 years old. And we have done no admirable deeds, no skillful deeds, no deeds that allay our fears. Teach us, Master Gotama. Instruct us, Master Gotama, for our long-term benefit & happiness.”

“Indeed, brahmans, you are feeble old men, aged, advanced in years, having come to the last stage of life, 120 years old. And you have done no admirable deeds, no skillful deeds, no deeds that allay your fears. This world is swept away by aging, by illness, by death. With the world thus swept away by aging, illness, & death, any restraint of body, speech, & intellect practiced here will be one’s shelter, cave, island, & refuge after death in the world beyond.”

It’s swept along:  
life, its next-to-nothing span.  
For one swept on by aging  
no shelters exist.  
Keeping sight of this danger in death,  
do meritorious deeds  
that bring bliss.

Whoever here is restrained  
in body, speech, & awareness,  
who makes merit while he’s alive:  
that will be for his bliss after death.

—AN 3:51

§73. Then two brahmans—feeble old men, aged, advanced in years, having come to the last stage of life, 120 years old—went to the Blessed One. On arrival, they exchanged courteous greetings with him and, after an exchange of friendly greetings & courtesies, sat to one side. As they were sitting there, they said to him: “Master Gotama, we are brahmans—feeble old men, aged, advanced in years, having come to the last stage of life, 120 years old. And we have done no admirable deeds, no skillful deeds, no deeds that allay our fears. Teach us, Master Gotama. Instruct us, Master Gotama, for our long-term benefit & happiness.”

“Indeed, brahmans, you are feeble old men, aged, advanced in years, having come to the last stage of life, 120 years old. And you have done no admirable deeds, no skillful deeds, no deeds that allay your fears. This world is on fire with aging, illness, & death. With the world thus on fire with aging, illness, & death, any restraint of body, speech, & intellect practiced here will be one’s shelter, cave, island, & refuge after death in the world beyond.”

When a house is on fire,  
the vessel salvaged  
is the one that will be of use,  
not the one left there to burn.

So when the world is on fire  
with aging & death,  
one should salvage [one’s wealth] by giving:  
what’s given is well salvaged.  
Whoever here is restrained  
in body, speech, & awareness;  
who makes merit while he’s alive:  
that will be for his bliss after death.

—[AN 3:52](#)

§74. Then Nakula’s father the householder ... went to Ven. Sariputta and on arrival, having bowed down to him, sat to one side. As he was sitting there, Ven. Sariputta said to him, “Your faculties are clear & calm,

householder, your complexion pure. Have you had the opportunity today of listening to a Dhamma talk in the presence of the Blessed One?"

"How could it be otherwise, venerable sir? I have just now been sprinkled by the Blessed One with the deathless ambrosia of a Dhamma talk."

"And how were you sprinkled by the Blessed One with the deathless ambrosia of a Dhamma talk?"

"Just now I went to the Blessed One and on arrival, having bowed down to him, sat to one side. As I was sitting there I said to him, 'Lord, I am a decrepit old man, aged, advanced in years, having come to the last stage of life. I am afflicted in body & ailing with every moment. And it is only rarely that I get to see the Blessed One & the monks who nourish the heart. May the Blessed One teach me, may the Blessed One instruct me, for my long-term benefit & happiness.'

"When this was said, the Blessed One said to me, 'So it is, householder. So it is. The body is afflicted, weak, & encumbered. For who, looking after this body, would claim even a moment of true health, except through sheer foolishness? So you should train yourself: "Even though I may be afflicted in body, my mind will be unafflicted." That is how you should train yourself.' That's how I was sprinkled by the Blessed One with the deathless ambrosia of a Dhamma talk."

"But why didn't it occur to you to question the Blessed One further: 'In what way is one afflicted in body & afflicted in mind? And in what way is one afflicted in body but unafflicted in mind?'

"I would come from a long way away to hear the explication of these words in Ven. Sariputta's presence. It would be good if Ven. Sariputta himself would enlighten me as to their meaning."

"Then in that case, householder, listen & pay close attention. I will speak."

"As you say, venerable sir," Nakula's father the householder responded.

Ven. Sariputta said: "Now, how is one afflicted in body & afflicted in mind?"

"There is the case where an uninstructed, run-of-the-mill person—who has no regard for noble ones, is not well-versed or disciplined in their Dhamma; who has no regard for men of integrity, is not well-versed or

disciplined in their Dhamma—assumes form to be the self, or the self as possessing form, or form as in the self, or the self as in form. He is obsessed with the idea that ‘I am form’ or ‘Form is mine.’ As he is obsessed with these ideas, his form changes & alters, and he falls into sorrow, lamentation, pain, distress, & despair over its change & alteration.

“He assumes feeling to be the self, or the self as possessing feeling, or feeling as in the self, or the self as in feeling. He is obsessed with the idea that ‘I am feeling’ or ‘Feeling is mine.’ As he is obsessed with these ideas, his feeling changes & alters, and he falls into sorrow, lamentation, pain, distress, & despair over its change & alteration.

“He assumes perception to be the self, or the self as possessing perception, or perception as in the self, or the self as in perception. He is obsessed with the idea that ‘I am perception’ or ‘Perception is mine.’ As he is obsessed with these ideas, his perception changes & alters, and he falls into sorrow, lamentation, pain, distress, & despair over its change & alteration.

“He assumes fabrications to be the self, or the self as possessing fabrications, or fabrications as in the self, or the self as in fabrications. He is obsessed with the idea that ‘I am fabrications’ or ‘Fabrications are mine.’ As he is obsessed with these ideas, his fabrications change & alter, and he falls into sorrow, lamentation, pain, distress, & despair over their change & alteration.

“He assumes consciousness to be the self, or the self as possessing consciousness, or consciousness as in the self, or the self as in consciousness. He is obsessed with the idea that ‘I am consciousness’ or ‘Consciousness is mine.’ As he is obsessed with these ideas, his consciousness changes & alters, and he falls into sorrow, lamentation, pain, distress, & despair over its change & alteration.

“This, householder, is how one is afflicted in body and afflicted in mind.

“And how is one afflicted in body but unafflicted in mind? There is the case where a well-instructed disciple of the noble ones—who has regard for noble ones, is well-versed & disciplined in their Dhamma; who has regard for men of integrity, is well-versed & disciplined in their Dhamma—doesn’t assume form to be the self, or the self as possessing form, or form as in the self, or the self as in form. He is not obsessed with the idea that ‘I am form’ or ‘Form is mine.’ As he is not obsessed with these ideas, his form changes

& alters, but he doesn't fall into sorrow, lamentation, pain, distress, or despair over its change & alteration.

"He doesn't assume feeling to be the self ....

"He doesn't assume perception to be the self ....

"He doesn't assume fabrications to be the self ....

"He doesn't assume consciousness to be the self, or the self as possessing consciousness, or consciousness as in the self, or the self as in consciousness. He is not obsessed with the idea that 'I am consciousness' or 'Consciousness is mine.' As he is not obsessed with these ideas, his consciousness changes & alters, but he doesn't fall into sorrow, lamentation, pain, distress, or despair over its change & alteration.

"This, householder, is how one is afflicted in body but unafflicted in mind."

That is what Ven. Sariputta said. Gratified, Nakula's father the householder delighted in Ven. Sariputta's words.

—[\*SN 22:1\*](#)

*§75. [Pīṅgiya:]*

I'm old & weak,  
my complexion dull.  
I've blurry eyes  
and trouble hearing,  
but may I not perish deluded,  
confused!  
Teach me the Dhamma  
so that I may know  
the abandoning here  
of birth & aging.

*[The Buddha:]*

Seeing people suffering  
on account of their bodies—  
heedless people are oppressed  
on account of their bodies—  
then heedful, Pīṅgiya,  
let go of the body

for the sake of no further becoming.

*[Pīṇḍiya:]*

In the four cardinal directions,  
the four intermediate,  
above & below  
—the ten directions—  
there is nothing in the world  
unseen, unheard,  
unsensed, uncognized by you.  
Teach me the Dhamma  
so that I may know  
the abandoning here  
of birth & aging.

*[The Buddha:]*

Seeing people,  
victims of craving—  
aflame, overwhelmed with aging—  
then heedful, Pīṇḍiya,  
let go of craving  
for the sake of no further becoming.

—*Sn 5:16*

## ILLNESS

§76. “A sick person endowed with five qualities is easy to tend to: He does what is amenable to his cure; he knows the proper amount in things amenable to his cure; he takes his medicine; he tells his symptoms, as they have come to be, to the nurse desiring his welfare, saying that they are worse when they are worse, improving when they are improving, or remaining the same when they are remaining the same; and he is the type who can endure bodily feelings that are painful, fierce, sharp, wracking, repellent, disagreeable, life-threatening. A sick person endowed with these five qualities is easy to tend to.

“A nurse endowed with five qualities is not fit to tend to the sick: He is not competent at mixing medicine; he doesn’t know what is amenable or

unamenable to the patient's cure, bringing to the patient things that are unamenable and taking away things that are amenable; he is motivated by material gain, not by thoughts of good will; he gets disgusted at cleaning up excrement, urine, saliva, or vomit; and he is not competent at instructing, urging, rousing, & encouraging the sick person at the proper occasions with a talk on Dhamma. A nurse endowed with these five qualities is not fit to tend to the sick.

"A nurse endowed with five qualities is fit to tend to the sick: He is competent at mixing medicine; he knows what is amenable or unamenable to the patient's cure, taking away things that are unamenable and bringing things that are amenable; he is motivated by thoughts of good will, not by material gain; he doesn't get disgusted at cleaning up excrement, urine, saliva, or vomit; and he is competent at instructing, urging, rousing, & encouraging the sick person at the proper occasions with a talk on Dhamma. A nurse endowed with these five qualities is fit to tend to the sick."

—*Mv.VIII.26*

§77. "Monks, when an uninstructed run-of-the-mill person makes the statement, 'There is a bottomless chasm in the ocean,' he is talking about something that doesn't exist, that can't be found. The word 'bottomless chasm' is actually a designation for painful bodily feeling.

"When an uninstructed run-of-the-mill person is touched by a painful bodily feeling, he sorrows, grieves, & laments, beats his breast, becomes distraught. This is called an uninstructed run-of-the-mill person who has not risen up out of the bottomless chasm, who has not gained a foothold.

"When a well-instructed disciple of the noble ones is touched by a painful bodily feeling, he doesn't sorrow, grieve, or lament, doesn't beat his breast or become distraught. This is called a well-instructed disciple of the noble ones who has risen up out of the bottomless chasm, whose foothold is gained."

Whoever can't endure them  
once they've arisen—  
painful bodily feelings  
that could kill living beings—

who trembles at their touch,  
who cries & wails,  
a weakling with no resilience:  
he hasn't risen up  
out of the bottomless chasm  
or even gained  
a foothold.

Whoever endures them  
once they've arisen—  
painful bodily feelings  
that could kill living beings—  
who doesn't tremble at their touch:  
he's risen up  
out of the bottomless chasm,  
his foothold is gained.

—[SN 36:4](#)

§78. “Monks, an uninstructed run-of-the-mill person feels feelings of pleasure, feelings of pain, feelings of neither-pleasure-nor-pain. A well-instructed disciple of the noble ones also feels feelings of pleasure, feelings of pain, feelings of neither-pleasure-nor-pain. So what difference, what distinction, what distinguishing factor is there between the well-instructed disciple of the noble ones and the uninstructed run-of-the-mill person?”

“For us, lord, the teachings have the Blessed One as their root, their guide, & their refuge. It would be good if the Blessed One himself would explicate the meaning of this statement. Having heard it from the Blessed One, the monks will remember it.”

“In that case, monks, listen & pay close attention. I will speak.”

“As you say, lord,” the monks responded.

The Blessed One said, “When touched with a feeling of pain, the uninstructed run-of-the-mill person sorrows, grieves, & laments, beats his breast, becomes distraught. So he feels two pains, physical & mental. Just as if they were to shoot a man with an arrow and, right afterward, were to shoot him with another one, so that he would feel the pains of two arrows; in the same way, when touched with a feeling of pain, the uninstructed run-

of-the-mill person sorrows, grieves, & laments, beats his breast, becomes distraught. So he feels two pains, physical & mental.

“As he is touched by that painful feeling, he is resistant. Any resistance-obsession toward that painful feeling comes into play. Touched by that painful feeling, he delights in sensual pleasure. Why is that? Because the uninstructed run-of-the-mill person doesn’t discern any escape from painful feeling aside from sensual pleasure. As he is delighting in sensual pleasure, any passion-obsession toward that feeling of pleasure comes into play. He doesn’t discern, as it has come to be, the origination, passing away, allure, drawback, or escape from that feeling. As he doesn’t discern the origination, passing away, allure, drawback, or escape from that feeling, then any ignorance-obsession toward a feeling of neither-pleasure-nor-pain comes into play.

“Sensing a feeling of pleasure, he senses it as though joined with it. Sensing a feeling of pain, he senses it as though joined with it. Sensing a feeling of neither-pleasure-nor-pain, he senses it as though joined with it. This is called an uninstructed run-of-the-mill person joined with birth, aging, & death; with sorrows, lamentations, pains, distresses, & despairs. He is joined, I tell you, with suffering & stress.

“Now, the well-instructed disciple of the noble ones, when touched with a feeling of pain, doesn’t sorrow, grieve, or lament, doesn’t beat his breast or become distraught. So he feels one pain: physical, but not mental. Just as if they were to shoot a man with an arrow and, right afterward, did not shoot him with another one, so that he would feel the pain of only one arrow; in the same way, when touched with a feeling of pain, the well-instructed disciple of the noble ones doesn’t sorrow, grieve, or lament, doesn’t beat his breast or become distraught. He feels one pain: physical, but not mental.

“As he is touched by that painful feeling, he is not resistant. No resistance-obsession toward that painful feeling comes into play. Touched by that painful feeling, he doesn’t delight in sensual pleasure. Why is that? Because the well-instructed disciple of the noble ones discerns an escape from painful feeling aside from sensual pleasure. As he is not delighting in sensual pleasure, no passion-obsession toward that feeling of pleasure comes into play. He discerns, as it has come to be, the origination, passing away, allure, drawback, and escape from that feeling. As he discerns the origination, passing away, allure, drawback, and escape from that feeling,

no ignorance-obsession toward a feeling of neither-pleasure-nor-pain comes into play.

“Sensing a feeling of pleasure, he senses it disjoined from it. Sensing a feeling of pain, he senses it disjoined from it. Sensing a feeling of neither-pleasure-nor-pain, he senses it disjoined from it. This is called a well-instructed disciple of the noble ones disjoined from birth, aging, & death; from sorrows, lamentations, pains, distresses, & despairs. He is disjoined, I tell you, from suffering & stress.

“This is the difference, this the distinction, this the distinguishing factor between the well-instructed disciple of the noble ones and the uninstructed run-of-the-mill person.”

The discerning person, learned,  
doesn't sense a (mental) feeling of pleasure or pain:  
This is the difference in skillfulness  
between the sage & the person run-of-the-mill.  
For a learned person  
who has fathomed the Dhamma,  
clearly seeing this world & the next,  
desirable things     don't charm the mind,  
undesirable ones     bring no resistance.  
His acceptance  
& rejection  
are scattered,  
gone to their end,  
do not exist.  
Knowing the dustless, sorrowless state,  
he  
discerns rightly,  
has gone, beyond becoming,  
to the Further Shore.

—[\*SN 36:6\*](#)

§79. At that time Ven. Maha Kassapa was staying in the Pepper Tree Cave, diseased, in pain, severely ill. Then the Blessed One, in the late afternoon, left his seclusion and went to where Ven. Maha Kassapa was

staying. On arrival, he sat down on a prepared seat and said to Ven. Maha Kassapa, “I hope you are getting better, Kassapa. I hope you are comfortable. I hope that your pains are lessening and not increasing. I hope that there are signs of their lessening, and not of their increasing.”

“I am not getting better, lord. I am not comfortable. My extreme pains are increasing, not lessening. There are signs of their increasing, and not of their lessening.”

“Kassapa, these seven factors for awakening rightly taught by me, when developed and pursued, lead to direct knowledge, to self-awakening, to unbinding. Which seven?

“Mindfulness as a factor for awakening rightly taught by me, when developed and pursued, leads to direct knowledge, to self-awakening, to unbinding.

“Analysis of qualities as a factor for awakening, rightly taught by me, when developed and pursued, leads to direct knowledge, to self-awakening, to unbinding.

“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 rightly taught by me, when developed and pursued, leads to direct knowledge, to self-awakening, to unbinding.

“Kassapa, these are the seven factors for awakening rightly taught by me that—when developed and pursued—lead to direct knowledge, to self-awakening, to unbinding.”

“They are indeed factors of awakening, O Blessed One. They are indeed factors of awakening, O One Well-Gone.”

That is what the Blessed One said. Gratified, Ven. Maha Kassapa delighted in the Blessed One’s words. And Ven. Maha Kassapa recovered from his disease. That was how Ven. Maha Kassapa’s disease was abandoned.

—[SN 46:14](#)

§80. I have heard that on one occasion the Blessed One was staying near Savatthi, in Jeta's Grove, Anathapindika's monastery. And on that occasion Ven. Girimananda was diseased, in pain, severely ill. Then Ven. Ananda went to the Blessed One and, on arrival, having bowed down to him, sat to one side. As he was sitting there he said to the Blessed One, "Lord, Ven. Girimananda is diseased, in pain, severely ill. It would be good if the Blessed One would visit Ven. Girimananda, out of sympathy for him."

"Ananda, if *you* go to the monk Girimananda and tell him ten perceptions, it's possible that when he hears the ten perceptions his disease may be allayed. Which ten? The perception of inconstancy, the perception of non-self, the perception of unattractiveness, the perception of drawbacks, the perception of abandoning, the perception of dispassion, the perception of cessation, the perception of distaste for every world, the perception of the undesirability of all fabrications, mindfulness of in-&-out breathing.

[1] "And what is the perception of inconstancy? There is the case where a monk—having gone to the wilderness, to the shade of a tree, or to an empty building—reflects thus: 'Form is inconstant, feeling is inconstant, perception is inconstant, fabrications are inconstant, consciousness is inconstant.' Thus he remains focused on inconstancy with regard to the five clinging-aggregates. This, Ananda, is called the perception of inconstancy.

[2] "And what is the perception of not-self? There is the case where a monk—having gone to the wilderness, to the shade of a tree, or to an empty building—reflects thus: 'The eye is not-self, forms are not-self; the ear is not-self, sounds are not-self; the nose is not-self, aromas are not-self; the tongue is not-self, flavors are not-self; the body is not-self, tactile sensations are not-self; the intellect is not-self, ideas are not-self.' Thus he remains focused on not-selfness with regard to the six inner & outer sense spheres. This is called the perception of not-self.

[3] "And what is the perception of unattractiveness? There is the case where a monk ponders this very body—from the soles of the feet on up, from the crown of the head on down, surrounded by skin, filled with all sorts of unclean things: 'There is in this body: hair of the head, hair of the body, nails, teeth, skin, muscle, tendons, bones, bone marrow, spleen, heart, liver, membranes, kidneys, lungs, large intestines, small intestines, gorge, feces, gall, phlegm, lymph, blood, sweat, fat, tears, oil, saliva, mucus, oil in

the joints, urine.’ Thus he remains focused on unattractiveness with regard to this very body. This is called the perception of unattractiveness.

[4] “And what is the perception of drawbacks? There is the case where a monk—having gone to the wilderness, to the foot of a tree, or to an empty dwelling—reflects thus: ‘This body has many pains, many drawbacks. In this body many kinds of disease arise, such as: seeing-diseases, hearing-diseases, nose-diseases, tongue-diseases, body-diseases, head-diseases, ear-diseases, mouth-diseases, teeth-diseases, cough, asthma, catarrh, fever, aging, stomach-ache, fainting, dysentery, grippe, cholera, leprosy, boils, ringworm, tuberculosis, epilepsy, skin-disease, itch, scab, psoriasis, scabies, jaundice, diabetes, hemorrhoids, fistulas, ulcers; diseases arising from bile, from phlegm, from the wind-property, from combinations of bodily humors, from changes in the weather, from uneven care of the body, from violence, from the result of kamma; cold, heat, hunger, thirst, defecation, urination.’ Thus he remains focused on drawbacks with regard to this body. This is called the perception of drawbacks.

[5] “And what is the perception of abandoning? There is the case where a monk doesn’t tolerate an arisen thought of sensuality. He abandons it, destroys it, dispels it, & wipes it out of existence. He doesn’t tolerate an arisen thought of ill-will. He abandons it, destroys it, dispels it, & wipes it out of existence. He doesn’t tolerate an arisen thought of harmfulness. He abandons it, destroys it, dispels it, & wipes it out of existence. He doesn’t tolerate arisen evil, unskillful mental qualities. He abandons them, destroys them, dispels them, & wipes them out of existence. This is called the perception of abandoning.

[6] “And what is the perception of dispassion? There is the case where a monk—having gone to the wilderness, to the shade of a tree, or to an empty building—reflects thus: ‘This is peace, this is exquisite—the pacification of all fabrications, the relinquishing of all acquisitions, the ending of craving, dispassion, unbinding.’ This is called the perception of dispassion.

[7] “And what is the perception of cessation? There is the case where a monk—having gone to the wilderness, to the shade of a tree, or to an empty building—reflects thus: ‘This is peace, this is exquisite—the pacification of all fabrications, the relinquishing of all acquisitions, the ending of craving, cessation, unbinding.’ This is called the perception of cessation.

[8] “And what is the perception of distaste for every world? There is the case where a monk abandoning any attachments, clingings, fixations of awareness, biases, or obsessions with regard to any world, refrains from them and does not get involved. This is called the perception of distaste for every world.

[9] “And what is the perception of the undesirability of all fabrications? There is the case where a monk feels horrified, humiliated, & disgusted with all fabrications. This is called the perception of the undesirability of all fabrications.

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

“[i] Breathing in long, he discerns that he is breathing in long; or breathing out long, he discerns that he is breathing out long. [ii] Or breathing in short, he discerns that he is breathing in short; or breathing out short, he discerns that he is breathing out short. [iii] He trains himself to breathe in sensitive to the entire body, and to breathe out sensitive to the entire body. [iv] He trains himself to breathe in calming bodily fabrication [the in-&-out breath], and to breathe out calming bodily fabrication.

“[v] He trains himself to breathe in sensitive to rapture, and to breathe out sensitive to rapture. [vi] He trains himself to breathe in sensitive to pleasure, and to breathe out sensitive to pleasure. [vii] He trains himself to breathe in sensitive to mental fabrication [feeling & perception], and to breathe out sensitive to mental fabrication. [viii] He trains himself to breathe in calming mental fabrication, and to breathe out calming mental fabrication.

“[ix] He trains himself to breathe in sensitive to the mind, and to breathe out sensitive to the mind. [x] He trains himself to breathe in gladdening the mind, and to breathe out gladdening the mind. [xi] He trains himself to breathe in steadying the mind, and to breathe out steadying the mind. [xii] He trains himself to breathe in releasing the mind, and to breathe out releasing the mind.

“[xiii] He trains himself to breathe in focusing on inconstancy, and to breathe out focusing on inconstancy. [xiv] He trains himself to breathe in

focusing on dispassion [*literally, fading*], and to breathe out focusing on dispassion. [xv] He trains himself to breathe in focusing on cessation, and to breathe out focusing on cessation. [xvi] He trains himself to breathe in focusing on relinquishment, and to breathe out focusing on relinquishment.

“This, Ananda, is called mindfulness of in-&-out breathing.

“Now, Ananda, if you go to the monk Girimananda and tell him these ten perceptions, it’s possible that when he hears these ten perceptions his disease may be allayed.”

Then Ven. Ananda, having learned these ten perceptions in the Blessed One’s presence, went to Ven. Girimananda and told them to him. As Ven. Girimananda heard these ten perceptions, his disease was allayed. And Ven. Girimananda recovered from his disease. That was how Ven. Girimananda’s disease was abandoned.

—[\*AN 10:60\*](#)

§81. I have heard that on one occasion the Blessed One was staying near Vesali, in the Great Forest, at the Gabled Pavilion. Then, in the late afternoon, he left his seclusion and went to the sick ward, where he saw a monk who was weak & sickly. Seeing him, he sat down on a prepared seat. As he was sitting there, he addressed the monks: “When these five things don’t leave a monk who is weak & sickly, it can be expected of him that, before long—with the ending of the fermentations—he will enter & remain in the fermentation-free release of awareness & release of discernment, having realized & directly known them for himself in the here & now. Which five?

“There is the case where a monk [1] remains focused on unattractiveness with regard to the body, [2] is percipient of foulness with regard to food, [3] is percipient of distaste with regard to every world, [4] is percipient of the undesirability of all fabrications, and [5] has the perception of death well established within himself.

“When these five things don’t leave a monk who is weak & sickly, it can be expected of him that, before long—with the ending of the fermentations—he will enter & remain in the fermentation-free release of awareness & release of discernment, having realized & directly known them for himself in the here & now.”

—[\*AN 5:121\*](#)

## DEATH

§82. At that time, Nakula's father the householder was diseased, in pain, severely ill. Then Nakula's mother said to him: "Don't be worried as you die, householder. Death is painful for one who is worried. The Blessed One has criticized being worried at the time of death.

"Now it may be that you are thinking, 'Nakula's mother will not be able to support the children or maintain the household after I'm gone,' but you shouldn't see things in that way. I am skilled at spinning cotton, at carding matted wool. I can support the children and maintain the household after you are gone. So don't be worried as you die, householder. Death is painful for one who is worried. The Blessed One has criticized being worried at the time of death.

"Now it may be that you are thinking, 'Nakula's mother will take another husband after I'm gone,' but you shouldn't see things in that way. You know as well as I how my fidelity [lit., "householder-celibacy"] has been constant for the past sixteen years. So don't be worried as you die, householder. Death is painful for one who is worried. The Blessed One has criticized death when one is worried.

"Now it may be that you are thinking, 'Nakula's mother will have no desire to go see the Blessed One, to go see the community of monks, after I'm gone,' but you shouldn't see things in that way. I will have an even greater desire to go see the Blessed One, to go see the community of monks, after you are gone. So don't be worried as you die, householder. Death is painful for one who is worried. The Blessed One has criticized being worried at the time of death.

"Now it may be that you are thinking, 'Nakula's mother will not act fully in accordance with the precepts after I'm gone,' but you shouldn't see things in that way. To the extent that the Blessed One has white-clad householder female disciples who act fully in accordance with the precepts, I am one of them. If anyone doubts or denies this, let him go ask the Blessed One, the worthy one, the rightly self-awakened one who is staying among the Bhaggus in the Deer Park at Bhesakala Grove, near Crocodile Hill. So don't be worried as you die, householder. Death is painful for one who is worried. The Blessed One has criticized being worried at the time of death.

"Now it may be that you are thinking, 'Nakula's mother will not attain inner tranquility of awareness after I'm gone,' but you shouldn't see things in that way. To the extent that the Blessed One has white-clad householder female disciples who attain inner tranquility of awareness, I am one of them. If anyone doubts or denies this, let him go ask the Blessed One, the worthy one, the rightly self-awakened one who is staying among the Bhaggus in the Deer Park at Bhesakala Grove, near Crocodile Hill. So don't be worried as you die, householder. Death is painful for one who is worried. The Blessed One has criticized being worried at the time of death.

"Now it may be that you are thinking, 'Nakula's mother will not reach firm ground in this Dhamma & Vinaya, will not attain a firm foothold, will not attain consolation, overcome her doubts, dispel her perplexity, reach fearlessness or gain independence from others with regard to the Teacher's message [a standard description of one who has gained the first stage of awakening], but you shouldn't see things in that way. To the extent that the Blessed One has white-clad householder female disciples who reach firm ground in this Dhamma & Vinaya, attain a firm foothold, attain consolation, overcome their doubts, dispel their perplexity, reach fearlessness, & gain independence from others with regard to the Teacher's message, I am one of them. If anyone doubts or denies this, let him go ask the Blessed One, the worthy one, the rightly self-awakened one who is staying among the Bhaggus in the Deer Park at Bhesakala Grove, near Crocodile Hill. So don't be worried as you die, householder. Death is painful for one who is worried. The Blessed One has criticized being worried at the time of death."

While Nakula's father the householder was being exhorted by Nakula's mother with this exhortation, his disease was immediately allayed. And he recovered from his disease. That was how Nakula's father's disease was abandoned.

Then, soon after Nakula's father the householder had recovered from being sick, not long after his recovery from his illness, he went leaning on a stick to the Blessed One. On arrival, having bowed down to the Blessed One, he sat to one side. As he was sitting there, the Blessed One said to him, "It is your gain, your great gain, householder, that you have Nakula's mother—sympathetic & wishing for your welfare—as your counselor & instructor. To the extent that I have white-clad householder female disciples

who act fully in accordance with the precepts, she is one of them. To the extent that I have white-clad householder female disciples who attain inner tranquility of awareness, she is one of them. To the extent that I have white-clad householder female disciples who reach firm ground in this Dhamma & Vinaya, attain a firm foothold, attain consolation, overcome their doubts, dispel their perplexity, reach fearlessness, & gain independence from others with regard to the Teacher's message, she is one of them. It's your gain, your great gain, householder, that you have Nakulā's mother—sympathetic & wishing for your welfare—as your counselor & instructor."

—[AN 6:16](#)

§83. "Mahanama, a discerning lay follower who is diseased, in pain, severely ill should be reassured by another discerning lay follower with four reassurances: 'Be reassured, friend, that you are endowed with verified confidence in the Awakened One ... verified confidence in the Dhamma ... verified confidence in the Sangha ... virtues that are appealing to the noble ones: untorn, unbroken, unspotted, unsplattered, liberating, praised by the wise, untarnished, leading to concentration.'

"Mahanama, when a discerning lay follower who is diseased, in pain, severely ill has been reassured by another discerning lay follower with these four reassurances, he should be asked: 'Friend, are you concerned for your mother & father?' If he should say, 'I am...', he should be told, 'You, my dear friend, are subject to death. If you feel concern for your mother & father, you're still going to die. If you don't feel concern for your mother & father, you're still going to die. It would be good if you abandoned concern for your mother & father.'

"If he should say, 'My concern for my mother & father has been abandoned,' he should be asked, 'Friend, are you concerned for your wife & children?' If he should say, 'I am...', he should be told, 'You, my dear friend, are subject to death. If you feel concern for your wife & children, you're still going to die. If you don't feel concern for your wife & children, you're still going to die. It would be good if you abandoned concern for your wife & children.'

"If he should say, 'My concern for my wife & children has been abandoned,' he should be asked, 'Friend, are you concerned for the five

strings of human sensuality?’ If he should say, ‘I am...,’ he should be told, ‘Friend, divine sensual pleasures are more splendid & more refined than human sensual pleasures. It would be good if, having raised your mind above human sensual pleasures, you set it on the Devas of the Four Great Kings.’

“If he should say, ‘My mind is raised above human sensual pleasures and is set on the Devas of the Four Great Kings,’ he should be told, ‘Friend, the Devas of the Thirty-three are more splendid & more refined than the Devas of the Four Great Kings. It would be good if, having raised your mind above the Devas of the Four Great Kings, you set it on the Devas of the Thirty-three.’

“If he should say, ‘My mind is raised above the Devas of the Four Great Kings and is set on the Devas of the Thirty-three,’ he should be told, ‘Friend, the Devas of the Hours are more splendid & more refined than the Devas of the Thirty-three ... the Contented Devas are more splendid & more refined than the Devas of the Hours ... the Devas Delighting in Creation are more splendid & more refined than the Contented Devas ... the Devas Wielding Power over the Creations of Others are more splendid & more refined than the Devas Delighting in Creation ... the Brahmā world is more splendid and more refined than the Devas Wielding Power over the Creations of Others. It would be good if, having raised your mind above the Devas Wielding Power over the Creations of Others, you set it on the Brahma world.’

“If he should say, ‘My mind is raised above the Devas Wielding Power over the Creations of Others and is set on the Brahma world,’ he should be told, ‘Friend, even the Brahma world is inconstant, impermanent, included in identity. It would be good if, having raised your mind above the Brahma world, you brought it to the cessation of identity.’

“If he should say, ‘My mind is raised above the Brahma worlds and is brought to the cessation of identity,’ then, I tell you, Mahanama, there is no difference—in terms of release—between the release of that lay follower whose mind is released and the release of a monk whose mind is released.”

—[SN 55:54](#)

§84. I have heard that on one occasion the Blessed One was staying near Vesali, in the Great Forest, at the Gabled Pavilion. Then, in the late

afternoon, he left his seclusion and went to the sick ward. On arrival he sat down on a prepared seat. As he was sitting there, he addressed the monks: "A monk should approach the time of death mindful & alert. This is our instruction to you all.

"And how is a monk mindful? There is the case where a monk remains focused on the body in & of itself—ardent, alert, & mindful—subduing greed & distress with reference to the world. He remains focused on feelings in & of themselves ... mind in & of itself ... mental qualities in & of themselves—ardent, alert, & mindful—subduing greed & distress with reference to the world. This is how a monk is mindful.

"And how is a monk alert? When going forward & returning, he makes himself fully alert; when looking toward & looking away ... when bending & extending his limbs ... when carrying his outer cloak, his upper robe & his bowl ... when eating, drinking, chewing, & savoring ... when urinating & defecating ... when walking, standing, sitting, falling asleep, waking up, talking, & remaining silent, he makes himself fully alert. This is how a monk is alert.

"So a monk should approach the time of death mindful & alert. This is our instruction to you all.

"As a monk is dwelling thus mindful & alert—heedful, ardent, & resolute—a feeling of pleasure arises in him. He discerns that 'A feeling of pleasure has arisen in me. It is dependent on a requisite condition, not independent. Dependent on what? Dependent on this body. Now, this body is inconstant, fabricated, dependently co-arisen. Being dependent on a body that is inconstant, fabricated, & dependently co-arisen, how can this feeling of pleasure that has arisen be constant?' He remains focused on inconstancy with regard to the body & to the feeling of pleasure. He remains focused on dissolution ... dispassion ... cessation ... relinquishment with regard to the body & to the feeling of pleasure. As he remains focused on inconstancy ... dissolution ... dispassion ... cessation ... relinquishment with regard to the body & to the feeling of pleasure, he abandons any passion-obsession with regard to the body & the feeling of pleasure.

"As he is dwelling thus mindful & alert—heedful, ardent, & resolute—a feeling of pain arises in him. He discerns that 'A feeling of pain has arisen in me. It is dependent on a requisite condition, not independent. Dependent on what? Dependent on this body. Now, this body is inconstant, fabricated,

dependently co-arisen. Being dependent on a body that is inconstant, fabricated, & dependently co-arisen, how can this feeling of pain that has arisen be constant?' He remains focused on inconstancy with regard to the body & to the feeling of pain. He remains focused on dissolution ... dispassion ... cessation ... relinquishment with regard to the body & to the feeling of pain. As he remains focused on inconstancy ... dissolution ... dispassion ... cessation ... relinquishment with regard to the body & to the feeling of pain, he abandons any resistance-obsession with regard to the body & the feeling of pain.

"As he is dwelling thus mindful & alert—heedful, ardent, & resolute—a feeling of neither-pleasure-nor-pain arises in him. He discerns that 'A feeling of neither-pleasure-nor-pain has arisen in me. It is dependent on a requisite condition, not independent. Dependent on what? Dependent on this body. Now, this body is inconstant, fabricated, dependently co-arisen. Being dependent on a body that is inconstant, fabricated, & dependently co-arisen, how can this feeling of neither-pleasure-nor-pain that has arisen be constant?' He remains focused on inconstancy with regard to the body & to the feeling of neither-pleasure-nor-pain. He remains focused on dissolution ... dispassion ... cessation ... relinquishment with regard to the body & to the feeling of neither-pleasure-nor-pain. As he remains focused on inconstancy ... dissolution ... dispassion ... cessation ... relinquishment with regard to the body & to the feeling of neither-pleasure-nor-pain, he abandons any ignorance-obsession with regard to the body & the feeling of neither-pleasure-nor-pain.

"Sensing a feeling of pleasure, he discerns that it is inconstant, not grasped at, not relished. Sensing a feeling of pain .... Sensing a feeling of neither-pleasure-nor-pain, he discerns that it is inconstant, not grasped at, not relished. Sensing a feeling of pleasure, he senses it disjoined from it. Sensing a feeling of pain .... Sensing a feeling of neither-pleasure-nor-pain, he senses it disjoined from it. 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 break-up of the body, after the termination of life, all that is experienced, not being relished, will grow cold right here.'

"Just as an oil lamp burns in dependence on oil & wick; and from the termination of the oil & wick—and from not being provided any other

sustenance—it goes out unnourished; in the same way, 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 break-up of the body, after the termination of life, all that is sensed, not being relished, will grow cold right here.’”

—[\*SN 36:7\*](#)

§85. Then, early in the morning, Upacala the nun put on her robes and, taking her bowl & outer robe, went into Savatthi for alms. When she had gone for alms in Savatthi and had returned from her alms round, after her meal she went to the Grove of the Blind to spend the day. Having gone deep into the Grove of the Blind, she sat down at the foot of a tree for the day’s abiding.

Then Mara the Evil One, wanting to arouse fear, horripilation, & terror in her, wanting to make her fall from solitude, approached her & said, “Where do you want to reappear [be reborn], nun?”

“I don’t want to reappear anywhere, my friend.”

*[Mara:]*

“The devas of the Thirty-three,  
the Hours, the Contented,  
those who delight in creation,  
& those in control:  
direct your mind there  
and it will enjoy  
delight.”

*[Sister Upacala:]*

“The devas of the Thirty-three,  
the Hours, the Contented,  
those who delight in creation,  
& those in control:  
they are bound  
with the bonds of sensuality;  
they come again

under Mara's sway.  
The whole world is burning.  
The whole world is aflame.  
The whole world is blazing.  
The whole world is provoked.  
The Unprovoked, Unblazing  
—that people run-of-the-mill  
don't partake,  
where Mara's  
never been—  
that's where my heart  
truly delights."

Then Mara the Evil One—sad & dejected at realizing, "Upacala the nun knows me"—vanished right there.

—[\*SN 5:7\*](#)

§86. Then Ven. Sariputta ... went to the residence of the householder Anathapindika with Ven. Ananda as his companion. On arrival, he sat down on a prepared seat and said to the householder Anathapindika: "I hope you are getting better, householder. I hope you are comfortable. I hope that your pains are lessening and not increasing. I hope that there are signs of their lessening, and not of their increasing."

[Anathapindika:] "I am not getting better, venerable sir. I am not comfortable. My extreme pains are increasing, not lessening. There are signs of their increasing, and not of their lessening. Extreme forces slice through my head, just as if a strong man were slicing my head open with a sharp sword .... Extreme pains have arisen in my head, just as if a strong man were tightening a turban made of tough leather straps around my head .... Extreme forces carve up my stomach cavity, just as if a butcher or his apprentice were to carve up the stomach cavity of an ox .... There is an extreme burning in my body, just as if two strong men, grabbing a weaker man by the arms, were to roast and broil him over a pit of hot embers. I am not getting better, venerable sir. I am not comfortable. My extreme pains are increasing, not lessening. There are signs of their increasing, and not of their lessening."

[Ven. Sariputta:] “Then, householder, you should train yourself in this way: ‘I won’t cling to the eye; my consciousness will not be dependent on the eye.’ Thus you should train yourself. ‘I won’t cling to the ear ... nose ... tongue ... body; my consciousness will not be dependent on the body’ ... ‘I won’t cling to the intellect; my consciousness will not be dependent on the intellect’ ...

“‘I won’t cling to forms ... sounds ... smells ... tastes ... tactile sensations; my consciousness will not be dependent on tactile sensations’ ... ‘I won’t cling to ideas; my consciousness will not be dependent on ideas’ ...

“‘I won’t cling to eye-consciousness ... ear-consciousness ... nose-consciousness ... tongue-consciousness ... body-consciousness; my consciousness will not be dependent on body-consciousness’ ... ‘I won’t cling to intellect-consciousness; my consciousness will not be dependent on intellect-consciousness’ ...

“‘I won’t cling to contact at the eye ... contact at the ear ... contact at the nose ... contact at the tongue... contact at the body; my consciousness will not be dependent on contact at the body’ ... ‘I won’t cling to contact at the intellect; my consciousness will not be dependent on contact at the intellect’ ...

“‘I won’t cling to feeling born of contact at the eye ... feeling born of contact at the ear ... feeling born of contact at the nose ... feeling born of contact at the tongue ... feeling born of contact at the body; my consciousness will not be dependent on feeling born of contact at the body’ ... ‘I won’t cling to feeling born of contact at the intellect; my consciousness will not be dependent on feeling born of contact at the intellect’ ...

“‘I won’t cling to the earth property ... liquid property ... fire property ... wind property ... space property; my consciousness will not be dependent on the space property’ ... ‘I won’t cling to the consciousness property; my consciousness will not be dependent on the consciousness property’ ...

“‘I won’t cling to form ... feeling ... perception ... thought-fabrications; my consciousness will not be dependent on thought-fabrications’ ... ‘I won’t cling to consciousness; my consciousness will not be dependent on consciousness’ ...

“‘I won’t cling to the dimension of the infinitude of space ... the dimension of the infinitude of consciousness ... the dimension of nothingness; my consciousness will not be dependent on the dimension of

nothingness' ... 'I won't cling to the dimension of neither perception nor non-perception; my consciousness will not be dependent on the dimension of neither perception nor non-perception' ...

"I won't cling to this world; my consciousness will not be dependent on this world ... I won't cling to the world beyond; my consciousness will not be dependent on the world beyond' ...

"I won't cling to what is seen, heard, sensed, cognized, attained, sought after, pondered by the intellect; my consciousness will not be dependent on that.' Thus you should train yourself."

When this was said, the householder Anathapindika wept and shed tears. Ven. Ananda said to him, "Are you sinking, householder? Are you foundering?"

"No, venerable sir. I'm not sinking, nor am I foundering. It's just that for a long time I have attended to the Teacher, and to the monks who inspire my heart, but never before have I heard this sort of talk on the Dhamma."

"This sort of talk on the Dhamma, householder, is not given to lay people clad in white. This sort of talk on the Dhamma is given to those gone forth."

"In that case, Ven. Sariputta, please let this sort of talk on the Dhamma be given to lay people clad in white. There are clansmen with little dust in their eyes who are wasting away through not hearing [this] Dhamma. There will be those who will understand it."

Then Ven. Sariputta and Ven. Ananda, having given this instruction to the householder Anathapindika, got up from their seats and left. Then, not long after they left, the householder Anathapindika died and reappeared in the Tusita [Contented] heaven.

—[MN 143](#)

*§87. Mogharaja:*

How does one view the world  
so as not to be seen  
by Death's king?

*The Buddha:*

View the world, Mogharaja,  
as empty—

always mindful  
to have removed any view  
about self.  
This way one is above & beyond death.  
This is how one views the world  
so as not to be seen  
by Death's king.

—[\*Sn 5:15\*](#)

## SEPARATION

§88. *[Note: This discourse gives the Buddha's recommendations for how to deal with grief. The passage discussing eulogies, chants, etc., is a reference to funeral customs designed to channel the feelings of the bereaved in a productive direction. As the Buddha notes, as long as these seem to be serving a purpose, engage in them. Once they no longer seem to be serving a purpose, and one finds that one is indulging in grief, one should return to the important duties of one's life.]*

Once the Blessed One was staying near Savatthi in Jeta's Grove, Anathapindika's monastery. Then King Pasenadi of Kosala went to the Blessed One and, on arrival, having bowed down, sat to one side. Now, at that time Queen Mallika died. Then a certain man went to the king and whispered in his ear: "Your majesty, Queen Mallika has died." When this was said, King Pasenadi of Kosala sat there miserable, sick at heart, his shoulders drooping, his face down, brooding, at a loss for words. Then the Blessed One saw the king sitting there miserable, sick at heart ... at a loss for words, and so said to him, "There are these five things, great king, that cannot be gotten by a contemplative, a brahman, a deva, a Mara, a Brahma, or anyone at all in the world. Which five?

"May what is subject to aging not age.' This is something that cannot be gotten by a contemplative, a brahman, a deva, a Mara, a Brahma, or anyone at all in the world.

"May what is subject to illness not grow ill.' This is something that cannot be gotten by a contemplative, a brahman, a deva, a Mara, a Brahma, or anyone at all in the world.

“‘May what is subject to death not die.’ This is something that cannot be gotten by a contemplative, a brahman, a deva, a Mara, a Brahma, or anyone at all in the world.

“‘May what is subject to ending not end.’ This is something that cannot be gotten by a contemplative, a brahman, a deva, a Mara, a Brahma, or anyone at all in the world.

“‘May what is subject to destruction not be destroyed.’ This is something that cannot be gotten by a contemplative, a brahman, a deva, a Mara, a Brahma, or anyone at all in the world.

“Now, it happens to an uninstructed run-of-the-mill person that something that is subject to aging ages. With the aging of what is subject to aging, he doesn’t reflect: ‘It doesn’t happen only to me that what is subject to aging will age. To the extent that there are beings—past & future, passing away & re-arising—it happens to all of them that what is subject to aging will age. And if, with the aging of what is subject to aging, I were to sorrow, grieve, lament, beat my breast, & become distraught, food would not agree with me, my body would become unattractive, my affairs would go untended, my enemies would be gratified and my friends unhappy.’ So, with the aging of what is subject to aging, he sorrows, grieves, laments, beats his breast, & becomes distraught. This is called an uninstructed run-of-the-mill person pierced by the poisoned arrow of sorrow, tormenting himself.

“Furthermore, it happens to an uninstructed run-of-the-mill person that something that is subject to illness grows ill ... that something subject to death dies ... that something subject to ending ends ... that something subject to destruction is destroyed. With the destruction of what is subject to destruction, he doesn’t reflect: ‘It doesn’t happen only to me that what is subject to destruction will be destroyed. To the extent that there are beings—past & future, passing away & re-arising—it happens to all of them that what is subject to destruction will be destroyed. And if, with the destruction of what is subject to destruction, I were to sorrow, grieve, lament, beat my breast, & become distraught, food would not agree with me, my body would become unattractive, my affairs would go untended, my enemies would be gratified and my friends unhappy.’ So, with the destruction of what is subject to destruction, he sorrows, grieves, laments, beats his breast,

& becomes distraught. This is called an uninstructed run-of-the-mill person pierced by the poisoned arrow of sorrow, tormenting himself.

“Now, it happens to an instructed disciple of the noble ones that something that is subject to aging ages. With the aging of what is subject to aging, he reflects: ‘It doesn’t happen only to me that what is subject to aging will age. To the extent that there are beings—past & future, passing away & re-arising—it happens to all of them that what is subject to aging will age. And if, with the aging of what is subject to aging, I were to sorrow, grieve, lament, beat my breast, & become distraught, food would not agree with me, my body would become unattractive, my affairs would go untended, my enemies would be gratified and my friends unhappy.’ So, with the aging of what is subject to aging, he doesn’t sorrow, grieve, or lament, doesn’t beat his breast or become distraught. This is called an instructed disciple of the noble ones who has pulled out the poisoned arrow of sorrow pierced with which the uninstructed run-of-the-mill person torments himself. Sorrowless, arrowless, the disciple of the noble ones is totally unbound right within himself.

“Furthermore, it happens to an instructed disciple of the noble ones that something that is subject to illness grows ill ... that something subject to death dies ... that something subject to ending ends ... that something subject to destruction is destroyed. With the destruction of what is subject to destruction, he reflects: ‘It doesn’t happen only to me that what is subject to destruction will be destroyed. To the extent that there are beings—past & future, passing away & re-arising—it happens to all of them that what is subject to destruction will be destroyed. And if, with the destruction of what is subject to destruction, I were to sorrow, grieve, lament, beat my breast, & become distraught, food would not agree with me, my body would become unattractive, my affairs would go untended, my enemies would be gratified and my friends unhappy.’ So, with the destruction of what is subject to destruction, he doesn’t sorrow, grieve, or lament, doesn’t beat his breast or become distraught. This is called an instructed disciple of the noble ones who has pulled out the poisoned arrow of sorrow pierced with which the uninstructed run-of-the-mill person torments himself. Sorrowless, arrowless, the disciple of the noble ones is totally unbound right within himself.

“These are the five things, great king, that cannot be gotten by a contemplative, a brahman, a deva, a Mara, a Brahma, or anyone at all in the world.”

Not by sorrowing,  
not by lamenting,  
is any aim accomplished here,  
not even a bit.  
Knowing you to be sorrowing & in pain,  
your enemies are gratified.  
But when a sage  
with a sense for determining what is his aim  
doesn't waver in the face of misfortune,  
his enemies are pained,  
seeing his face unchanged, as of old.  
Where & however an aim is accomplished  
through  
eulogies, chants, good sayings,  
donations, & family customs,  
follow them diligently there & that way.  
But if you discern that your own aim  
or that of others is not gained in this way,  
acquiesce [to the nature of things]  
unsorrowing, with the thought:  
'What important work am I doing now?'

—[\*AN 5:49\*](#)

§89. [*Sister Ubbiri:*]  
“Jiva, my daughter,  
you cry in the woods.  
Come to your senses, Ubbiri.  
84,000  
all named Jiva  
have been burned in that charnel ground.  
For which of them do you grieve?”  
Pulling out

—completely out—  
the arrow so hard to see,  
embedded in my heart,  
he expelled from me  
—overcome with grief—  
the grief  
over my daughter.

Today—with arrow removed,  
without hunger, entirely  
unbound—  
to the Buddha, Dhamma, & Sangha I go,  
for refuge to  
the Sage.

—[\*Thig 3:5\*](#)

§90. [*Pañcasata Patacara:*]

“You don’t know  
the path  
of his coming or going,  
that being who has come  
from where?—  
the one you lament as ‘my son.’  
But when you know  
the path  
of his coming or going,  
you don’t grieve after him,  
for that is the nature  
of beings.  
Unasked,  
he came from there.  
Without permission,  
he went from here—  
coming from where?  
having stayed a few days.  
And coming one way from here,  
he goes yet another

from there.  
Dying in the human form,  
he will go wandering on.  
As he came, so he has gone—  
so what is there  
to lament?"

Pulling out  
—completely out—  
the arrow so hard to see,  
embedded in my heart,  
he expelled from me  
—overcome with grief—  
the grief  
over my son.

Today—with arrow removed,  
without hunger, entirely  
unbound—  
to the Buddha, Dhamma, & Sangha I go,  
for refuge to  
the Sage.

—*Thig 6:1*

§91. Now at that time a dear and beloved grandson of Visakha, Migara's mother, had died. So Visakha, Migara's mother—her clothes wet, her hair wet—went to the Blessed One in the middle of the day and, on arrival, having bowed down to him, sat to one side. As she was sitting there the Blessed One said to her: "Why have you come here, Visakha—your clothes wet, your hair wet—in the middle of the day?"

When this was said, she said to the Blessed One, "My dear and beloved grandson has died. This is why I have come here—my clothes wet, my hair wet—in the middle of the day."

"Visakha, would you like to have as many children and grandchildren as there are people in Savatthi?"

“Yes, lord, I would like to have as many children and grandchildren as there are people in Savatthi.”

“But how many people in Savatthi die in the course of a day?”

“Sometimes ten people die in Savatthi in the course of a day, sometimes nine ... eight ... seven ... six ... five ... four ... three ... two ... Sometimes one person dies in Savatthi in the course of a day. Savatthi is never free from people dying.”

“So what do you think, Visakha: Would you ever be free from wet clothes and wet hair?”

“No, lord. Enough of my having as many children and grandchildren as there are people in Savatthi.”

“Visakha, those who have a hundred dear ones have a hundred sufferings. Those who have ninety dear ones have ninety sufferings. Those who have eighty ... seventy ... sixty ... fifty ... forty ... thirty ... twenty ... ten ... nine ... eight ... seven ... six ... five ... four ... three ... two ... Those who have one dear one have one suffering. For those with no dear ones, there are no sufferings. They are free from sorrow, free from stain, free from lamentation, I tell you.”

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

The sorrows, lamentations,  
the many kinds of suffering in the world,  
exist dependent on something dear.  
They don't exist  
when there's nothing dear.  
And thus blissful & sorrowless  
are those for whom nothing  
in the world is anywhere dear.  
So one who aspires  
to be stainless & sorrowless  
shouldn't make anything dear  
in the world  
anywhere.

—Ud 8:8

§92. On one occasion the Blessed One was staying near Savatthi in Jetā's Grove, Anāthapīṇḍikā's monastery. Now at that time Ven. Sāriputta was staying among the Magadhans in Nālaka village—diseased, in pain, severely ill. Cunda the novice was his attendant. Then, because of that illness, Ven. Sāriputta attained total unbinding.

So Cunda the novice, taking Ven. Sāriputta's bowl & robes, went to Ven. Ananda in Jetā's Grove, Anāthapīṇḍikā's monastery, near Savatthi, and on arrival, having bowed down to him, sat to one side. As he was sitting there he said to Ven. Ananda: "Venerable sir, Ven. Sāriputta has attained total unbinding. Here are his bowl & robes."

"Cunda, my friend, there is warrant here for seeing the Blessed One. Come, let's go to the Blessed One and report this matter to him."

"Yes, venerable sir," Cunda the novice replied.

So Ven. Ananda & Cunda the novice went to the Blessed One and, on arrival, having bowed down to him, sat to one side. As they were sitting there, Ven. Ananda said to him, "Lord, just now Cunda the novice said to me, 'Venerable sir, Ven. Sāriputta has attained total unbinding. Here are his bowl & robes.' It was as if my body were drugged, I lost my bearings, things weren't clear to me, on hearing that Ven. Sāriputta had attained total unbinding."

"But, Ananda, when he attained total unbinding, did Sāriputta take the aggregate of virtue along with him? Did he take the aggregate of concentration ... discernment ... release ... the aggregate of knowledge & vision of release along with him?"

"No, lord, when he attained total unbinding, Ven. Sāriputta didn't take the aggregate of virtue ... concentration ... discernment ... release ... the aggregate of knowledge & vision of release along with him. It's just that he was my instructor & counselor, one who exhorted, urged, roused, & encouraged me. He was tireless in teaching the Dhamma, a help to his companions in the holy life. We miss the nourishment of his Dhamma, the wealth of his Dhamma, his help in the Dhamma."

"But, Ananda, haven't I already taught you the state of growing different with regard to all things dear & appealing, the state of becoming separate, the state of becoming otherwise? What else is there to expect? It's impossible that one could forbid anything born, existent, fabricated, & subject to disintegration from disintegrating."

“Just as if the largest limb were to fall off of a great tree composed of heartwood, standing firm; in the same way, Sariputta has attained total unbinding from this great community of monks composed of heartwood, standing firm. What else is there to expect? It’s impossible that one could forbid anything born, existent, fabricated, & subject to disintegration from disintegrating.

“Therefore, Ananda, each of you should remain with your self as an island, your self as your refuge, without anything else as a refuge. Remain with the Dhamma as an island, the Dhamma as your refuge, without anything else as a refuge. And how does a monk remain with his self as an island, his self as his refuge, without anything else as a refuge? How does he remain with the Dhamma as an island, the Dhamma as his refuge, without anything else as a refuge? There is the case where a monk remains focused on the body in & of itself—ardent, alert, & mindful—subduing greed & distress with reference to the world. He remains focused on feelings ... mind ... mental qualities in & of themselves—ardent, alert, & mindful—subduing greed & distress with reference to the world. This is how a monk remains with his self as an island, his self as his refuge, without anything else as a refuge, with the Dhamma as an island, the Dhamma as his refuge, without anything else as a refuge. For those who—now or after I am gone—remain with their self as an island, their self as their refuge, without anything else as a refuge, with the Dhamma as an island, the Dhamma as their refuge, without anything else as a refuge, they will be the highest of the monks who desire training.”

—[SN 47:13](#)

## Teaching by Example

### AGING

§93. [*Sister Sona:*]

Ten children I bore  
from this physical heap.  
Then weak from that, aged,  
I went to a nun.  
She taught me the Dhamma:  
aggregates, sense spheres, & elements.  
Hearing the Dhamma,  
I cut off my hair and ordained.  
Having purified the divine eye  
while still a probationer,  
I know my previous lives,  
where I lived in the past.  
I develop the theme-less meditation,  
well-focused singleness.  
I gain the liberation of immediacy—  
from lack of clinging, unbound.  
The five aggregates, comprehended,  
stand like a tree with its root cut through.  
I spit on old age.  
There is now no further becoming.

—*Thig 5:8*

§94. Then Ven. Maha Kassapa went to the Blessed One and, on arrival, having bowed down to him, sat to one side. As he was sitting there the Blessed One said to him, “You are now old, Kassapa. Your robes made of cast-off hemp rags are heavy for you. So wear robes donated by householders, eat invitational meals, and live close by me.”

“Lord, for a long time I have lived in the wilderness and have extolled living in the wilderness. I have been an alms-goer and have extolled being

an alms-goer. I have worn cast-off rags and have extolled wearing cast-off rags. I have worn only one set of the triple robe and have extolled wearing only one set of the triple robe. I have been modest and have extolled being modest. I have been content and have extolled being content. I have been reclusive and have extolled being reclusive. I have been unentangled and have extolled being unentangled. I have kept my persistence aroused and have extolled having persistence aroused."

"But, Kassapa, what compelling reason do you see that you for a long time have lived in the wilderness and have extolled living in the wilderness ... that you have kept your persistence aroused and have extolled having persistence aroused?"

"Lord, I see two compelling reasons that for a long time I have lived in the wilderness and have extolled living in the wilderness ... that I have kept my persistence aroused and have extolled having persistence aroused: seeing a pleasant abiding for myself in the here & now, and feeling sympathy for later generations: 'Perhaps later generations will take it as an example: "It seems that the disciples of the Awakened One and those who awakened after him lived for a long time in the wilderness and extolled living in the wilderness; were alms-goers and extolled being alms-goers; wore cast-off rags and extolled wearing cast-off rags; wore only one set of the triple robe and extolled wearing only one set of the triple robe; were modest and extolled being modest; were content and extolled being content; were reclusive and extolled being reclusive; were unentangled and extolled being unentangled; kept their persistence aroused and extolled having persistence aroused.'"

"Good, Kassapa. Very good. It seems that you are one who practices for the happiness of many, out of compassion for the world, for the welfare, benefit, & happiness of beings human & divine. So continue wearing your robes of cast-off hemp cloth, go for alms, and live in the wilderness."

—[SN 16:5](#)

§95. Then, when the Blessed One had entered the Rains Retreat, there arose a severe illness within him. Sharp & deadly were the pains, but he bore them mindfully, alert, & unperturbed. The thought occurred to him, "It would not be proper for me to enter total unbinding without addressing my attendants & without taking leave of the community of monks. Why don't

I, suppressing this illness with persistence, remain resolved on the fabrication of life?" So he suppressed the illness with persistence & remained resolved on the fabrication of life. His illness abated.

Then he recovered from the illness. Soon after his recovery he came out of his dwelling & sat down in the shade of the building, on a seat prepared for him. Then Ven. Ananda approached him and, on arrival, having bowed down to him, sat to one side. As he was sitting there he said to the Blessed One, "What a happy sight to see the Blessed One in comfort! What a happy sight to see the Blessed One at ease! Because of the Blessed One's sickness my own body felt as if it were drugged. I lost my bearings. Things were unclear to me. Yet I still took a measure of comfort in the thought that the Blessed One would not enter total unbinding as long as he hadn't given at least some pronouncement concerning the community of monks."

"What more does the community of monks want from me, Ananda? I have taught the Dhamma without an inner or an outer version. The Tathagata has no closed fist with regard to teachings. Whoever has the thought, 'I will rule the community of monks,' or 'The community of monks is dedicated to me,' he should give some pronouncement concerning the community of monks. But the Tathagata has no such thoughts. So why should he give some pronouncement concerning the community of monks?

"I am old now, Ananda, & aged. My years have turned eighty. Just as an old cart is kept going with the help of bamboo strips, it seems to me as if the Tathagata's body is kept going with the help of bamboo strips. The only time the Tathagata's body feels at ease is when, not attending to any theme at all, and with the cessation of certain feelings, he enters & remains in the theme-less concentration of awareness. Therefore each of you should remain with your self as an island, your self as your refuge, without anything else as a refuge. Remain with the Dhamma as an island, the Dhamma as your refuge, without anything else as a refuge.

"And how does a monk remain with his self as an island, his self as his refuge, without anything else as a refuge? How does he remain with the Dhamma as an island, the Dhamma as his refuge, without anything else as a refuge? There is the case where a monk remains focused on the body in & of itself—ardent, alert, & mindful—subduing greed & distress with reference to the world. He remains focused on feelings ... mind ... mental qualities in & of themselves—ardent, alert, & mindful—subduing greed &

distress with reference to the world. This is how a monk remains with his self as an island, his self as his refuge, without anything else as a refuge, with the Dhamma as an island, the Dhamma as his refuge, without anything else as a refuge. For those who—now or after I am gone—remain with their self as an island ... the Dhamma as their refuge, without anything else as a refuge, they will be the highest of the monks who desire training.”

—[\*DN 16\*](#)

## ILLNESS

§96. [*Ven. Cakkhupala:*]

I’m blind,  
my eyes are destroyed.  
I’ve stumbled  
on a wilderness track.  
Even  
if I must crawl,  
I’ll go on,  
but not with an evil companion.

—[\*Thag 1:95\*](#)

§97. I have heard that on one occasion Ven. Anuruddha was staying near Savatthi in the Dark Forest—diseased, in pain, severely ill. Then a large number of monks went to Ven. Anuruddha and on arrival said to him, “What (mental) dwelling are you dwelling in so that the pains that have arisen in the body do not invade or remain in the mind?”

“When I dwell with my mind well-established in the four frames of reference, the pains that have arisen in the body do not invade or remain in the mind. Which four? There is the case where I remain focused on the body in & of itself—ardent, alert, & mindful—subduing greed & distress with reference to the world. I remain focused on feelings in & of themselves ... mind in & of itself ... mental qualities in & of themselves—ardent, alert, & mindful—subduing greed & distress with reference to the world. When I dwell with my mind well-established in these four frames of

reference, the pains that have arisen in the body do not invade or remain in the mind.”

—[SN 52:10](#)

§98. [Note: Cullavagga VII tells of how Devadatta, the Buddha’s cousin, tried unsuccessfully in various ways to wrest leadership of the Sangha from the Buddha. In Cv VII.3.9, he tries to kill the Buddha by hurling a rock down a mountainside. The rock is diverted and shattered, but a splinter of the rock pierces the Buddha’s foot, drawing blood. According to the Commentary, the following two passages describe the Buddha’s reaction to this attempt on his life.]

I have heard that on one occasion the Blessed One was staying near Rajagaha at the Maddakucchi Deer Reserve. Now at that time his foot had been pierced by a stone sliver. Excruciating were the bodily feelings that developed within him—painful, fierce, sharp, wracking, repellent, disagreeable—but he endured them mindful, alert, & unperturbed. Having had his outer robe folded in four and laid out, he lay down on his right side in the lion’s posture, with one foot placed on top of the other, mindful & alert.

Then 700 devatas from the Satullapa retinue, in the far extreme of the night, their extreme radiance lighting up the entirety of Maddakucchi, went to the Blessed One. On arrival, having bowed down to him, they stood to one side.

As she was standing there, one of the devatas exclaimed in the Blessed One’s presence: “What a naga is Gotama the contemplative! And like a naga, when bodily feelings have arisen—painful, fierce, sharp, wracking, repellent, disagreeable—he endures them mindful, alert, & unperturbed!”

Then another devata exclaimed in the Blessed One’s presence: “What a lion is Gotama the contemplative! And like a lion, when bodily feelings have arisen—painful, fierce, sharp, wracking, repellent, disagreeable—he endures them mindful, alert, & unperturbed!”

Then another devata exclaimed in the Blessed One’s presence: “What a thoroughbred is Gotama the contemplative! And like a thoroughbred, when bodily feelings have arisen—painful, fierce, sharp, wracking, repellent, disagreeable—he endures them mindful, alert, & unperturbed!”

Then another devata exclaimed in the Blessed One's presence: "What a chief bull of the herd is Gotama the contemplative! And like a chief bull of the herd, when bodily feelings have arisen—painful, fierce, sharp, wracking, repellent, disagreeable—he endures them mindful, alert, & unperturbed!"

Then another devata exclaimed in the Blessed One's presence: "What a strong burden-carrier is Gotama the contemplative! And like a strong burden-carrier, when bodily feelings have arisen—painful, fierce, sharp, wracking, repellent, disagreeable—he endures them mindful, alert, & unperturbed!"

Then another devata exclaimed in the Blessed One's presence: "What a tamed one is Gotama the contemplative! And like a tamed one, when bodily feelings have arisen—painful, fierce, sharp, wracking, repellent, disagreeable—he endures them mindful, alert, & unperturbed!"

Then another devata exclaimed in the Blessed One's presence: "See a concentration well-developed, a mind well-released—neither pressed down nor forced back, nor with mental fabrication kept blocked or suppressed. Whoever would think that such a naga of a man, lion of a man, thoroughbred of a man, chief bull of a man, strong burden-carrier of a man, such a tamed man should be violated: What else is that if not blindness?"

Five-Veda Brahmans,  
living austere  
for 100 years:  
Their minds  
are not rightly released.  
Lowly by nature,  
they've not gone beyond.

Overpowered by craving,  
bound up in precepts & practices,  
performing wretched austerities  
for 100 years:  
Their minds  
are not rightly released.  
Lowly by nature,  
they've not gone beyond.

For one fond of conceit,  
there's no taming;  
for one uncentered,  
no sagacity.

Though alone in the wilderness,  
if one lives heedlessly,  
one won't cross over, beyond Mara's sway.  
But having abandoned conceit,  
well-centered within,  
with right awareness  
everywhere  
fully released,  
alone in the wilderness,  
heedfully living,  
one will cross over, beyond Mara's sway.

—SN 1:38

§99. I have heard that on one occasion the Blessed One was staying near Rajagaha at the Maddakucchi Deer Reserve. Now at that time his foot had been pierced by a stone sliver. Excruciating were the bodily feelings that developed within him—painful, fierce, sharp, wracking, repellent, disagreeable—but he endured them mindful, alert, & unperturbed. Having had his outer robe folded in four and laid out, he lay down on his right side in the lion's posture, with one foot placed on top of the other, mindful & alert.

Then Mara the Evil One went to the Blessed One and recited this verse in his presence:

"Are you lying there moping,  
or is it drunk on poetry?  
Are your goals so very few?  
All alone in a secluded lodging,  
what is this dreamer, this sleepy-face?"

[*The Buddha:*]

"I lie here,

not moping,  
nor drunk on poetry.  
Goal-attained am I,  
my sorrow all gone.  
All alone in a secluded lodging,  
I lie down with compassion  
for all beings.  
Even those pierced in the chest  
with an arrow,  
their hearts throbbing  
in short, short beats:  
Even they with their arrows  
are able to sleep.

So why shouldn't I sleep  
with my arrow removed?

I'm not awake with worry,  
nor afraid to sleep.  
Days & nights  
don't oppress me.  
I see no threat of decline  
from anywhere in the world.  
That's why I sleep  
with compassion  
for all beings."

Then Mara the Evil One—sad & dejected at realizing, "The Blessed One knows me; the One Well-Gone knows me"—vanished right there.

—[SN 4:13](#)

## DEATH

§100. On that occasion Citta the householder was diseased, in pain, severely ill. Then a large number of garden devas, forest devas, tree devas, and devas inhabiting herbs, grasses, & forest giants assembled and said to him: "Make a wish, householder: 'In the future, may I become a king, a wheel-turning monarch!'"

When this was said, Citta the householder said to the garden devas, forest devas, tree devas, and devas inhabiting herbs, grasses, & forest giants: "Even that is inconstant; even that is impermanent; one must abandon even that when one passes on."

When this was said, Citta the householder's friends & companions, relatives and kinsmen, said to him: "Steady your mindfulness, master. Don't ramble."

"What did I say that you say to me: 'Steady your mindfulness, master. Don't ramble'?"

"You said: 'Even that is inconstant; even that is impermanent; one must abandon even that when one passes on.'"

"That was because garden devas, forest devas, tree devas, and devas inhabiting herbs, grasses, & forest giants have assembled and said to me: 'Make a wish, householder: "In the future, may I become a king, a wheel-turning monarch!"' And I said to them: 'Even that is inconstant; even that is impermanent; one must abandon even that when one passes on.'"

"But what compelling reason do those garden devas, forest devas, tree devas, and devas inhabiting herbs, grasses, & forest giants see, master, that they say to you, 'Make a wish, householder: "In the future, may I become a king, a wheel-turning monarch!"'?"

"It occurs to them: 'This Citta the householder is virtuous, of admirable character. If he should wish: "In the future, may I become a king, a wheel-turning monarch!"—then, as he is virtuous, this wish of his would succeed because of the purity of his virtue. A righteous one, he will wield righteous power.' Seeing this compelling reason, they assembled and said: 'Make a wish, householder: "In the future, may I become a king, a wheel-turning monarch!"' And I said to them: 'Even that is inconstant; even that is impermanent; one must abandon even that when one passes on.'"

"Then, master, instruct us, too."

"Then you should train yourselves: 'We will be endowed with verified confidence in the Buddha: "Indeed, the Blessed One [the Buddha] is worthy & rightly self-awakened, consummate in knowledge & conduct, well-gone, an expert with regard to the cosmos, unexcelled as a trainer for those people fit to be tamed, the Teacher of divine & human beings, awakened, blessed.'"

“We will be endowed with verified confidence in the Dhamma: “The Dhamma is well-expounded by the Blessed One, to be seen here & now, timeless, inviting verification, pertinent, to be realized by the wise for themselves.”

“We will be possessed of verified confidence in the Sangha: “The Sangha of the Blessed One’s disciples who have practiced well ... who have practiced straightforwardly ... who have practiced methodically ... who have practiced masterfully—in other words, the four types of noble disciples when taken as pairs, the eight when taken as individual types—they are the Sangha of the Blessed One’s disciples: worthy of gifts, worthy of hospitality, worthy of offerings, worthy of respect, the incomparable field of merit for the world.”

“Whatever there may be in our family that can be given away, all that will be shared unstintingly with virtuous ones who are of admirable character.’ That’s how you should train yourselves.”

Then, having enjoined his friends & colleagues, his relatives & kinsmen, to place confidence in the Buddha, Dhamma, & Sangha; having exhorted them to undertake generosity, Citta the householder passed away.

—[\*SN 41:10\*](#)

*§101 . [A bandit chief:]*

“Those who  
for the sake of sacrifice  
for the sake of wealth  
we have killed in the past,  
against their will  
have trembled & babbled  
from fear.

But you—  
you show no fear;  
your complexion brightens.  
Why don’t you lament  
in the face of what is greatly to be feared?”

*[Ven. Adhimutta:]*

“There are no painful mental states, chieftain,

in one without longing.  
In one whose fetters are ended,  
all fears are overcome.  
With the ending of (craving)  
the guide to becoming,  
when phenomena are seen  
as they have come to be,  
then just as in the laying down of a burden,  
there is no fear in death.  
I have lived well the holy life,  
well-developed the path.  
Death holds no fear for me.  
It's like the end of a disease.  
I have lived well the holy life,  
well-developed the path.  
I have seen states of becoming  
as devoid of allure,  
like poison spit out  
after it's drunk.  
One gone to the far shore  
without clinging  
without fermentation  
his task completed,  
welcomes the ending of life,  
as if freed from a place of execution.  
Having attained the supreme Rightness,  
unconcerned with all the world,  
as if released from a burning house,  
he does not sorrow at death.  
Whatever is compounded,  
wherever a state of becoming is obtained,  
all that has no one in charge:  
so says the Great Seer.  
Whoever discerns this,  
as taught by the Awakened One,  
would no more grasp hold of any state of becoming  
than he would a hot iron ball.

I have no "I was,"  
no "I will be."  
Processes will simply go out of existence.  
What's to lament there in that?  
For one who sees, as it has come to be,  
the pure arising of phenomena,  
the pure seriality of processes,  
there's no fear.  
When seeing the world with discernment  
as on a par with grass & twigs,  
finding no "mine-ness,"  
thinking, "There is nothing of mine,"  
he feels no sorrow.  
I am dissatisfied with this carcass,  
unconcerned with becoming.  
This body will break up  
and there will not be another.  
Do as you like with this carcass.  
From that I will feel  
neither hatred nor love."

Hearing these astounding, hair-raising words,  
the young men threw down their weapons  
and said:

"What have you done, sir,  
or who have you taken as mentor?  
Because of whose teachings  
is this lack of sorrow acquired?"

*[Ven. Adhimutta:]*

"The all-knowing,  
all-seeing conqueror:  
He is my mentor.  
Greatly compassionate teacher,  
all the world's healer,  
this doctrine is his,  
unexcelled, leading to ending.

Because of his teachings  
is this lack of sorrow acquired.”  
The bandits, hearing the good words of the seer,  
threw down their swords & their weapons.  
Some relinquished their life of crime,  
some chose the going forth.  
Having gone forth in the teachings  
of the one well-gone,  
developing the powers & factors of awakening,  
wise, happy,  
exultant in mind,  
their faculties ripened,  
they touched uncompounded unbinding.

—*Thag 16:1*

§102. Once Ven. Sariputta and Ven. Upasena were staying near Rajagaha in the Cool Forest, at Snakeshood Grotto. Then it so happened that a snake fell on Ven. Upasena’s body [and bit him]. Then Ven. Upasena said to the monks, “Quick, friends, lift this body of mine onto a couch and carry it outside before it is scattered like a fistful of chaff!”

When this was said, Ven. Sariputta said to Ven. Upasena, “But we don’t see any alteration in your body or change in your faculties.”

Then Ven. Upasena said, “Quick, friends, lift this body of mine onto a couch and carry it outside before it is scattered like a fistful of chaff! Friend Sariputta, in anyone who had the thought, ‘I am the eye’ or ‘The eye is mine,’ ‘I am the ear’ or ‘The ear is mine,’ ‘I am the nose’ or ‘The nose is mine,’ ‘I am the tongue’ or ‘The tongue is mine,’ ‘I am the body’ or ‘The body is mine,’ ‘I am the intellect’ or ‘The intellect is mine’: in him there would be an alteration in his body or a change in his faculties. But as for me, the thought does not occur to me that ‘I am the eye’ or ‘The eye is mine,’ .... ‘I am the tongue’ or ‘The tongue is mine,’ .... ‘I am the intellect’ or ‘The intellect is mine.’ So what alteration should there be in my body, what change should there be in my faculties?”

Now, Ven. Upasena’s I-making, my-making, & tendencies to conceits had already been well rooted out for a long time, which is why the thought did not occur to him that “I am the eye” or “The eye is mine,” .... “I am the

tongue” or “The tongue is mine,” .... “I am the intellect” or “The intellect is mine.”

Then the monks lifted Ven. Upasena’s body on a couch and carried it outside. And Ven. Upasena’s body was scattered right there like a fistful of chaff.

—[\*SN 35:69\*](#)

*§103. Ven. Revata’s Farewell*

Since I went forth  
from home into homelessness,  
I haven’t known  
an ignoble, aversive resolve.  
“May these beings  
be destroyed,  
be slaughtered,  
fall into pain”—  
I’ve not known this resolve  
in this long, long time.  
But I have known good will,  
unlimited,  
fully developed,  
nurtured step after step,  
as taught by the One  
Awake:  
to all, a friend;  
to all, a comrade;  
for all beings, sympathetic.  
And I develop a mind of good will,  
delighting in non-malevolence—always.  
Unvanquished, unshaken,  
I gladden the mind.  
I develop the sublime abiding,  
not frequented by  
the lowly.  
Attaining no-thinking,  
the disciple of the Rightly  
Self-awakened One

is endowed with noble silence  
straightaway.

As a mountain of rock  
is unmoving,  
firmly established,  
so a monk, with the ending of delusion,  
like a mountain, doesn't quake.

To a person without blemish,  
constantly in search of what's pure,  
a hair-tip of evil  
seems a storm cloud.

As a frontier fortress is guarded  
within & without,  
you should safeguard yourselves.  
Don't let the moment  
pass you by.

I don't delight in death,  
don't delight in living.  
I await my time  
like a worker his wage.  
I don't delight in death,  
don't delight in living.  
I await my time  
mindful, alert.  
The Teacher has been served by me;  
the Awakened One's bidding,  
done;  
the heavy load, laid down;  
the guide to becoming, uprooted.  
And the goal for which I went forth  
from home life into homelessness  
I've reached:  
the end

of all fetters.

Attain completion through heedfulness:  
that is my message.  
So then, I'm about to be  
unbound. I'm  
released  
everywhere.

—*Thag 14:1*

§104. I have heard that on one occasion the Blessed One was staying near Savatthi in Jeta's Grove, Anathapindika's monastery. Then Ven. Dabba Mallaputta 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: "Now is the time for my total unbinding, O One-Well-Gone!"

"Then do, Dabba, what you think it is now time to do."

Then Ven. Dabba Mallaputta, rising from his seat, bowed down to the Blessed One and, circling him on the right, rose up into the air and sat cross-legged in the sky, in space. Entering the fire property and emerging from it, he was totally unbound. Now, when Dabba Mallaputta rose up into the air and, sitting cross-legged in the sky, in space, entered the fire property and then emerged from it and was totally unbound, his body burned and was consumed so that neither ashes nor soot could be discerned. Just as when ghee or oil is burned and consumed, neither ashes nor soot can be discerned, in the same way, when Dabba Mallaputta rose up into the air and, sitting cross-legged in the sky, in space, entered the fire property and then emerged from it and was totally unbound, his body burned and was consumed so that neither ashes nor soot could be discerned.

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

The body broke up,  
perception ceased,  
feelings went cold  
—all—

fabrications were stilled,  
consciousness has come to an end.

—Ud 8:9

§105. I have heard that on one occasion the Blessed One was staying near Savatthi in Jeta's Grove, Anathapindika's monastery. There he addressed the monks, "Monks!"

"Yes, lord," the monks replied.

The Blessed One said, "When Dabba Mallaputta rose up into the air and, sitting cross-legged in the sky, in space, entered the fire property and then emerged from it and was totally unbound, his body burned and was consumed so that neither ashes nor soot could be discerned. Just as when ghee or oil is burned and consumed, neither ashes nor soot can be discerned, in the same way, when Dabba Mallaputta rose up into the air and, sitting cross-legged in the sky, in space, entered the fire property and then emerged from it and was totally unbound, his body burned and was consumed so that neither ashes nor soot could be discerned."

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

Just as the destination of a glowing fire  
struck with a [blacksmith's] iron hammer,  
gradually growing calm,  
isn't known:

Even so, there's no destination to describe  
for those rightly released  
—having crossed over the flood  
of sensuality's bond—  
for those who have attained

unwavering bliss.

—Ud 8:10

§106. Then the Blessed One went with a large number of monks to the Black Rock on the slope of Isigili. From afar he saw Ven. Vakkali lying dead

on a couch. Now at that time a smokiness, a darkness was moving to the east, moved to the west, moved to the north, the south, above, below, moved to the intermediate directions. The Blessed One said, "Monks, do you see that smokiness, that darkness ... ?"

"Yes, Lord."

"That is Mara, the Evil One. He is searching for the consciousness of Vakkali the clansman: 'Where is the consciousness of Vakkali the clansman established?' But, monks, it's through unestablished consciousness that Vakkali the clansman has attained total unbinding."

— [SN 22:87](#)

## SEPARATION

§107. Ven. Sariputta said, "Friends, just now as I was withdrawn in seclusion, this train of thought arose to my awareness: 'Is there anything in the world with whose change or alteration there would arise within me sorrow, lamentation, pain, distress, & despair?' Then the thought occurred to me: 'There is nothing in the world with whose change or alteration there would arise within me sorrow, lamentation, pain, distress, & despair.'"

When this was said, Ven. Ananda said to Ven. Sariputta, "Sariputta my friend, even if there were change & alteration in the Teacher would there arise within you no sorrow, lamentation, pain, distress, or despair?"

"Even if there were change & alteration in the Teacher, my friend, there would arise within me no sorrow, lamentation, pain, distress, or despair. Still, I would have this thought: 'What a great being, of great might, of great prowess, has disappeared! For if the Blessed One were to remain for a long time, that would be for the benefit of many people, for the happiness of many people, out of sympathy for the world; for the welfare, benefit, & happiness of human & divine beings.'"

"Surely," [said Ven. Ananda,] "it's because Ven. Sariputta's I-making & mine-making and conceit-obsessions have long been well uprooted that even if there were change & alteration in the Teacher, there would arise within him no sorrow, lamentation, pain, distress, or despair."

— [SN 21:2](#)

## THE BUDDHA'S LAST DAYS

§108. Then [after relinquishing the will to continue fabricating his life processes] the Blessed One went to the audience hall and on arrival sat down on the seat prepared for him. When he was seated, he addressed the monks: "The qualities I have pointed out, having known them directly: You should grasp them thoroughly, cultivate them, develop them, & pursue them so that this holy life may long endure & remain steadfast for the benefit, welfare, & happiness of the multitude, out of sympathy for the world, for the benefit, welfare, & happiness of human & divine beings. And what are those qualities? The four establishing of mindfulness, the four right exertions, the four bases of success, the five faculties, the five strengths, the seven factors for awakening, the noble eightfold path. These are the qualities I have pointed out, having known them directly, that you should grasp thoroughly, cultivate, develop, & pursue ... for the benefit, welfare, & happiness of human & divine beings." Then the Blessed One addressed the monks, "I exhort you, monks: All fabrications are subject to decay. Bring about completion by means of heedfulness. It will not be long before the Tathagata's total unbinding. He will attain total unbinding in three month's time."

That is what the Blessed One said. Then ... he said further:

Young & old  
wise & foolish  
rich & poor:  
all end up dying.  
As a potter's clay vessels  
large & small  
fired & unfired  
all end up broken,  
so too life  
heads to death.

Then the Teacher said further:

Ripe my age, little the life  
remaining to me.

Leaving you, I will go,  
having made a refuge  
for myself.  
Be heedful, monks,  
mindful, virtuous.  
With your resolves well-concentrated,  
look after your minds.  
He who, in this  
Dhamma & Vinaya,  
remains heedful,  
leaving the round  
of birth,  
will make an end  
of stress.

\* \* \*

Then the Blessed One with a large community of monks went to the far shore of the Hiraññavati River and headed for Upavattana, the Mallans' sal-grove near Kusinara. On arrival, he said to Ven. Ananda, "Ananda, please prepare a bed for me between the twin sal-trees, with its head to the north. I am tired, and will lie down."

Responding, "As you say, lord," Ven. Ananda prepared a bed between the twin sal-trees, with its head to the north. Then the Blessed One lay down on his right side in the lion's sleeping posture, with one foot on top of the other, mindful & alert.

Now at that time the twin sal-trees were in full bloom, even though it was not the time for flowering. They showered, strewed, & sprinkled on the Tathagata's body in homage to him. Heavenly coral-tree blossoms fell from the sky, showering, strewing, & sprinkling the Tathagata's body in homage to him. Heavenly sandalwood powder fell from the sky, showering, strewing, & sprinkling the Tathagata's body in homage to him. Heavenly music was playing in the sky, in homage to the Tathagata. Heavenly songs were sung in the sky, in homage to the Tathagata.

Then the Blessed One said to Ven. Ananda, "Ananda, the twin sal-trees are in full bloom, even though it's not the flowering season. They shower,

strew, & sprinkle on the Tathagata's body in homage to him. Heavenly coral-tree blossoms are falling from the sky .... Heavenly sandalwood powder is falling from the sky .... Heavenly music is playing in the sky .... Heavenly songs are sung in the sky, in homage to the Tathagata. But it is not to this extent that a Tathagata is worshipped, honored, respected, venerated, or paid homage to. Rather, the monk, nun, male lay follower, or female lay follower who keeps practicing the Dhamma in accordance with the Dhamma, who keeps practicing masterfully, who lives in accordance with the Dhamma: that is the person who worships, honors, respects, venerates, & pays homage to the Tathagata with the highest homage. So you should train yourselves: 'We will keep practicing the Dhamma in accordance with the Dhamma, we will keep practicing masterfully, we will live in accordance with the Dhamma.' That's how you should train yourselves" ....

Then Ven. Ananda, going into a [nearby] building, stood leaning against the door jamb, weeping: "Here I am, still in training, with work left to do, and the total unbinding of my teacher is about to occur—the teacher who has had such sympathy for me!"

Then the Blessed One said to the monks, "Monks, where is Ananda?"

"Lord, Ven. Ananda, having gone into that building, stands leaning against the door jamb, weeping: 'Here I am, still in training, with work left to do, and the total unbinding of my teacher is about to occur—the teacher who has had such sympathy for me!'"

Then the Blessed One told a certain monk, "Come, monk. In my name, call Ananda, saying, 'The Teacher calls you, my friend.'"

Responding, "As you say, lord," to the Blessed One, the monk went to Ven. Ananda and on arrival said, "The Teacher calls you, my friend."

Responding, "As you say, friend," to the monk, Ven. Ananda went to the Blessed One and, on arrival, having bowed down to him, sat to one side. As he was sitting there, the Blessed One said to him, "Enough, Ananda. Don't grieve. Don't lament. Haven't I already taught you the state of growing different with regard to all things dear & appealing, the state of becoming separate, the state of becoming otherwise? What else is there to expect? It's impossible that one could forbid anything born, existent, fabricated, & subject to disintegration from disintegrating.

“For a long time, Ananda, you have attended to the Tathagata with physical acts of good will—helpful, happy, whole-hearted, without limit; with verbal acts of good will ... with mental acts of good will—helpful, happy, whole-hearted, without limit. You are one who has made merit. Commit yourself to exertion, and soon you will be without fermentations.”

Then the Blessed One addressed the monks, “Monks, those Blessed Ones who, in the past, were worthy ones, rightly self-awakened, had foremost attendants, just as I have had Ananda. Those Blessed Ones who, in the future, will be worthy ones, rightly self-awakened, will have foremost attendants, just as I have had Ananda. Ananda is wise. He knows, ‘This is the time to approach to see the Tathagata. This is the time for monks, this the time for nuns, this the time for male lay-followers, this the time for female lay-followers, this the time for kings & their ministers, this the time for sectarians, this the time for the followers of sectarians.’

“There are these four amazing & astounding qualities in Ananda. If a group of monks approaches to see Ananda, they are gratified at the sight of him. If he speaks Dhamma to them, they are gratified with what he says. Before they are sated, he falls silent. If a group of nuns approaches to see Ananda ... If a group of male lay followers approaches to see Ananda ... If a group of female lay followers approaches to see Ananda, they are gratified at the sight of him. If he speaks Dhamma to them, they are gratified with what he says. Before they are sated, he falls silent. These are the four amazing & astounding qualities in Ananda. There are these four amazing & astounding qualities in a wheel-turning monarch. If a group of noble warriors approaches to see him ... If a group of brahmans approaches to see him ... If a group of householders approaches to see him ... If a group of contemplatives approaches to see him, they are gratified at the sight of him. If he speaks to them, they are gratified with what he says. Before they are sated, he falls silent. In the same way, monks, there are these four amazing & astounding qualities in Ananda. If a group of monks ... a group of nuns ... a group of male lay followers ... a group of female lay followers approaches to see Ananda, they are gratified at the sight of him. If he speaks Dhamma to them, they are gratified with what he says. Before they are sated, he falls silent. These are the four amazing & astounding qualities in Ananda” ....

Now at that time Subhadda the wanderer was staying in Kusinara. He heard, “Tonight, in the last watch of the night, the total unbinding of

Gotama the contemplative will take place." Then the thought occurred to him: "I have heard the elder wanderers, teachers of teachers, saying that only once in a long, long time do Tathagatas—worthy ones, rightly self-awakened—appear in the world. Tonight, in the last watch of the night, the total unbinding of Gotama the contemplative will occur. Now there is a doubt that has arisen in me, but I have faith that he could teach me the Dhamma in such a way that I might abandon that doubt."

So he went to Upavattana, the Mallans' sal-grove and, on arrival, said to Ven. Ananda, "I have heard the elder wanderers, teachers of teachers, saying that only once in a long, long time do Tathagatas—worthy ones, rightly self-awakened—appear in the world. Tonight, in the last watch of the night, the total unbinding of Gotama the contemplative will occur. Now there is a doubt that has arisen in me, but I have faith that he could teach me the Dhamma in such a way that I might abandon that doubt. It would be good, Ven. Ananda, if you would let me see him."

When this was said, Ven. Ananda said to him, "Enough, friend Subhadda. Don't bother the Blessed One. The Blessed One is tired."

For a second time ... For a third time, Subhadda the Wanderer said to Ven. Ananda, "... It would be good, Ven. Ananda, if you would let me see him."

For a third time, Ven. Ananda said to him, "Enough, friend Subhadda. Don't bother the Blessed One. The Blessed One is tired."

Now, the Blessed One heard the exchange between Ven. Ananda & Subhadda the wanderer, and so he said to Ven. Ananda, "Enough, Ananda. Don't stand in his way. Let him see the Tathagata. Whatever he asks me will all be for the sake of knowledge, and not to be bothersome. And whatever I answer when asked, he will quickly understand."

So Ven. Ananda said to Subhadda the wanderer, "Go ahead, friend Subhadda. The Blessed One gives you his leave."

Then Subhadda went to the Blessed One and exchanged courteous greetings with him. After an exchange of friendly greetings & courtesies, he sat to one side. As he was sitting there, he said to the Blessed One, "Venerable sir, these contemplatives & brahmans, each with his group, each with his community, each the teacher of his group, an honored leader, well-regarded by people at large—i.e., Purana Kassapa, Makkhali Gosala, Ajita Kesakambalin, Pakudha Kaccayana, Sañjaya Belatthitaputta, & the

Nigantha Nataputta: Do they all have direct knowledge as they themselves claim, or do they all not have direct knowledge, or do some of them have direct knowledge and some of them not?"

"Enough, Subhadda. Put this question aside. I will teach you the Dhamma. Listen, and pay close attention. I will speak."

"Yes, lord," Subhadda answered, and the Blessed One said, "In any Dhamma & Vinaya where the noble eightfold path is not found, no contemplative of the first ... second ... third ... fourth order [stream-winner, once-returner, non-returner, or arahant] is found. But in any Dhamma & Vinaya where the noble eightfold path *is* found, contemplatives of the first ... second ... third ... fourth order *are* found. The noble eightfold path is found in this Dhamma & Vinaya, and right here there are contemplatives of the first ... second ... third ... fourth order. Other teachings are empty of knowledgeable contemplatives. And if the monks dwell rightly, this world will not be empty of arahants.

At age twenty-nine I went forth,  
seeking what might be skillful,  
and since my going forth  
more than fifty years have past.  
Outside of the realm  
of methodical Dhamma,  
there is no contemplative.

And no contemplative of the second ... third ... fourth order. Other teachings are empty of knowledgeable contemplatives. And if the monks dwell rightly, this world will not be empty of arahants."

Then Subhadda the wanderer said, "Magnificent, lord! Magnificent! Just as if he were to place upright what had been overturned, were to reveal what had been hidden, were to point out the way to one who was lost, or were carry a lamp into the dark so that those with eyes might see forms, in the same way the Blessed One has—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. Let me obtain the going forth in the Blessed One's presence, let me obtain acceptance [into the Community]."

"Anyone, Subhadda, who has previously belonged to another sect and who desires the going forth & acceptance into this Dhamma & Vinaya, must first undergo probation for four months. If, at the end of four months, the monks feel so moved, they give him the going forth & accept him into the monk's state. But I know distinctions among individuals in this matter."

"Lord, if that is so, I am willing to undergo probation for four years. If, at the end of four years, the monks feel so moved, let them give me the going forth & accept me into the monk's state."

Then the Blessed One said to Ven. Ananda, "Very well then, Ananda, give Subhadda the going forth."

"Yes, lord," Ananda answered.

Then Subhadda said to Ven. Ananda, "It's a gain for you, Ananda, a great gain, that you have been anointed here in the Teacher's presence with the pupil's anointing."

Then Subhadda the wanderer received the going forth in the Blessed One's presence, he received the acceptance. And not long after his acceptance—dwelling alone, secluded, heedful, ardent, & resolute—he in no long time entered & 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. Subhadda became another one of the arahants, the last of the Blessed One's face-to-face disciples.

Then the Blessed One said to Ven. Ananda, "Now, if it occurs to any of you—'The teaching has lost its arbitrator; we are without a Teacher'—do not view it in that way. Whatever Dhamma & Vinaya I have pointed out & formulated for you, that will be your Teacher when I am gone" ....

Then the Blessed One addressed the monks, "If even a single monk has any doubt or perplexity concerning the Buddha, Dhamma, or Sangha, 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 ... a third time, the Blessed One said, "If even one of the monks has any doubt or perplexity concerning the Buddha, Dhamma, or Sangha, 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. Ananda said to the Blessed One, "It's amazing, lord. It's astounding. I'm confident that, in this community of monks, there is not even a single monk who has any doubt or perplexity concerning the Buddha, Dhamma, or Sangha, the path or the practice."

"You, Ananda, speak out of confidence, while there is knowledge in the Tathagata that, in this community of monks, there is not even a single monk who has any doubt or perplexity concerning the Buddha, Dhamma, or Sangha, 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 means of heedfulness." Those were the Tathagata's last words.

Then the Blessed One entered the first jhana. Emerging from that he entered the second jhana. Emerging from that, he entered the third ... the fourth jhana ... the dimension of the infinitude of space ... the dimension of the infinitude of consciousness ... the dimension of nothingness ... the dimension of neither perception nor non-perception. Emerging from that, he entered the cessation of perception & feeling.

Then Ven. Ananda said to Ven. Anuruddha, "Ven. Anuruddha, the Blessed One is totally unbound."

"No, friend Ananda. The Blessed One isn't totally unbound. He has entered the cessation of perception & feeling."

Then the Blessed One, emerging from the cessation of perception & feeling, entered the dimension of neither perception nor non-perception. Emerging from that, he entered the dimension of nothingness ... the

dimension of the infinitude of consciousness ... the dimension of the infinitude of space ... the fourth jhana ... the third ... the second ... the first jhana. Emerging from the first jhana he entered the second ... the third ... the fourth jhana. Emerging from the fourth jhana, he immediately was totally unbound.

When the Blessed One was totally unbound, simultaneously with the total unbinding, there was a great earthquake, awesome & hair-raising, and the drums of the devas sounded.

When the Blessed One was totally unbound, simultaneously with the total unbinding, Sahampati Brahma uttered this verse:

All beings—all—in the world,  
will cast off the bodily heap  
in the world  
where a Teacher like this  
without peer in the world  
the Tathagata, with strength attained,  
the Rightly Self-Awakened One,  
has been totally  
unbound.

When the Blessed One was totally unbound, simultaneously with the total unbinding, Sakka, ruler of the devas, uttered this verse:

How inconstant are fabrications!  
Their nature: to arise & pass away.  
They disband as they are arising.  
Their total stilling is bliss.

When the Blessed One was totally unbound, simultaneously with the total unbinding, Ven. Anuruddha uttered this verse:

He had no in-&-out breathing,  
the one who was Such, the firm-minded one,  
imperturbable  
& bent on peace:

the sage completing his span.

With heart unbowed  
he endured the pain.  
Like a flame's unbinding  
was the liberation  
of awareness.

When the Blessed One was totally unbound, simultaneously with the total unbinding, Ven. Ananda uttered this verse:

It was awe-inspiring.  
It was hair-raising  
when, displaying the foremost  
accomplishment in all things,  
the Rightly Self-Awakened One  
was totally unbound.

When the Blessed One was totally unbound, simultaneously with the total unbinding, some of the monks present who were not without passion wept, uplifting their arms. As if their feet were cut out from under them, they fell down and rolled back & forth, crying, "All too soon is the Blessed One totally unbound! All too soon is the One Well-gone totally unbound! All too soon, the One with Eyes has disappeared from the world!" But those monks who were free from passion acquiesced, mindful & alert: "Fabrications are inconstant. What else is there to expect?"

Then Ven. Anuruddha addressed the monks, "Enough, friends. Don't grieve. Don't lament. Hasn't the Blessed One already taught the state of growing different with regard to all things dear & appealing, the state of becoming separate, the state of becoming otherwise? What else is there to expect? It's impossible that one could forbid anything born, existent, fabricated, & subject to disintegration from disintegrating. The devatas, friends, are complaining."

[Ven. Ananda:] "But, Ven. Anuruddha, what is the state of the devatas the Blessed One is referring to?"

"Friend Ananda, there are devatas who perceive space to be earth. Tearing at their hair, they are weeping. Uplifting their arms, they are

weeping. As if their feet were cut out from under them, they fall down and roll back & forth, crying, 'All too soon is the Blessed One totally unbound! All too soon is the One Well-gone totally unbound! All too soon, the One with Eyes has disappeared from the world!' Then there are devatas who perceive earth to be earth. Tearing at their hair, they are weeping. Uplifting their arms, they are weeping. As if their feet were cut out from under them, they fall down and roll back & forth, crying, 'All too soon is the Blessed One totally unbound! All too soon is the One Well-gone totally unbound! All too soon, the One with Eyes has disappeared from the world!' But those devatas who are free from passion acquiesce, mindful & alert: 'Fabrications are inconstant. What else is there to expect?'"

Then Ven. Anuruddha & Ven. Ananda spent the remainder of the night in Dhamma talk.

—DN 16

## Glossary

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

**Āsava:** Fermentation; effluent. Four qualities—sensuality, views, becoming, and ignorance—that “flow out” of the mind and create the flood of the round of death and rebirth.

**Brāhman:** In general usage, this denotes a member of the priestly caste of India. In its specifically Buddhist usage, it denotes an arahant.

**Brahmā:** Inhabitant of the heavens of form or formlessness.

**Deva (devatā):** Literally, “shining one.” An inhabitant of heavenly or terrestrial levels of being enjoying pleasures higher than those of human beings.

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

**Jhāna:** Mental absorption. A state of strong concentration focused on a single sensation or mental notion. This term is derived from the verb *jhāyati*, which means to burn with a still, steady flame. Sanskrit form: *Dhyāna*.

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

**Māra:** Death and temptation personified.

**Nāga:** (1) A magical serpent; (2) a great elephant; (3) a human being of admirable nobility and strength.

**Nibbāna:** Literally, the “unbinding” of the mind from passion, aversion, and delusion, and from the entire round of death and rebirth. As this term also denotes the extinguishing of a fire, it carries connotations of stilling, cooling, and peace. “Total nibbāna” in some contexts denotes the experience of awakening; in others, the final passing away of an arahant.  
Sanskrit form: *Nirvāṇa*.

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

***Tathāgata:*** Literally, one who has “become authentic (*tatha-āgata*)” or “truly gone (*tathā-gata*),” an epithet used in ancient India for a person who has attained the highest religious goal. In Buddhism, it usually denotes the Buddha, although occasionally it also denotes any of his arahant disciples.

## Abbreviations

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

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