



DESIRES

Desires

A Study Guide

compiled by

Ṭhānissaro Bhikkhu

copyright 2023 ṭhānissaro bhikkhu

This work is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 Unported. To see a copy of this license visit <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/>. “Commercial” shall mean any sale, whether for commercial or non-profit purposes or entities.

questions about this book may be addressed to

Metta Forest Monastery
Valley Center, CA 92082-1409
U.S.A.

additional resources

More Dhamma talks, books and translations by Ṭhānissaro Bhikkhu are available to download in digital audio and various ebook formats at dhammatalks.org.

printed copy

A paperback copy of this book is available free of charge. To request one, write to: Book Request, Metta Forest Monastery, PO Box 1409, Valley Center, CA 92082 USA.

Introduction

All phenomena, the Buddha once said, are rooted in desire. Everything we think, say, or do—every experience—comes from desire. Even *we* come from desire. We were reborn into this life because of our desire to be. Consciously or not, our desires keep redefining our sense of who we are. Desire is how we take our place in the causal matrix of space and time. The only thing not rooted in desire is nibbāna, because it's the end of all phenomena and lies even beyond the Buddha's use of the word "all." But the path that takes you to nibbāna is rooted in desire—in skillful desires. The path to liberation pushes the limits of skillful desires to see how far they can go.

The notion of a skillful desire may sound strange, but a mature mind intuitively pursues the desires it sees as skillful and drops those it perceives as not. Basic in everyone is the desire for happiness. Every other desire is a strategy for attaining that happiness. You want an iPad, a sexual partner, or an experience of inner peace because you think it will make you happy. Because these secondary desires are strategies, they follow a pattern. They spring from an inchoate feeling of lack and limitation; they employ your powers of perception to identify the cause of the limitation; and they use your powers of creative imagination to conceive a solution to it.

But despite their common pattern, desires are not monolithic. Each offers a different perception of what's lacking in life, together with a different picture of what the solution should be. A desire for a sandwich comes from a perception of physical hunger and proposes to solve it with a Swiss-on-rye. A desire to climb a mountain focuses on a different set of hungers—for accomplishment, exhilaration, self-mastery—and appeals to a different image of satisfaction. Whatever the desire, if the solution actually leads to happiness, the desire is skillful. If it doesn't, it's not. However, what seems to be a skillful desire may lead only to a false or transitory happiness not worth the

effort entailed. So wisdom starts as a meta-desire: to learn how to recognize skillful and unskillful desires for what they actually are.

Unskillful desires can create suffering in a variety of ways. Sometimes they aim at the impossible: not to grow old or die. Sometimes they focus on possibilities that require distasteful means—such as lying or cheating to get ahead in your job. Or the goal, when you get it, may not really keep you happy. Even the summit of Everest can be a disappointment. Even when it's not, you can't stay there forever. When you leave, you're left with nothing but memories, which can shift and fade. If you did mean or hurtful things to get there, their memory can burn away any pleasure that memories of the summit might hold.

In addition, desires often pull in opposite directions. Your desire for sex, for instance, can get in the way of your desire for peace. In fact, conflict among desires is what alerts us to how painful desire can be. It's also what has taught each desire how to speak, to persuade, to argue or bully its way into power. And just because a desire is skillful doesn't mean it's more skillful at arguing its case than the unskillful ones, for those can often be the most intransigent, the most strident, the slickest in having their way. This means that wisdom has to learn how to strategize, too, to strengthen skillful desires so that less skillful desires will listen to them. That way, desires can be trained to work together toward greater happiness. This is how a mature and healthy mind works: conducting a dialogue not so much between reason and desire as between responsible desires and irresponsible ones.

But even in a mature mind, the dialogue often yields compromises that don't really go to the heart: snatches of sensual pleasure, glimpses of spiritual peace, nothing really satisfying and whole. Some people, growing impatient with compromise, turn a deaf ear to prudent desires and tune into demands for instant gratification—all the sex, power, and money they can grab. But when the rampage of gratification wears itself out, the damage can take lifetimes to repair. Other people try their best to accept the compromise among desires, trying to find a measure of peace in not reaching for what they see as impossible. But this peace, too, depends on a deaf inner ear, denying

the underlying truth of all desires: that a life of endless limitations is intolerable.

Both sorts of people share a common assumption that true, unlimited happiness lies beyond reach. Their imaginations are so stunted that they can't even conceive of what a true, unlimited happiness in this lifetime would be.

What made the Buddha special was that he never lowered his expectations. He imagined the ultimate happiness—one so free from limit and lack that it would leave no need for further desire—and then treasured his desire for that happiness as his highest priority. Bringing all his other desires into dialogue with it, he explored various strategies until finding one that actually attained that unlimited goal. This strategy became his most basic teaching: the four noble truths.

Most of us, when looking at the four noble truths, don't realize that they're all about desire. We're taught that the Buddha gave only one role to desire—as the cause of suffering. Because he says to abandon the cause of suffering, it sounds like he's denying any positive role to desire and its constructive companions: creativity, imagination, and hope. This perception, though, misses two important points. The first is that all four truths speak to the basic dynamic of desire on its own terms: perception of lack and limitation, the imagination of a solution, and a strategy for attaining it. The first truth teaches the basic lack and limitation in our lives—the clinging that constitutes suffering—while the second truth points to the types of desires that lead to clinging: desires for sensuality, becoming, and annihilation. The third truth expands our imagination to encompass the possibility that clinging can be totally overcome. The fourth truth, the path to the end of suffering, shows how to strategize so as to overcome clinging by abandoning its cause.

The second point that's often missed is that the noble truths give two roles to desire, depending on whether it's skillful or not. Unskillful desire is the cause of suffering; skillful desire forms part of the path to its cessation. Skillful desire undercuts unskillful desire, not by repressing it, but by producing greater and greater levels of satisfaction and well-being so that unskillful desire has no place to

stand. This strategy of skillful desire is explicit in the path factor of right effort:

“What is right effort? There is the case where a monk (here meaning any meditator) generates desire, endeavors, arouses persistence, upholds and exerts his intent for the sake of the non-arising of evil, unskillful mental qualities that have not yet arisen ... for the sake of the abandoning of evil, unskillful qualities that have arisen ... for the sake of the arising of skillful qualities that have not yet arisen ... for the maintenance, non-confusion, increase, plenitude, development, and culmination of skillful qualities that have arisen. This is called right effort.” ([DN 22](#))

As this formula shows, the crucial elements for replacing unskillful mental qualities with skillful ones are desire, persistence, and intent. Desire gives the initial impetus and focus for right effort, while persistence provides staying power. Intent is the most complex factor of the three. The Pali word here, *citta*, also means “mind,” and in this context it means giving your whole mind to the work at hand: all your powers of sensitivity, intelligence, discernment, and ingenuity. You don’t want your mind to be split on this issue; you want all of its powers working together on the same side.

These three qualities—desire, persistence, and intent—underlie every attempt to master a skill. So it’s useful, in undertaking the path, to reflect on how you’ve used these qualities to master skills in the past. The Buddha made this point in his many similes comparing the person on the path to a master craftsman—a musician, carpenter, surgeon, acrobat, cook. As with any skill, there are many steps to developing the path, but four stand out.

The first is to use your ingenuity to fight off the chorus of inner voices trying to dissuade you from making the effort to be skillful in the first place. These voices are like devious lawyers representing strongly entrenched interests: all your threatened unskillful desires. You have to be quick and alert in countering their arguments, because they can come from all sides, sounding honest and wise even though

they're not. Here are some of the arguments these voices may propose, along with a few effective responses:

Trying to manipulate your desires like this is unnatural. Actually, you're already manipulating your desires all the time, when you choose one desire over another, so you might as well learn to do it skillfully. And there are plenty of people out there only too happy to manipulate your desires for you—think of all the advertisements clamoring for your attention—so it's better to put the manipulation in more trustworthy hands: your own.

Trying to change your desires is an attack on your very self. This argument works only if you give your sense of self—which is really just a grab bag of desires—more solidity than it deserves. You can turn the argument on its head by noting that since your “self” is a perpetually changing line-up of strategies for happiness, you might as well try changing it in a direction more likely to achieve true happiness.

To think of “skillful” and “unskillful” desires is dualistic and judgmental. You don't want non-dualistic mechanics working on your car, or non-dualistic surgeons operating on your brain. You want people who can tell what's skillful from what's not. If you really value your happiness, you'll demand the same discernment in the person most responsible for it: yourself.

It's too goal-oriented. Just accept things as they are in the present. Every desire tells you that things in the present are limited and lacking. You either accept the desire or accept the lack. To accept both at once is to deny that either has any real truth. To try to dwell peacefully in the tension between the two—in a “path of no craving” to be rid of either—is what the Buddha called limited equanimity, and what one Thai forest master called the equanimity of a cow.

It's a futile attempt to resist such a divine and mysterious power. Desire seems overwhelming and mysterious simply because we don't know our minds. And where would we be if we kept slapping the term “divine” or “cosmic” on forces we didn't understand?

Arguing with unskillful desires is too much work. Consider the alternative: an endless wandering from one set of limitations to

another, continually seeking happiness and yet finding it always slipping from your grasp, repeatedly taking a stance for one desire one moment and shifting to another desire the next. Right effort at least gives you one steady place to stand. It's not adding a more demanding desire to the chaotic mix; it's offering a way to sort out the mess. And the Buddha's path holds open the hope of an unlimited happiness, preceded by increasingly refined and reliable levels of happiness all along the path. In short, his alternative is actually the one that, in the long run, is more enjoyable and involves less work.

Once you've silenced these voices, the next step is to take responsibility for your actions and their consequences. This requires being willing to learn from your mistakes. Several years ago, a sociologist studied students in a neurosurgery program to see what qualities separated those who succeeded from those who failed. He found ultimately that two questions in his interviews pointed to the crucial difference. He would ask the students, "Do you ever make mistakes? If so, what is the worst mistake you've ever made?" Those who failed the program would inevitably answer that they rarely made mistakes or else would blame their mistakes on factors beyond their control. Those who succeeded in the program not only admitted to many mistakes but also volunteered information on what they would do not to repeat those mistakes in the future.

The Buddha encouraged this same mature attitude in his first instructions to his son, Rāhula. He told Rāhula to focus on his intentions before acting, and on the results of his actions both while he was doing them and after they were done. If Rāhula saw that his intentions would lead to harm for himself or others, he shouldn't act on them. If he saw that his thoughts, words, or deeds actually produced harm, he should stop them and resolve never to repeat them, without at the same time falling into remorse. If, on the other hand, he saw no harmful consequences from his actions, he should take joy in his progress on the path, and use that joy to nourish his continued practice.

Although the Buddha aimed these instructions at a seven-year-old child, the pattern they outline informs every level of the practice. The whole path to awakening consists of sticking to the desire always to do the most skillful thing; it develops as your sense of “skillful” gets more refined. If you act on an unskillful desire, then take responsibility for the consequences, using them to educate that desire as to where it went wrong. Although desires can be remarkably stubborn, they share a common goal—happiness—and this can form the common ground for an effective dialogue: If a desire doesn’t really produce happiness, it contradicts its reason for being.

The best way to make this point is to keep tracing the thread from the desire to its resulting actions, and from the actions to their consequences. If the desire aimed at a happiness that caused suffering to others, notice how their corresponding desire for happiness leads them to undermine the happiness you sought. If the desire aimed at a happiness based on things that can age, grow ill, die, or leave you, notice how that fact sets you up for a fall. Then notice how the distress that comes from acting on this sort of desire is universal. It’s not just you. Everyone who has acted, is acting, or will act on that desire has suffered in the past, is suffering right now, and will suffer in the future. There’s no way around it.

Reflecting this way helps to weaken the “why me?” tendency that aggravates suffering and makes you cling fiercely to the desire causing it. It also helps develop two important attitudes that strengthen skillful desires: a sense of dismay (*saṃvega*) over the universality of suffering, and an attitude of heedfulness (*appamāda*) to avoid being duped by that particular type of desire again.

Unskillful desires don’t really give way, though, until you can show that other, less troublesome desires actually can produce greater happiness. This is why the Buddha emphasizes learning how to appreciate the rewards of a virtuous, generous life: the joy in fostering the happiness of others, the solid dignity and self-worth in doing the hard but the right thing. It’s also why his path centers on states of blissful, refreshing concentration. Accessing this refreshment in your meditation gives you immediate, visceral proof that the Buddha was

no killjoy. The desires he recommends really do produce a happiness that can give you the strength to keep on choosing the skillful path.

That's the next step: patiently and persistently sticking with the desire to do the skillful thing in all situations. This isn't a matter of sheer effort. As any good sports coach will tell you, hours of practice don't necessarily guarantee results. You have to combine your persistence with intent: sensitivity, discernment, ingenuity. Keep an eye out for how to do things more efficiently. Try to see patterns in what you do. At the same time, introduce play and variety into your practice so that the plateaus don't get boring, and the downs don't get you down.

The Buddha makes similar points in his meditation instructions. Once you've mastered a state of concentration, see where it still contains elements of stress. Then look for patterns to that stress: What are you doing to cause it? Find ways to gladden the mind when it's down, to liberate it from its confinements, to steady it when it gets restless. In this way, as you learn to enjoy rising to the challenges of meditation, you also gain familiarity with subtle patterns of cause and effect in the mind.

The fourth step, once you've mastered those patterns, is to push their limits. Again, this isn't simply a matter of increased effort. It's more a rekindling of your imagination to explore the unexpected side-alleys of cause and effect. A famous cellist once said that his most exhilarating concert was one in which he broke a string on his cello and decided to finish the piece he was playing on the remaining strings, re-fingering it on the spot. The most obvious strings in meditation are the specific techniques for fostering stillness and insight, but the more interesting ones are the assumptions that underlie the quest for skill: lack, strategy, dialogue, your sense of self. Can you learn to do without them? There comes a point in your meditation when the only way for greater happiness is to begin questioning these assumptions.

This leads to some intriguing paradoxes: If desire springs from a sense of lack or limitation, what happens to desire when it produces a happiness with no lack or limitation at all? What's it like not to need

desire? What would happen to your inner dialogue, your sense of self? And if desire is how you take your place in space and time, what happens to space and time when desire is absent?

The Buddha encouraged these queries by describing the awakened person as so undefined and unlimited that he or she couldn't be located in the present life or be described after this life as existing, not existing, neither, or both. This may sound like an abstract and unreachable goal, but the Buddha demonstrated its human face in the example of his person. Having pushed past the limits of cause and effect, he was still able to function admirably within them, in this life, happy in even the most difficult circumstances, compassionately teaching people of every sort. And there's his testimony that not only monks and nuns, but also lay people—even children—had developed their skillful desires to the point where they gained a taste of awakening as well.

So imagine that. And listen to any desire that would take you in that direction, for that's your path to true happiness.

Readings

BASIC PRINCIPLES

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

§2. “With the arising of effluents there is the arising of ignorance. With the cessation of effluents there is the cessation of ignorance.... And what are effluents? ... There are these three effluents: the sensuality-effluent, the becoming-effluent, & the ignorance-effluent. With the arising of ignorance there is the arising of effluents. With the cessation of ignorance there is the cessation of effluents. — [MN 9](#)

§3. “I designate the rebirth of one who has sustenance [or: clinging], Vaccha, and not of one without sustenance. Just as a fire burns with sustenance and not without sustenance, even so I designate the rebirth of one who has sustenance and not of one without sustenance.”

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

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

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

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

§4. Then Ven. Rādhā went to the Blessed One and, on arrival, having bowed down to him sat to one side. As he was sitting there he

said to the Blessed One: “‘A being,’ lord. ‘A being,’ it’s said. To what extent is one said to be ‘a being’?”

“Any desire, passion, delight, or craving for form, Rādhā: When one is caught up [*satta*] there, tied up [*visatta*] there, one is said to be ‘a being [*satta*].’

“Any desire, passion, delight, or craving for feeling ... perception ... fabrications ...

“Any desire, passion, delight, or craving for consciousness, Rādhā: When one is caught up there, tied up there, one is said to be ‘a being.’”

— [*SN 23:2*](#)

§5. “If one stays obsessed with form, that’s what one is measured by. Whatever one is measured by, that’s how one is classified.

“If one stays obsessed with feeling ...

“If one stays obsessed with perception ...

“If one stays obsessed with fabrications ...

“If one stays obsessed with consciousness, that’s what one is measured by. Whatever one is measured by, that’s how one is classified.

“But if one doesn’t stay obsessed with form, that’s not what one is measured by. Whatever one isn’t measured by, that’s not how one is classified.

“If one doesn’t stay obsessed with feeling ...

“If one doesn’t stay obsessed with perception ...

“If one doesn’t stay obsessed with fabrications ...

“If one doesn’t stay obsessed with consciousness, that’s not what one is measured by. Whatever one isn’t measured by, that’s not how one is classified.” — [*SN 22:36*](#)

§6. “Just as a dog, tied by a leash to a post or stake, keeps running around and circling around that very post or stake; in the same way, 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 people 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 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 keeps running around and circling around that very form... that very feeling... that very perception... those very fabrications... that very consciousness. Running and circling around form... feeling... perception... fabrications... consciousness, he is not set loose from form, not set loose from feeling... from perception... from fabrications... not set loose from consciousness. He is not set loose from birth, aging, & death; from sorrows, lamentations, pains, distresses, & despairs. He is not set loose, I tell you, from suffering & stress.” — [SN 22:99](#)

§7. “If a monk practices for the sake of disenchantment, dispassion, & cessation with regard to craving ... with regard to fabrications, he deserves to be called a monk who practices the Dhamma in accordance with the Dhamma. If—through disenchantment, dispassion, cessation, and lack of clinging/sustenance with regard to craving ... with regard to fabrications—he is released, then he deserves to be called a monk who has attained unbinding in the here-&-now.” — [SN 12:67](#)

§8. “And what are fabrications? There are these six classes of intention: intention aimed at sights, sounds, smells, tastes, tactile sensations, & ideas. These are called fabrications.” — [SN 22:56](#)

§9. Visākha: And what, lady, are bodily fabrications, what are verbal fabrications, what are mental fabrications?

Sister Dhammadinnā: In-&-out breathing is bodily, bound up with the body, therefore is it called a *bodily fabrication*. Having directed one’s thought and evaluated [the matter], one breaks into speech.

Therefore directed thought & evaluation are called *verbal fabrications*. Perception & feeling are mental, bound up with the mind. Therefore perception & feeling are called *mental fabrications*. — [MN 44](#).

§10. “And why do you call them ‘fabrications’? ‘They fabricate the fabricated,’ thus they are called ‘fabrications.’ And what is the fabricated that they fabricate? For the sake of form-ness, they fabricate fabricated form. For the sake of feeling-ness, they fabricate fabricated feeling. For the sake of perception-hood... For the sake of fabrication-hood... For the sake of consciousness-hood, they fabricate fabricated consciousness. ‘They fabricate the fabricated,’ thus they are called ‘fabrications.’” — [SN 22:79](#).

THE FIRST NOBLE TRUTH

§11. “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 is wanted. 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.” — [DN 22](#)

§12. “And what are the *five clinging-aggregates* that, in short, are stressful? 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 stressful.” — [DN 22](#)

§13. The Blessed One said, “And what, monks, are clingable phenomena [or: phenomena offering sustenance]? What is clinging [sustenance]?”

“Form is a clingable phenomenon. Any desire-passion related to it, is clinging related to it.

“Feeling ... perception ... fabrications ...consciousness is a clingable phenomenon. Any desire-passion related to it, is clinging related to it.

“These are called clingable phenomena. This is clinging.” — [SN 22:121](#)

§14. 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 fabrications are past, future, or present; internal or external; blatant or subtle; common or sublime; far or near: Those are called the fabrications 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 effluent: 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 effluent: 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 effluent: That is called the perception clinging-aggregate.

“Whatever 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 effluent: 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 effluent: That is called the consciousness clinging-aggregate.

“These are called the five clinging-aggregates.” — [SN 22:48](#)

THE SECOND NOBLE TRUTH

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

“This noble truth of the origination of stress is to be abandoned.”
—[*SN 56:11*](#)

§16. *This was said by the Blessed One, said by the Arahant, so I have heard:* “Monks, I don’t envision even one other fetter—fettered by which beings conjoined go wandering & transmigrating on for a long, long time—like the fetter of craving. Fettered with the fetter of craving, beings conjoined go wandering & transmigrating on for a long, long time.”

With craving his companion, a man
wanders on a long, long time.
Neither in this state here
nor anywhere else
does he go beyond
the wandering- on.

Knowing this drawback—
that craving brings stress into play—
free from craving,
devoid of clinging,
mindful, the monk
lives the mendicant life.—[*Iti 15*](#)

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

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

“As you say, lord,” Gandhabhaka the headman replied.

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

“Yes, lord....”

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

“Yes, lord....”

“... Why?...”

“Those... whose murder, imprisonment, fining, or censure would cause me sorrow... are those for whom I feel desire & passion. Those... whose murder, imprisonment, fining, or censure would cause me no sorrow... are those for whom I feel no desire or passion.”

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

“Amazing, lord. Astounding. How well the Blessed One has put it.... I have a son, lord, named Ciravāsi, who lives far away from here. When I get up in the morning, I send a man, saying, ‘Go, learn how Ciravāsi is doing.’ And as long as that man has not returned, I am simply beside myself, [thinking,] ‘Don’t let Ciravāsi be sick!’”

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

“...My very life would be altered. So how could I not feel sorrow, lamentation, pain, distress, & despair?”

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

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

“No, lord.”

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

“Yes, lord.”

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

“...My very life would be altered. So how could I not feel sorrow, lamentation, pain, distress, & despair?”

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

§18. Ven. Sāriputta: “There may be wise nobles & brāhmins, 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? ... 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 ... for consciousness.” — [SN 22:2](#)

§19. “Monks, the All is aflame. What All is aflame? The eye is aflame. Forms are aflame. Consciousness at the eye is aflame. Contact at the eye is aflame. And whatever there is that arises in dependence on contact at the eye—experienced as pleasure, pain or neither-pleasure-nor-pain—that too is aflame. Aflame with what? Aflame with the fire of passion, the fire of aversion, the fire of delusion. Aflame, I tell you, with birth, aging & death, with sorrows, lamentations, pains, distresses, & despairs.

“The ear is aflame. Sounds are aflame...

“The nose is aflame. Aromas are aflame...

“The tongue is aflame. Flavors are aflame...

“The body is aflame. Tactile sensations are aflame...

“The intellect is aflame. Ideas are aflame. Consciousness at the intellect is aflame. Contact at the intellect is aflame. And whatever there is that arises in dependence on contact at the intellect—experienced as pleasure, pain or neither-pleasure-nor-pain—that too is aflame. Aflame with what? Aflame with the fire of passion, the fire of aversion, the fire of delusion. Aflame, I say, with birth, aging & death, with sorrows, lamentations, pains, distresses, & despairs.” — [SN 35:28](#)

§20. “And where does this craving, when arising, arise? And where, when dwelling, does it dwell? Whatever is endearing & alluring in terms of the world: That is where this craving, when arising, arises. That is where, when dwelling, it dwells.

“And what is endearing & alluring in terms of the world? The eye is endearing & alluring in terms of the world. That is where this craving, when arising, arises. That is where, when dwelling, it dwells.

“The ear....The nose....The tongue....The body....The intellect....

“Forms....Sounds....Smells....Tastes....Tactile sensations....Ideas....

“Eye-consciousness....Ear-consciousness....Nose-consciousness....
Tongue-consciousness....Body-consciousness....Intellect-
consciousness....

“Eye-contact....Ear-contact....Nose-contact....Tongue-contact....
Body-contact Intellect-contact....

“Feeling born of eye-contact....Feeling born of ear-contact....Feeling
born of nose-contact....Feeling born of tongue-contact....Feeling born
of body-contact.... Feeling born of intellect-contact....

“Perception of forms.... Perception of sounds....Perception of
smells.... Perception of tastes....Perception of tactile sensations....
Perception of ideas....

“Intention for forms....Intention for sounds....Intention for smells....
Intention for tastes....Intention for tactile sensations....Intention for
ideas....

“Craving for forms....Craving for sounds....Craving for smells....
Craving for tastes....Craving for tactile sensations....Craving for ideas is
endearing & alluring in terms of the world. That is where this craving,
when arising, arises. That is where, when dwelling, it dwells.” — [DN 22](#)

§21. “Any brāhmans or contemplatives who do not discern, as it is
actually present, that ‘This is stress... This is the origination of stress...
This is the cessation of stress... This is the path of practice leading to
the cessation of stress,’ cherish the fabrications leading to birth,
cherish the fabrications leading to aging...death... sorrow,
lamentation, pain, distress, & despair. Cherishing the fabrications
leading to birth... aging... death... sorrow, lamentation, pain, distress,
& despair, they fashion fabrications leading to birth... aging... death...
sorrow, lamentation, pain, distress, & despair, and so they fall into the
darkness of birth... aging... death... sorrow, lamentation, pain, distress
& despair. They are not released from birth... aging... death... sorrows,
lamentations, pains, distresses, & despairs. They are not released, I
tell you, from stress.” — [SN 56:46](#)

§22. “Now, craving is dependent on feeling,
seeking is dependent on craving,

acquisition is dependent on seeking,
ascertainment is dependent on acquisition,
desire-passion is dependent on ascertainment,
attachment is dependent on desire-passion,
possessiveness is dependent on attachment,
stinginess is dependent on possessiveness,
defensiveness is dependent on stinginess,
and because of defensiveness, dependent on defensiveness,
various evil, unskillful phenomena come into play: the taking up
of sticks & knives; conflicts, quarrels, & disputes; accusations,
divisive speech, & lies.” — [DN 15](#)

§23. There’s no fire like passion,
no seizure like anger,
no snare like delusion,
no river like craving. — [Dhp 215](#)

§24. “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—kāsa grasses, kusa grasses, reeds, biraṇa grasses, & trees were growing. Then a man swept away by the current would grab hold of the kāsa 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 biraṇa 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 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. That form tears away from him, and so from that cause he would come to disaster.

“He assumes feeling... perception... 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. That consciousness tears away from him, and so from that cause he would come to disaster.” — [SN 22:95](#)

§25. “Suppose a man was being carried along by the flow of a river, lovely & alluring. And then another man with good eyesight, standing on the bank, on seeing him would say: ‘My good man, even though you are being carried along by the flow of a river, lovely & alluring, further down from here is a pool with waves & whirlpools, with monsters & demons. On reaching that pool you will suffer death or death-like pain.’ Then the first man, on hearing the words of the second man, would make an effort with his hands & feet to go against the flow.

“I have given you this simile to illustrate a meaning. The meaning is this: The flow of the river stands for craving. Lovely & alluring stands for the six internal sense-media. The pool further down stands for the five lower fetters. The waves stand for anger & distress. The whirlpools stand for the five strings of sensuality. The monsters & demons stand for the opposite sex. Against the flow stands for renunciation. Making an effort with hands & feet stands for the arousing of persistence. The man with good eyesight standing on the bank stands for the Tathāgata, worthy & rightly self-awakened.” — [Iti 109](#)

§26. “There are these ten fetters. Which ten? Five lower fetters & five higher fetters. And which are the five lower fetters? Self-identity views, uncertainty, grasping at habits & practices, sensual desire, & ill will. These are the five lower fetters. And which are the five higher fetters? Passion for form, passion for what is formless, conceit, restlessness, & ignorance. These are the five higher fetters. And these are the ten fetters.” — [AN 10:13](#)

§27. “Suppose that a black ox and a white ox were joined with a single collar or yoke. If someone were to say, ‘The black ox is the fetter of the white ox, the white ox is the fetter of the black’—speaking this way, would he be speaking rightly?”

“No, my friend. The black ox is not the fetter of the white ox, nor is the white ox the fetter of the black. The single collar or yoke by which they are joined: That is the fetter there.”

“In the same way, the eye is not the fetter of forms, nor are forms the fetter of the eye. Whatever desire & passion arise in dependence on the two of them: That is the fetter there. The ear is not the fetter of sounds....The nose is not the fetter of aromas....The tongue is not the fetter of flavors....The body is not the fetter of tactile sensations.... The intellect is not the fetter of ideas, nor are ideas the fetter of the intellect. Whatever desire & passion arises in dependence on the two of them: That is the fetter there.” — [SN 35:191](#)

SENSUALITY

§28. “There are these five strings of sensuality. Which five? Forms cognizable via the eye—agreeable, pleasing, charming, endearing, fostering desire, enticing; sounds cognizable via the ear... aromas cognizable via the nose... flavors cognizable via the tongue... tactile sensations cognizable via the body—agreeable, pleasing, charming, endearing, fostering desire, enticing. But these are not sensuality. They are called strings of sensuality in the discipline of the noble ones.

The passion for his resolves is a man’s sensuality,
not the beautiful sensual pleasures
found in the world.

The passion for his resolves is a man’s sensuality.
The beauties remain as they are in the world,
while the wise, in this regard,
subdue their desire.

“And what is the cause by which sensuality comes into play?
Contact....

“And what is the diversity in sensuality? Sensuality with regard to forms is one thing, sensuality with regard to sounds is another, sensuality with regard to aromas is another, sensuality with regard to flavors is another, sensuality with regard to tactile sensations is another....

“And what is the result of sensuality? One who wants sensuality produces a corresponding self-state [*attabhāva*] on the side of merit or demerit....

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

§29. “Touched by a painful feeling, an uninstructed run-of-the-mill person delights in sensuality. Why is that? Because he doesn’t discern any escape from painful feeling aside from sensuality.” — [SN 36:6](#)

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

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

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

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

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

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

“Now what do you think, Māgaṇḍiya? Have you ever seen or heard of a king or king’s minister—enjoying himself, provided & endowed with the five strands of sensual pleasure, without abandoning sensual craving, without removing sensual fever—who has dwelt or will dwell or is dwelling free from thirst, his mind inwardly at peace?”

“No, Master Gotama.”

“Very good, Māgaṇḍiya. Neither have I ever seen or heard of a king or king’s minister—enjoying himself, provided & endowed with the five strands of sensual pleasure, without abandoning sensual craving, without removing sensual fever—who has dwelt or will dwell or is dwelling free from thirst, his mind inwardly at peace. But whatever contemplatives or brahmans who have dwelt or will dwell or are dwelling free from thirst, their minds inwardly at peace, all have done so having realized—as it has come to be—the origination & disappearance, the allure, the danger, & the escape from sensual pleasures, having abandoned sensual craving and removed sensual fever.” — [MN.75](#)

§31. Even if it’s with pain,
you should abandon
sensual desires
if you aspire

to future safety from bondage.

Rightly discerning,
with a mind well-released,
touch release now here,
now there.

An attainer-of-wisdom,
having fulfilled the holy life,
is said to have gone
to the end of the world, gone
beyond.— *Iti 109*

§32. “Now what is the allure of sensuality? There are, monks, these five strings of sensuality. Which five? Forms cognizable via the eye—agreeable, pleasing, charming, endearing, fostering desire, enticing. Sounds cognizable via the ear... Aromas cognizable via the nose... Flavors cognizable via the tongue... Tactile sensations cognizable via the body—agreeable, pleasing, charming, endearing, fostering desire, enticing. Now whatever pleasure or joy arises in dependence on these five strings of sensuality, that is the allure of sensuality.

“And what is the drawback of sensuality? There is the case where, on account of the occupation by which a clansman makes a living—whether checking or accounting or calculating or plowing or trading or cattle tending or archery or as a king’s man, or whatever the occupation may be—he faces cold & heat, harassed by mosquitoes & flies, wind & sun & creeping things, dying from hunger & thirst.

“Now this drawback in the case of sensuality, this mass of stress visible here & now, has sensuality for its reason, sensuality for its source, sensuality for its cause, the reason being simply sensuality.

“If the clansman gains no wealth while thus working & striving & making effort, he sorrows, grieves, & laments, beats his breast, becomes distraught: ‘My work is in vain, my efforts are fruitless!’

“If the clansman gains wealth while thus working & striving & making effort, he experiences pain & distress in protecting it: ‘How will neither kings nor thieves make off with my property, nor fire burn it, nor water sweep it away, nor hateful heirs make off with it?’ And as

he thus guards and watches over his property, kings or thieves make off with it, or fire burns it, or water sweeps it away, or hateful heirs make off with it. And he sorrows, grieves, & laments, beats his breast, becomes distraught: ‘What was mine is no more!’....

“Furthermore, it is with sensuality for the reason, sensuality for the source, sensuality for the cause, the reason being simply sensuality, that kings quarrel with kings, nobles with nobles, brāhmins with brāhmins, householders with householders, mother with child, child with mother, father with child, child with father, brother with brother, sister with sister, brother with sister, sister with brother, friend with friend. And then in their quarrels, brawls, & disputes, they attack one another with fists or with clods or with sticks or with knives, so that they incur death or deadly pain....

“Furthermore, it is with sensuality for the reason, sensuality for the source...that (men), taking swords & shields and buckling on bows & quivers, charge into battle massed in double array while arrows & spears are flying and swords are flashing; and there they are wounded by arrows & spears, and their heads are cut off by swords, so that they incur death or deadly pain....

“Furthermore, it is with sensuality for the reason, sensuality for the source...that (men), taking swords & shields and buckling on bows & quivers, charge slippery bastions while arrows & spears are flying and swords are flashing; and there they are splashed with boiling cow dung and crushed under heavy weights, and their heads are cut off by swords, so that they incur death or deadly pain. Now this drawback too in the case of sensuality, this mass of stress visible here & now, has sensuality for its reason, sensuality for its source, sensuality for its cause, the reason being simply sensuality.” — [*MN 13*](#)

§33. “Imagine a bowl of water mixed with lac, yellow orpiment, indigo, or crimson, such that a man with good eyesight examining the reflection of his face in it would not be able to know or see his face as it actually is. In the same way, when one remains with awareness possessed by *sensual passion*, overcome with sensual passion, and neither knows nor sees the escape, as it is actually present, from

sensual passion once it has arisen, then one neither knows nor sees what is for one's own benefit, or for the benefit of others, or for the benefit of both.... —*SN 46:55*

§34. “And who is the person who, subject to death, is afraid & in terror of death? There is the case of the person who has not abandoned passion, desire, fondness, thirst, fever, & craving for sensuality. Then he comes down with a serious disease. As 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 & is tormented, weeps, beats his breast, & grows delirious. This is a person who, subject to death, is afraid & in terror of death.

“Then there is the case of the person who has not abandoned passion, desire, fondness, thirst, fever, & craving for the body. Then he comes down with a serious disease. As he comes down with 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 & is tormented, weeps, beats his breast, & grows delirious. This, too, is a person who, subject to death, is afraid & in terror of death.” —*AN 4:184*.

§35. “There are forms, monks, cognizable via the eye—agreeable, pleasing, charming, endearing, fostering desire, enticing. If a monk relishes them, welcomes them, & remains fastened to them, he is said to be a monk fettered by forms cognizable by the eye. He has gone over to Māra's camp; he has come under Māra's power. The Evil One can do with him as he will.”

[Similarly with the rest of the six senses.] —*SN 35:115*

§36. “There are forms cognizable by the eye—agreeable...enticing. If a monk relishes them, welcomes them, & remains fastened to them, then...his consciousness is dependent on them, is sustained by them. With sustenance/clinging, the monk is not totally unbound....

“If he does not relish them, welcome them, or remain fastened to them, then...his consciousness is not dependent on them, is not

sustained by them. Without sustenance/clinging, the monk is totally unbound.”

[Similarly with the rest of the six senses.] — [SN 35:118](#)

§37. Not even if it rained gold coins
would we have our fill
of sensual pleasures,
 sensual passions.
 ‘Stressful,
 they give little enjoyment’—
knowing this, the wise one
 finds no delight
even in heavenly sensual pleasures.
He is one who delights
 in the ending of craving,
 a disciple of the Rightly
 Self-Awakened One. — [Dhp 186–187](#)

BECOMING & NON-BECOMING

§38. “Overcome by two viewpoints, some devas & human beings adhere, other devas & human beings slip right past, while those with vision see.

“And how do some adhere? Devas & human beings enjoy becoming, delight in becoming, are satisfied with becoming. When the Dhamma is being taught for the sake of the cessation of becoming, their minds do not take to it, are not calmed by it, do not settle on it or become resolved on it. This is how some adhere.

“And how do some slip right past? Some, feeling horrified, humiliated, & disgusted with that very becoming, relish non-becoming: ‘When this self, at the break-up of the body, after death, perishes & is destroyed, and does not exist after death, that is peaceful, that is exquisite, that is sufficiency!’ This is how some slip right past.

“And how do those with vision see? There is the case where a monk sees what has come into being as come into being. Seeing what has come into being as come into being, he practices for disenchantment with what has come into being, dispassion toward what has come into being, cessation of what has come into being. This is how those with vision see.” — *Iti 49*.

§39. This world is burning.
Afflicted by contact,
it calls disease a ‘self.’
By whatever means it supposes [anything],
it becomes otherwise than that.
Becoming otherwise,
the world is
 attached to becoming,
 afflicted by becoming,
and yet delights
 in that very becoming.

Where there's delight,
 there is fear.
What one fears
 is stressful.
This holy life is lived
for the abandoning of becoming.

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

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

For this stress comes into play
in dependence on every acquisition.
With the ending of every clinging/sustenance,
there's no stress coming into play.
 Look at this world:
Beings, afflicted with thick ignorance,
are unreleased
from passion for what has come to be.
All levels of becoming,
 anywhere,
 in any way,
are inconstant, stressful, subject to change.
Seeing this—as it's come to be—
with right discernment,
one abandons craving for becoming
and doesn't delight in non-becoming.
From the total ending of craving
comes fading & cessation without remainder:
 unbinding.
For the monk unbound
through lack of clinging/sustenance,

there's no further becoming.
He has conquered Māra,
won the battle,
having gone beyond becomings
: Such.— [Ud 3:10](#)

§40. People are
possessed by conceit
tied up with conceit
delighted with becoming.
Not comprehending conceit,
they come to becoming again.
But those who, letting go of conceit,
are, in its destruction, released,
conquering the bond of conceit,
go beyond
all bonds.— [Iti 8](#)

§41. Abandon anger,
be done with conceit,
get beyond every fetter.
When for name & form
you have no attachment
—have nothing at all—
no sufferings, no stresses, invade. — [Dhp 221](#)

§42. Once Ven. Sāriputta and Ven. Upasena were staying near Rājagaha 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. Sāriputta 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 Sāriputta, 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, & obsession with conceit 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](#).

§43. Ven. Sāriputta 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. Ānanda said to Ven. Sāriputta, “Sāriputta 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. Ānanda,] “it’s because Ven. Sāriputta’s I-making & mine-making and obsession with conceit 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 FOURTH NOBLE TRUTH

§44. “Among whatever fabricated phenomena there may be, the noble eightfold path—right view, right resolve, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness, right concentration—is considered supreme.” — [Iti 90](#)

§45. “And what is right resolve? Right resolve, I tell you, is of two sorts: There is right resolve with effluents, siding with merit, resulting in the acquisitions [of becoming]; and there is noble right resolve, without effluents, transcendent, a factor of the path.

“And what is the right resolve with effluents, siding with merit, resulting in acquisitions? Resolve for renunciation, resolve for non-ill will, resolve for harmlessness. This is the right resolve with effluents, siding with merit, resulting in acquisitions.

“And what is the right resolve that is noble, without effluents, transcendent, a factor of the path? The thinking, directed thinking, resolve, mental fixity, mental transfixion, focused awareness, & verbal fabrications [directed thought & evaluation] in one developing the noble path whose mind is noble, whose mind is without effluents, who is fully possessed of the noble path. This is the right resolve that is noble, without effluents, transcendent, a factor of the path.” — [MN 117](#)

§46. “And what is right effort? 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 ... for the sake of the abandoning of evil, unskillful qualities that have arisen ... for the sake of the arising of skillful qualities that have not yet arisen ... for the maintenance, non-confusion, increase, plenitude, development, & culmination of skillful qualities that have arisen: This, monks, is called right effort.” — [SN 45:8](#)

§47. If
you've given birth to a wish
for what can't be expressed,
are suffused with heart,
your mind not enmeshed
in sensual passions:
you're said to be
in the up-flowing stream.— *Dhp 218*

§48. “There is the case where a monk develops the base of power endowed with concentration founded on desire & the fabrications of exertion, thinking, ‘This desire of mine will be neither overly sluggish nor overly active, neither inwardly restricted nor outwardly scattered.’ He keeps perceiving what is in front & behind so that what is in front is the same as what is behind, what is behind is the same as what is in front. What is below is the same as what is above, what is above is the same as what is below. [He dwells] by night as by day, and by day as by night. By means of an awareness thus open & unhampered, he develops a brightened mind....

“And how is desire overly sluggish? Whatever desire is accompanied by laziness, conjoined with laziness, that is called overly sluggish desire.

“And how is desire overly active? Whatever desire is accompanied by restlessness, conjoined with restlessness, that is called overly active desire.

“And how is desire inwardly restricted? Whatever desire is accompanied by sloth & drowsiness, conjoined with sloth & drowsiness, that is called inwardly restricted desire.

“And how is desire outwardly scattered? Whatever desire is stirred up by the five strands of sensuality, outwardly dispersed & dissipated, that is called outwardly scattered desire.

“And how does a monk dwell perceiving what is in front & behind so that what is in front is the same as what is behind, and what is behind is the same as what is in front? There is the case where a monk's perception of what is in front & behind is well in hand, well-

attended to, well-considered, well-tuned (‘penetrated’) by means of discernment. This is how a monk keeps perceiving what is in front and behind so that what is in front is the same as what is behind, and what is behind is the same as what is in front.

“And how does a monk dwell so that what is below is the same as what is above, and what is above is the same as what is below? There is the case where a monk reflects on this very body, from the soles of the feet on up, from the crown of the head on down, surrounded by skin, & full of various kinds of unclean things: ‘In this body there are head hairs, body hairs, nails, teeth, skin, flesh, tendons, bones, bone marrow, kidneys, heart, liver, pleura, spleen, lungs, large intestines, small intestines, gorge, feces, bile, phlegm, pus, blood, sweat, fat, tears, skin-oil, saliva, mucus, fluid in the joints, urine.’ This is how a monk dwells so that what is below is the same as what is above, and what is above is the same as what is below.

“And how does a monk dwell by night as by day, and by day as by night? There is the case where a monk at night develops the base of power endowed with concentration founded on desire & the fabrications of exertion by means of the same modes (permutations) & signs & themes that he uses by day, and by day he develops the base of power endowed with concentration founded on desire & the fabrications of exertion by means of the same modes & signs & themes that he uses by night. This is how a monk dwells by night as by day, and by day as by night.

“And how does a monk—by means of an awareness open & unhampered—develop a brightened mind? There is the case where a monk has the perception of light, the perception of daytime [at any hour of the day] well in hand & well-established. This is how a monk—by means of an awareness open & unhampered—develops a brightened mind.” — [*SN 51:20*](#)

§49. I have heard that on one occasion Ven. Ānanda was staying in Kosambī, at Ghosita’s Park. Then the brahman Uṇṇābha went to Ven. Ānanda and on arrival greeted him courteously. After an exchange of friendly greetings & courtesies, he sat to one side. As he was sitting

there, he said to Ven. Ānanda: “Master Ānanda, what is the aim of this holy life lived under the contemplative Gotama?”

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

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

“Yes, there is ...”

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

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

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

“In that case, brahman, let me cross-question you on this matter. Answer as you see fit. What do you think: Didn’t you first have desire, thinking, ‘I’ll go to the park,’ and then when you reached the park, wasn’t that particular desire allayed?”

“Yes, sir.” ...

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

“You’re right, Master Ānanda. This is a path with an end, and not an endless one.” — [SN 51:15](#)

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

“Furthermore, he reflects thus: ‘If someone, by way of theft, were to take from me what I haven’t given, that would be displeasing & disagreeable to me... If someone were to commit adultery with my wives, that would be displeasing & disagreeable to me... If someone were to damage my well-being with a lie, that would be displeasing & disagreeable to me... If someone were to divide me from my friends with divisive speech, that would be displeasing & disagreeable to me ... If someone were to address me with harsh speech, that would be displeasing & disagreeable to me... If someone were to address me with idle chatter, that would be displeasing & disagreeable to me. And if I were to address another with idle chatter, that would be displeasing & disagreeable to the other. What is displeasing & disagreeable to me is displeasing & disagreeable to others. How can I inflict on others what is displeasing & disagreeable to me?’ Reflecting in this way, he refrains from idle chatter, gets others to refrain from idle chatter, and speaks in praise of refraining from idle chatter.” — [SN 55:7](#)

§51. Ven. Ānanda [to a nun who had tried to seduce him]: “‘This body, sister, comes into being through food. And yet it is by relying on food that food is to be abandoned.’ Thus it was said. And in reference to what was it said? There is the case where a monk, considering it thoughtfully, takes food—not playfully, nor for intoxication, nor for

putting on bulk, nor for beautification—but simply for the survival & continuance of this body, for ending its afflictions, for the support of the holy life, [thinking,] ‘Thus will I destroy old feelings [of hunger] and not create new feelings [from overeating]. I will maintain myself, be blameless, & live in comfort.’ Then, at a later time, he abandons food, having relied on food....

“‘This body comes into being through craving. And yet it is by relying on craving that craving is to be abandoned.’ Thus it was said. And in reference to what was it said? There is the case, sister, where a monk hears, ‘The monk named such-and-such, they say, through the ending of the effluents, has entered & remains in the effluent-free awareness-release & discernment-release, having known & realized them for himself in the here & now.’ The thought occurs to him, ‘I hope that I, too, will—through the ending of the effluents—enter & remain in the effluent-free awareness-release & discernment-release, having directly known & realized them for myself right in the here & now.’ Then, at a later time, he abandons craving, having relied on craving....

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

“This body comes into being through sexual intercourse. Sexual intercourse is to be abandoned. With regard to sexual intercourse, the Buddha declares the cutting off of the bridge.” — [*AN 4:159*](#)

§52. “The thirty-six emotions to which beings are attached should be known’: Thus was it said. And in reference to what was it said? Six kinds of house-based happiness & six kinds of renunciation-based happiness; six kinds of house-based distress & six kinds of renunciation-based distress; six kinds of house-based equanimity & six kinds of renunciation-based equanimity.

“And what are the six kinds of house-based happiness? The happiness that arises when one regards as an acquisition the acquisition of forms cognizable by the eye—agreeable, pleasing, charming, endearing, connected with worldly baits—or when one recalls the previous acquisition of such forms after they have passed, ceased, & changed: That is called house-based happiness. [Similarly with sounds, smells, tastes, tactile sensations, & ideas.]

“And what are the six kinds of renunciation-based happiness? The happiness that arises when—experiencing the inconstancy of those very forms, their change, fading, & cessation—one sees with right discernment as it has come to be that all forms, both before and now, are inconstant, stressful, subject to change: That is called renunciation-based happiness. [Similarly with sounds, smells, tastes, tactile sensations, & ideas.]

“And what are the six kinds of house-based distress? The distress that arises when one regards as a non-acquisition the non-acquisition of forms cognizable by the eye—agreeable, pleasing, charming, endearing, connected with worldly baits—or when one recalls the previous non-acquisition of such forms after they have passed, ceased, & changed: That is called house-based distress. [Similarly with sounds, smells, tastes, tactile sensations, & ideas.]

“And what are the six kinds of renunciation-based distress? The distress coming from the longing that arises in one who is filled with longing for the unexcelled liberations when—experiencing the inconstancy of those very forms, their change, fading, & cessation—he sees with right discernment as it has come to be that all forms, both before and now, are inconstant, stressful, subject to change and he is filled with this longing: ‘O when will I enter & remain in the dimension

that the noble ones now enter & remain in?’ This is called renunciation-based distress. [Similarly with sounds, smells, tastes, tactile sensations, & ideas.]

“And what are the six kinds of house-based equanimity? The equanimity that arises when a foolish, deluded person—a run-of-the-mill, untaught person who has not conquered his limitations or the results of action & who is blind to danger—sees a form with the eye. Such equanimity does not go beyond the form, which is why it is called house-based equanimity. [Similarly with sounds, smells, tastes, tactile sensations, & ideas.]

“And what are the six kinds of renunciation-based equanimity? The equanimity that arises when—experiencing the inconstancy of those very forms, their change, fading, & cessation—one sees with right discernment as it has come to be that all forms, both before and now, are inconstant, stressful, subject to change: This equanimity goes beyond form, which is why it is called renunciation-based equanimity. [Similarly with sounds, smells, tastes, tactile sensations, & ideas.]

“‘The thirty-six emotions to which beings are attached should be known’: Thus was it said. And in reference to this was it said.

“‘With regard to them, depending on this, abandon that’: Thus was it said. And in reference to what was it said?

“Here, by depending & relying on the six kinds of renunciation-based happiness, abandon & transcend the six kinds of house-based happiness. Such is their abandoning, such is their transcending. By depending & relying on the six kinds of renunciation-based distress, abandon & transcend the six kinds of house-based distress. Such is their abandoning, such is their transcending. By depending & relying on the six kinds of renunciation-based equanimity, abandon & transcend the six kinds of house-based equanimity. Such is their abandoning, such their transcending.

“By depending & relying on the six kinds of renunciation-based happiness, abandon & transcend the six kinds of renunciation-based distress. Such is their abandoning, such is their transcending. By depending & relying on the six kinds of renunciation-based

equanimity, abandon & transcend the six kinds of renunciation-based happiness. Such is their abandoning, such their transcending.

“There is equanimity coming from multiplicity, dependent on multiplicity; and there is equanimity coming from singleness, dependent on singleness.

“And what is equanimity coming from multiplicity, dependent on multiplicity? There is equanimity with regard to forms, equanimity with regard to sounds... smells... tastes... tactile sensations [& ideas: this word appears in one of the recensions]. This is equanimity coming from multiplicity, dependent on multiplicity.

“And what is equanimity coming from singleness, dependent on singleness? There is equanimity dependent on the dimension of the infinitude of space, equanimity dependent on the dimension of the infinitude of consciousness... dependent on the dimension of nothingness... dependent on the dimension of neither perception nor non-perception. This is equanimity coming from singleness, dependent on singleness.

“By depending & relying on equanimity coming from singleness, dependent on singleness, abandon & transcend equanimity coming from multiplicity, dependent on multiplicity. Such is its abandoning, such its transcending.

“By depending & relying on non-fashioning, abandon & transcend the equanimity coming from singleness, dependent on singleness. Such is its abandoning, such its transcending.

“Depending on this, abandon that’: Thus was it said. And in reference to this was it said.” — [*MN 137*](#)

§53. Spread with garlands of vines,
places delighting the mind,
resounding with elephants,
appealing:

those rocky crags
refresh me.

The color of blue-dark clouds,
glistening,
cooled with the waters
of clear-flowing streams
covered with ladybugs:
those rocky crags
refresh me.

Like the peaks of blue-dark clouds,
like excellent peaked-roof buildings,
resounding with tuskers,
appealing:
those rocky crags
refresh me.

Their lovely surfaces wet with rain,
mountains frequented
by seers
& echoing
with peacocks:
those rocky crags
refresh me.

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

resolute,
Such.

Flax-flower blue,
like the sky
covered over with clouds;
filled with flocks
of various birds:
those rocky crags
refresh me.

Uncrowded
by householders,
frequented
by herds of deer
filled with flocks
of various birds:
those rocky crags
refresh me.

With clear waters &
massive boulders,
frequented by monkeys &
deer,
covered with moss &
water weeds:
those rocky crags
refresh me.

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

§54. “And what is the escape from sensuality? The subduing of desire-passion for sensuality, the abandoning of desire-passion for

sensuality. That is the escape from sensuality.” — [MN 13](#)

§55. “Furthermore... just as if a sack with openings at both ends were full of various kinds of grain—wheat, rice, mung beans, kidney beans, sesame seeds, husked rice—and a man with good eyesight, pouring it out, were to reflect, ‘This is wheat. This is rice. These are mung beans. These are kidney beans. These are sesame seeds. This is husked rice,’ in the same way, the monk reflects on this very body from the soles of the feet on up, from the crown of the head on down, surrounded by skin and full of various kinds of unclean things: ‘In this body there are head hairs, body hairs, nails, teeth, skin, flesh, tendons, bones, bone marrow, kidneys, heart, liver, pleura, spleen, lungs, large intestines, small intestines, gorge, feces, bile, phlegm, pus, blood, sweat, fat, tears, skin-oil, saliva, mucus, fluid in the joints, urine.’...

“Furthermore, as if he were to see a corpse cast away in a charnel ground—one day, two days, three days dead—bloated, livid, & festering, he 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](#)

§56. “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'....

“A disciple of the noble ones considers this: ‘I am not the only one who is the owner of my actions, heir to my actions, born of my actions, related through my actions, and have 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 the owners 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 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 5:57](#)

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

“‘May what is subject to aging not age.’ This is something that cannot be gotten by a contemplative, a brahman, a deva, a Māra, a Brahmā, or anyone at all in the world.

“‘May what is subject to illness not grow ill.’ This is something that cannot be gotten by a contemplative, a brahman, a deva, a Māra, a Brahmā, or anyone at all in the world.

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

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

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

“Now, it happens to an uninstructed run-of-the-mill person that something that is subject to aging ages. With the aging of what is subject to aging, he does not 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 does not 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 does not sorrow, grieve, or lament, does not beat his breast or become distraught. This is called an instructed disciple of the noble ones who has pulled out the poisoned arrow of sorrow pierced with which the uninstructed run-of-the-mill person torments himself. Sorrowless, arrowless, the disciple of the noble ones is totally unbound right within himself.

“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 does not sorrow, grieve, or lament, does not beat his breast or become distraught. This is called an instructed disciple of the noble ones who has pulled out the poisoned arrow of sorrow pierced with which the uninstructed run-of-the-mill person torments himself. Sorrowless, arrowless, the disciple of the noble ones is totally unbound right within himself.

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

Not by sorrowing,
not by lamenting,
is any aim accomplished here,
not even a bit.
Knowing you’re 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](#)

§58. “Even though a disciple of the noble ones may have seen clearly, with right discernment, that sensuality is of much stress, much despair, & greater drawbacks, as long as he/she has not attained the rapture & pleasure aside from sensual sensuality, aside from unskillful mental qualities, or something more peaceful than that, then he/she is still liable to return to sensuality. But when a disciple of the noble ones has seen clearly, with right discernment, that sensuality is of much stress, much despair, & greater drawbacks, and has attained the rapture & pleasure aside from sensuality, aside from unskillful mental qualities, or something more peaceful than that, then he/she is no longer liable to return to sensuality.” — [MN 14](#).

§59. “Before, when I was a householder, I enjoyed myself endowed and well-provided with the five strings of sensuality: forms cognizable via the eye—agreeable, pleasing, charming, endearing, fostering desire, enticing; sounds cognizable via the ear ... aromas cognizable via the nose ... flavors cognizable via the tongue ... tactile sensations cognizable via the body—agreeable, pleasing, charming, endearing, fostering desire, enticing. 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. Then, having at a later time seen as they actually are present the origination, the disappearance, the allure, the drawbacks, & the escape from sensuality; having abandoned sensual craving and removed sensual fever, I dwell without thirst, with a mind inwardly at peace. I see other beings who are not devoid of passion for sensuality being chewed upon by sensual craving, burning with sensual fevers, engrossed in sensuality, and I am not envious of them, nor do I delight there. Why is that? Because—delighting in the delight that is apart from sensuality, apart from unskillful mental states—I am not envious of what is inferior nor do I delight there.” — [MN.75](#)

§60. “Suppose a dog, overcome with weakness & hunger, were to come across a slaughterhouse, and there a dexterous butcher or butcher’s apprentice were to fling him a chain of bones—thoroughly scraped, without any flesh, smeared with blood. What do you think: Would the dog, gnawing on that chain of bones—thoroughly scraped, without any flesh, smeared with blood—appease its weakness & hunger?”

“No, lord. And why is that? Because the chain of bones is thoroughly scraped, without any flesh, & smeared with blood. The dog would get nothing but its share of weariness & vexation.”

“In the same way, householder, a disciple of the noble ones considers this point: ‘The Blessed One has compared sensuality to a chain of bones, of much stress, much despair, & greater drawbacks.’ Seeing this with right discernment, as it actually is, then avoiding the equanimity coming from multiplicity, dependent on multiplicity, he develops the equanimity coming from singleness, dependent on singleness, where sustenance/clinging for the baits of the world ceases without trace.

“Now suppose a vulture, a kite, or a hawk, seizing a lump of flesh, were to take off, and other vultures, kites, or hawks—following right

after it—were to tear at it with their beaks & pull at it with their claws. What do you think: If that vulture, kite, or hawk were not quickly to drop that lump of flesh, would it meet with death from that cause, or with death-like pain?”

“Yes, lord.”

“In the same way, householder, a disciple of the noble ones considers this point: ‘The Blessed One has compared sensuality to a lump of flesh, of much stress, much despair, & greater drawbacks’

“Now suppose a man were to come against the wind, carrying a burning grass torch. What do you think: If he were not quickly to drop that grass torch, would he burn his hand or his arm or some other part of his body, so that he would meet with death from that cause, or with death-like pain?”

“Yes, lord.”

“In the same way, householder, a disciple of the noble ones considers this point: ‘The Blessed One has compared sensuality to a grass torch, of much stress, much despair, & greater drawbacks’

“Now suppose there were a pit of glowing embers, deeper than a man’s height, full of embers that were neither flaming nor smoking, and a man were to come along—loving life, hating death, loving pleasure, abhorring pain—and two strong men, grabbing him with their arms, were to drag him to the pit of embers. What do you think: Wouldn’t the man twist his body this way & that?”

“Yes, lord. And why is that? Because he would realize, ‘If I fall into this pit of glowing embers, I will meet with death from that cause, or with death-like pain.’”

“In the same way, householder, a disciple of the noble ones considers this point: ‘The Blessed One has compared sensuality to a pit of glowing embers, of much stress, much despair, & greater drawbacks’

“Now suppose a man, when dreaming, were to see delightful parks, delightful forests, delightful stretches of land, & delightful lakes, and on awakening were to see nothing. In the same way, householder, a disciple of the noble ones considers this point: ‘The Blessed One has

compared sensuality to a dream, of much stress, much despair, & greater drawbacks'

“Now suppose a man having borrowed some goods—a manly carriage, fine jewels, & ear ornaments—were to go into the market preceded & surrounded by his borrowed goods, and people seeing him would say, ‘How wealthy this man is, for this is how the wealthy enjoy their possessions,’ but the actual owners, wherever they might see him, would strip him then & there of what is theirs. What do you think: Would the man justifiably be upset?”

“No, lord. And why is that? Because the owners are stripping him of what is theirs.”

“In the same way, householder, a disciple of the noble ones considers this point: ‘The Blessed One has compared sensuality to borrowed goods, of much stress, much despair, & greater drawbacks’

“Now suppose that, not far from a village or town, there were a dense forest grove, and there in the grove was a tree with delicious fruit, abundant fruit, but with no fruit fallen to the ground. A man would come along, desiring fruit, looking for fruit, searching for fruit. Plunging into the forest grove, he would see the tree...and the thought would occur to him, ‘This is a tree with delicious fruit, abundant fruit, and there is no fruit fallen to the ground, but I know how to climb a tree. Why don’t I climb the tree, eat what I like, and fill my clothes with the fruit?’ So, having climbed the tree, he would eat what he liked and fill his clothes with the fruit. Then a second man would come along, desiring fruit, looking for fruit, searching for fruit and carrying a sharp ax. Plunging into the forest grove, he would see the tree...and the thought would occur to him, ‘This is a tree with delicious fruit, abundant fruit, and there is no fruit fallen to the ground, and I don’t know how to climb a tree. Why don’t I chop down this tree at the root, eat what I like, and fill my clothes with the fruit?’ So he would chop the tree at the root. What do you think: If the first man who climbed the tree didn’t quickly come down, wouldn’t the falling tree crush his hand or foot or some other part of his body, so that he would meet with death from that cause, or with death-like pain?”

“Yes, lord.”

“In the same way, householder, a disciple of the noble ones considers this point: ‘The Blessed One has compared sensuality to the fruits of a tree, of much stress, much despair, & greater drawbacks.’ Seeing this with right discernment, as it actually is present, then avoiding the equanimity coming from multiplicity, dependent on multiplicity, he develops the equanimity coming from singleness, dependent on singleness, where sustenance/clinging for the baits of the world ceases without trace.

“Now when the disciple of the noble ones has arrived at this purity of equanimity & mindfulness, he recollects his manifold past lives, i.e., one birth, two ... five, ten ... fifty, a hundred, a thousand, a hundred thousand, many eons of cosmic contraction, many eons of cosmic expansion, many eons of cosmic contraction & expansion: ‘There I had such a name, belonged to such a clan, had such an appearance. Such was my food, such my experience of pleasure & pain, such the end of my life. Passing away from that state, I re-arose there. There too I had such a name, belonged to such a clan, had such an appearance. Such was my food, such my experience of pleasure & pain, such the end of my life. Passing away from that state, I re-arose here.’ Thus he recollects his manifold past lives in their modes & details.

“When the disciple of the noble ones has arrived at this purity of equanimity & mindfulness, he sees—by means of the divine eye, purified & surpassing the human—beings passing away & re-appearing, and he discerns how they are inferior & superior, beautiful & ugly, fortunate & unfortunate in accordance with their kamma: ‘These beings—who were endowed with bad conduct of body, speech & mind, who reviled noble ones, held wrong views and undertook actions under the influence of wrong views—with the break-up of the body, after death, have re-appeared in the plane of deprivation, the bad destination, the lower realms, in hell. But these beings—who were endowed with good conduct of body, speech, & mind, who did not revile noble ones, who held right views and undertook actions under the influence of right views—with the break-up of the body, after

death, have re-appeared in the good destinations, in the heavenly world.’ Thus—by means of the divine eye, purified & surpassing the human—he sees beings passing away & re-appearing, and he discerns how they are inferior & superior, beautiful & ugly, fortunate & unfortunate in accordance with their kamma.

“When the disciple of the noble ones has arrived at this purity of equanimity & mindfulness, he enters & remains in the effluent-free awareness-release & discernment-release, having directly known & realized them for himself right in the here & now.” — [MN 54](#).

§61. “I tell you, the ending of the effluents depends on the first jhāna.’ Thus it has been said. In reference to what was it said? There is the case where a monk, secluded from sensuality, secluded from unskillful qualities, enters & remains in the first jhāna: rapture & pleasure born from seclusion, accompanied by directed thought & evaluation. He regards whatever phenomena there that are connected with form, feeling, perception, fabrications, & consciousness, as inconstant, stressful, a disease, a cancer, an arrow, painful, an affliction, alien, a disintegration, an emptiness, not-self. He turns his mind away from those phenomena, and having done so, inclines his mind to the property of deathlessness: ‘This is peace, this is exquisite—the resolution of all fabrications; the relinquishment of all acquisitions; the ending of craving; dispassion; cessation; unbinding.’

“Suppose that an archer or archer’s apprentice were to practice on a straw man or mound of clay, so that after a while he would become able to shoot long distances, to fire accurate shots in rapid succession, and to pierce great masses. In the same way, there is the case where a monk...enters & remains in the first jhāna: rapture & pleasure born of seclusion, accompanied by directed thought & evaluation. He regards whatever phenomena there that are connected with form, feeling, perception, fabrications, & consciousness, as inconstant, stressful, a disease, a cancer, an arrow, painful, an affliction, alien, a disintegration, an emptiness, not-self. He turns his mind away from those phenomena, and having done so, inclines his mind to the property of deathlessness: ‘This is peace, this is exquisite—the

resolution of all fabrications; the relinquishment of all acquisitions; the ending of craving; dispassion; cessation; unbinding.’

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

“I tell you, the ending of the effluents depends on the first jhāna.’ Thus it was said, and in reference to this was it said.”

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

§62. “Then again, a monk keeps pervading the first direction [the east] with an awareness imbued with good will, likewise the second, likewise the third, likewise the fourth. Thus above, below, & all around, everywhere, in its entirety, he keeps pervading the all-encompassing cosmos with an awareness imbued with good will—abundant, expansive, immeasurable, without hostility, without ill will. He reflects on this and discerns, ‘This release of awareness through goodwill is fabricated & intended. Now whatever is fabricated & intended is inconstant & subject to cessation.’ Staying right there, he reaches the ending of the effluents. Or, if not, then—through this very Dhamma-passion, this Dhamma-delight, and from the total ending of the five lower fetters—he is due to arise spontaneously [in the Pure Abodes], there to be totally unbound, never again to return from that world.

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

[Similarly with release of awareness through compassion, through empathetic joy, & through equanimity.] —[AN 11:17](#)

§63. Whatever streams
there are in the world:
 their blocking is
 mindfulness, mindfulness
 is their restraint—I tell you—
with discernment
 they’re finally stopped.— *Sn 5:1*

§64. He whose thirty-six streams,
flowing to what is appealing, are strong:
the currents—resolves based on passion—
carry him, of base views, away.

They flow every which way, the streams,
but the sprouted creeper stays
 in place.

Now, seeing that the creeper’s arisen,
cut through its root
with discernment. — *Dhp 339–340*

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

“By & large, Kaccāyana, this world is in bondage to attachments, clingings, & biases. But one such as this does not get involved with or cling to these attachments, clingings, fixations of awareness, biases, or obsessions; nor is he resolved on ‘my self.’ He has no uncertainty or doubt that mere stress, when arising, is arising; stress, when passing away, is passing away. In this, his knowledge is independent of others. It’s to this extent, Kaccāyana, that there is right view.

“‘Everything exists’: That is one extreme. ‘Everything doesn’t exist’: That is a second extreme. Avoiding these two extremes, the Tathāgata

teaches the Dhamma via the middle: From ignorance as a requisite condition come fabrications.... — [SN 12:15](#)

§66. The Blessed One said: “Now what is dependent co-arising? From birth as a requisite condition comes aging & death. Whether or not there is the arising of Tathāgatas, this property stands—this regularity of the Dhamma, this orderliness of the Dhamma, this this/that conditionality. The Tathāgata directly awakens to that, breaks through to that. Directly awakening & breaking through to that, he declares it, teaches it, describes it, sets it forth. He reveals it, explains it, makes it plain, & says, ‘Look.’ From birth as a requisite condition comes aging & death.

“From becoming as a requisite condition comes birth....

“From clinging/sustenance as a requisite condition comes becoming....

“From craving as a requisite condition comes clinging/sustenance....

“From feeling as a requisite condition comes craving....

“From contact as a requisite condition comes feeling....

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

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

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

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

“From ignorance as a requisite condition come fabrications. Whether or not there is the arising of Tathāgatas, this property stands—this regularity of the Dhamma, this orderliness of the Dhamma, this this/that conditionality. The Tathāgata directly awakens to that, breaks through to that. Directly awakening & breaking through to that, he declares it, teaches it, describes it, sets it forth. He reveals it, explains it, makes it plain, & says, ‘Look.’ From ignorance as a requisite condition come fabrications. What’s there in this way is a

reality, not an unreality, not other than what it seems, conditioned by this/that. This is called dependent co-arising....

“When a disciple of the noble ones has seen well with right discernment this dependent co-arising & these dependently co-arisen phenomena as they are actually present, it’s not possible that he would run after the past, thinking, ‘Was I in the past? Was I not in the past? What was I in the past? How was I in the past? Having been what, what was I in the past?’ or that he would run after the future, thinking, ‘Shall I be in the future? Shall I not be in the future? What shall I be in the future? How shall I be in the future? Having been what, what shall I be in the future?’ or that he would be inwardly perplexed about the immediate present, thinking, ‘Am I? Am I not? What am I? How am I? Where has this being come from? Where is it bound?’ Such a thing is not possible. Why is that? Because the disciple of the noble ones has seen well with right discernment this dependent co-arising & these dependently co-arisen phenomena as they are actually present.” — [SN 12:20](#)

§67. “Whatever is inconstant: There desire is to be abandoned.... Whatever is stressful: There desire is to be abandoned.... Whatever is not-self: There desire is to be abandoned.” — *SN 35:162–164*

§68. The Blessed One said: “Monks, there are these five means of propagation. Which five? Root-propagation, stem-propagation, joint-propagation, cutting-propagation, & seed-propagation as the fifth. And if these five means of propagation are not broken, not rotten, not damaged by wind & sun, mature, and well-buried, but there is no earth and no water, would they exhibit growth, increase, & proliferation?”

“No, lord.”

“And if these five means of propagation are broken, rotten, damaged by wind & sun, immature, and poorly-buried, but there is earth & water, would they exhibit growth, increase, & proliferation?”

“No, lord.”

“And if these five means of propagation are not broken, not rotten, not damaged by wind & sun, mature, and well-buried, and there is earth & water, would they exhibit growth, increase, & proliferation?”

“Yes, lord.”

“Like the earth property, monks, is how the four standing-spots for consciousness should be seen. Like the liquid property is how delight & passion should be seen. Like the five means of propagation is how consciousness together with its nutriment should be seen.

“Should consciousness, when taking a stance, stand attached to (a physical) form ... feeling ... perception ... fabrications, supported by fabrications (as its object), established on fabrications, watered with delight, it would exhibit growth, increase, & proliferation.

“Were someone to say, ‘I will describe a coming, a going, a passing away, an arising, a growth, an increase, or a proliferation of consciousness apart from form, from feeling, from perception, from fabrications,’ that would be impossible.

“If a monk abandons passion for the property of form ... the property of feeling ... the property of perception ... the property of fabrications ... the property of consciousness, then owing to the abandonment of passion, the support is cut off, and there is no base for consciousness. Consciousness, thus unestablished, not proliferating, not performing any function, is released. Owing to its release, it is steady. Owing to its steadiness, it is contented. Owing to its contentment, it is not agitated. Not agitated, he (the monk) is totally unbound right within. He discerns that ‘Birth is ended, the holy life fulfilled, the task done. There is nothing further for this world.’” —

[SN 22:54](#)

§69. “There are these four nutriments for the maintenance of beings who have come into being or for the support of those in search of a place to be born. Which four? Physical food, gross or refined; contact as the second, intellectual intention the third, and consciousness the fourth. These are the four nutriments for the maintenance of beings who have come into being or for the support of those in search of a place to be born.

“And how is physical food to be regarded? Suppose a couple, husband & wife, taking meager provisions, were to travel through a desert. With them would be their only baby son, dear & adorable. Then the meager provisions of the couple going through the desert would be used up & depleted while there was still a stretch of the desert yet to be crossed. The thought would occur to them, ‘Our meager provisions are used up & depleted while there is still a stretch of this desert yet to be crossed. What if we were to kill this only baby son of ours, dear & adorable, and make dried meat & jerky. That way—chewing on the flesh of our son—at least the two of us would make it through this desert. Otherwise, all three of us would perish.’ So they would kill their only baby son, dear & adorable, and make dried meat & jerky. Chewing on the flesh of their son, they would make it through the desert. While eating the flesh of their only son, they would beat their breasts, [crying,] ‘Where have you gone, our only baby son? Where have you gone, our only baby son?’ Now what do you think, monks: Would that couple eat that food playfully or for intoxication, or for putting on bulk, or for beatification?”—“No, lord.”

“Wouldn’t they eat that food simply for the sake of making it through that desert?”—“Yes, lord.”

“In the same way, I tell you, is the nutriment of physical food to be regarded. *When physical food is comprehended, passion for the five strings of sensuality is comprehended.* When passion for the five strings of sensuality is comprehended, there is no fetter bound by which a disciple of the noble ones would come back again to this world.

“And how is the nutriment of contact to be regarded? Suppose a flayed cow were to stand leaning against a wall. The creatures living in the wall would chew on it. If it were to stand leaning against a tree, the creatures living in the tree would chew on it. If it were to stand exposed to water, the creatures living in the water would chew on it. If it were to stand exposed to the air, the creatures living in the air would chew on it. For wherever the flayed cow were to stand exposed, the creatures living there would chew on it. In the same way, I tell you, is the nutriment of contact to be regarded. *When the nutriment of contact is comprehended, the three feelings [pleasure, pain, neither pleasure nor*

pain] are comprehended. When the three feelings are comprehended, I tell you, there is nothing further for a disciple of the noble ones to do.

“And how is the nutriment of intellectual intention to be regarded? Suppose there were a pit of glowing embers, deeper than a man’s height, full of embers that were neither flaming nor smoking, and a man were to come along—loving life, hating death, loving pleasure, abhorring pain—and two strong men, having grabbed him by the arms, were to drag him to the pit of embers. To get far away would be that man’s intention, far away would be his wish, far away his aspiration. Why is that? Because he would realize, ‘If I fall into this pit of glowing embers, I will meet with death from that cause, or with death-like pain.’ In the same way, I tell you, is the nutriment of intellectual intention to be regarded. *When the nutriment of intellectual intention is comprehended, the three forms of craving [for sensuality, for becoming, and for non-becoming] are comprehended.* When the three forms of craving are comprehended, I tell you, there is nothing further for a disciple of the noble ones to do.

“And how is the nutriment of consciousness to be regarded? Suppose that, having arrested a thief, a criminal, they were to show him to the king: ‘This is a thief, a criminal for you, your majesty. Impose on him whatever punishment you like.’ So the king would say, ‘Go, men, and shoot him in the morning with a hundred spears.’ So they would shoot him in the morning with a hundred spears. Then the king would say at noon, ‘Men, how is that man?’ ‘Still alive, your majesty.’ So the king would say, ‘Go, men, and shoot him at noon with a hundred spears.’ So they would shoot him at noon with a hundred spears. Then the king would say in the evening, ‘Men, how is that man?’ ‘Still alive, your majesty.’ So the king would say, ‘Go, men, and shoot him in the evening with a hundred spears.’ So they would shoot him in the evening with a hundred spears. Now what do you think, monks: Would that man, being shot with three hundred spears a day, experience pain & distress from that cause?”

“Even if he were to be shot with only one spear, lord, he would experience pain & distress from that cause, to say nothing of three hundred spears.”

“In the same way, I tell you, monks, is the nutriment of consciousness to be regarded. *When the nutriment of consciousness is comprehended, name & form are comprehended.* When name & form are comprehended, I tell you, there is nothing further for a disciple of the noble ones to do.” — [SN 12:63](#)

§70. “What do you think, Māluṅkyaputta: the forms cognizable via the eye that are unseen by you—that you have never before seen, that you don’t see, and that are not to be seen by you: Do you have any desire or passion or love there?”

“No, lord.”

“The sounds cognizable via the ear

“The aromas cognizable via the nose

“The flavors cognizable via the tongue

“The tactile sensations cognizable via the body

“The ideas cognizable via the intellect that are uncognized by you—that you have never before cognized, that you don’t cognize, and that are not to be cognized by you: Do you have any desire or passion or love there?”

“No, lord.”

“Then, Māluṅkyaputta, with regard to phenomena to be seen, heard, sensed, or cognized: In reference to the seen, there will be only the seen. In reference to the heard, only the heard. In reference to the sensed, only the sensed. In reference to the cognized, only the cognized. That is how you should train yourself. When for you there will be only the seen in reference to the seen, only the heard in reference to the heard, only the sensed in reference to the sensed, only the cognized in reference to the cognized, then, Māluṅkyaputta, there is no you in connection with that. When there is no you in connection with that, there is no you there. When there is no you there, you are neither here nor yonder nor between the two. This, just this, is the end of stress.”

“I understand in detail, lord, the meaning of what the Blessed One has said in brief:

Seeing a form
 with mindfulness muddled,
attending
 to the theme of ‘endearing,’
one experiences it
 with mind impassioned,
 and remains fastened there.
One’s feelings, born of the form
 grow numerous,
Greed & provocation
 injure one’s mind.
Thus amassing stress,
 one is said to be far from unbinding.

[Similarly with the remaining senses.]

One not impassioned with forms
 —seeing a form with mindfulness firm—
knows with mind unimpassioned
 and doesn’t remain fastened there.
While one is seeing a form
 —and even experiencing feeling—
it falls away and does not accumulate.
 Thus one fares mindfully.
Thus not amassing stress,
 one is said to be
in the presence of unbinding.

[Similarly with the remaining senses.] — [SN 35:95](#)

§71. “Seeing in what way is a monk unbound,
clinging to nothing in the world?”

“He should put an entire stop
to the root of objectification-classifications:

‘I am the thinker.’

He should train, always mindful,
to subdue any craving inside him.” — [Sn 4:14](#).

§72. When this was said, Ven. Ānanda said to the Blessed One:
“There is the case, lord, where a monk, having practiced in this way
—‘It should not be, it should not occur to me (should not be mine); it
will not be, it will not occur to me (will not be mine). What is, what has
come to be, that I abandon’—obtains equanimity. Now, would this
monk be totally unbound, or not?”

“A certain such monk might, Ānanda, and another might not.’

“What is the cause, what is the reason, whereby one might and
another might not?”

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

“Being sustained, where is that monk sustained?”

“The dimension of neither perception nor non-perception.”

“Then, indeed, being sustained, he is sustained by the supreme
sustenance.”

“Being sustained, Ānanda, he *is* sustained by the supreme
sustenance; for this—the dimension of neither perception nor non-
perception—is the supreme sustenance. There is [however] the case
where a monk, having practiced in this way—‘It should not be, it
should not occur to me; it will not be, it will not occur to me. What is,
what has come to be, that I abandon’—obtains equanimity. He does
not relish that equanimity, does not welcome it, does not remain
fastened to it. As does not relish that equanimity, does not welcome it,
does not remain fastened to it, his consciousness is not dependent on

‘There is nothing’:
How is he
to be led further on?

The Buddha:

...Knowing directly
the origin of nothingness
to be the fetter of delight,
one then sees there
clearly.

That’s his genuine knowledge—
the brahman who has lived
to fulfillment.— *Sn 5:14.*

§74. “Suppose a man were traveling along a path. He would see a great expanse of water, with the near shore dubious & risky, the further shore secure & free from risk, but with neither a ferryboat nor a bridge going from this shore to the other. The thought would occur to him, ‘... What if I were to gather grass, twigs, branches, & leaves and, having bound them together to make a raft, were to cross over to safety on the other shore in dependence on the raft, making an effort with my hands & feet?’ Then the man, having gathered grass, twigs, branches, & leaves, having bound them together to make a raft, would cross over to safety on the other shore in dependence on the raft, making an effort with his hands & feet.⁷ Having crossed over to the further shore, he might think, ‘How useful this raft has been to me! For it was in dependence on this raft that, making an effort with my hands & feet, I have crossed over to safety on the further shore. Why don’t I, having hoisted it on my head or carrying on my back, go wherever I like?’ What do you think, monks: Would the man, in doing that, be doing what should be done with the raft?”

“No, lord.”

“And what should the man do in order to be doing what should be done with the raft? There is the case where the man, having crossed over, would think, ‘How useful this raft has been to me! For it was in dependence on this raft that, making an effort with my hands & feet, I

have crossed over to safety on the further shore. Why don't I, having dragged it on dry land or sinking it in the water, go wherever I like?' In doing this, he would be doing what should be done with the raft. In the same way, monks, I have taught the Dhamma compared to a raft, for the purpose of crossing over, not for the purpose of holding onto. Understanding the Dhamma as taught compared to a raft, you should let go even of Dhammas, to say nothing of non-Dhammas." — [MN 22](#)

§75. “The great expanse of water stands for the fourfold flood: the flood of sensuality, the flood of becoming, the flood of views, & the flood of ignorance. The near shore, dubious & risky, stands for self-identity. The further shore, secure and free from risk, stands for Unbinding. The raft stands for just this noble eightfold path: right view...right concentration. Making an effort with hands & feet stands for the arousing of persistence.” — [SN 35:197](#)

§76. Then a certain devatā, in the far extreme of the night, her extreme radiance lighting up the entirety of Jeta's Grove, went to the Blessed One. On arrival, having bowed down to him, she stood to one side. As she was standing there, she said to him, “Tell me, dear sir, how you crossed over the flood.”

“I crossed over the flood without pushing forward, without staying in place.”

“But how, dear sir, did you cross over the flood without pushing forward, without staying in place?”

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

The devatā:

“At long last I see
a brahman, totally unbound,
who without pushing forward,
without staying in place,
has crossed over

the entanglements
of the world.”—[SN 1:1](#)

THE THIRD NOBLE TRUTH & BEYOND

§77. “And this, monks, is the noble truth of the cessation of stress: the remainderless dispassion-cessation, renunciation, relinquishment, release, & letting go of that very craving.” — [SN 56:11](#)

§78. “Among whatever phenomena there may be, fabricated or unfabricated, the phenomenon of dispassion—the subduing of intoxication, the elimination of thirst, the uprooting of attachment, the breaking of the round, the destruction of craving, dispassion, cessation, the realization of Unbinding—is considered supreme. Those who have confidence in the quality of dispassion have confidence in what is supreme; and for those with confidence in the supreme, supreme is the result. — [Iti 90](#)

§79. “Seeing thus, the instructed disciple of the noble ones grows disenchanted with form, disenchanted with feeling, disenchanted with perception, disenchanted with fabrications, disenchanted with consciousness. Disenchanted, he becomes dispassionate. Through dispassion, he is fully released. With full release, there is the knowledge, ‘Fully released.’ He discerns that ‘Birth is ended, the holy life fulfilled, the task done. There is nothing further for this world.’” — [SN 22:59](#)

§80. “Where there is no passion for the nutriment of physical food ... contact ... intellectual intention ... consciousness, where there is no delight, no craving, then consciousness does not land there or grow. Where consciousness does not land or grow, name-&-form does not alight. Where name-&-form does not alight, there is no growth of fabrications. Where there is no growth of fabrications, there is no production of renewed becoming in the future. Where there is no production of renewed becoming in the future, there is no future birth, aging, & death. That, I tell you, has no sorrow, affliction, or despair.

“Just as if there were a roofed house or a roofed hall having windows on the north, the south, or the east. When the sun rises, and

a ray has entered by way of the window, where does it land?”

“On the western wall, lord.”

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

“On the ground, lord.”

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

“On the water, lord.”

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

“It doesn’t land, lord.”

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

§81. Sensual search, becoming-search,
together with the holy-life search—
 i.e., grasping at truth
 based on an accumulation
 of viewpoints:
through the relinquishing of searches
& the abolishing of viewpoints
 of one dispassionate to
 all passion,
 and released in the ending
 of craving,
through the ending of searches, the monk
 is devoid of perplexity &
 desire. — [*Iti 55*](#)

§82. Gone to the beyond of becoming,
you let go of *in front*,
let go of *behind*,
let go of *between*.

With a heart everywhere let-go,
you don't come again to birth
& aging. — [*Dhp 348*](#)

§83. “All phenomena [*dhammā*] have unbinding as their final end.” — [*AN 10:58*](#)

§84. Everywhere the sage independent
makes 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,
doesn't adhere,
so the sage
doesn't adhere
to the seen, the heard, or the sensed;

for, cleansed,
he doesn't suppose
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. — [*Sn 4:6*](#)

§85. “Now, the well-instructed disciple of the noble ones, when touched with a feeling of pain, does not sorrow, grieve, or lament,

does not 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 does not sorrow, grieve, or lament, does not 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 with regard to that painful feeling obsesses him. Touched by that painful feeling, he does not delight in sensuality. Why is that? Because the well-instructed disciple of the noble ones discerns an escape from painful feeling aside from sensuality. As he is not delighting in sensuality, no passion-obsession with regard to that feeling of pleasure obsesses him. He discerns, as it actually is present, 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 with regard to that feeling of neither-pleasure-nor-pain obsesses him.

“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.” — [SN 36:6](#)

§86. [Some Nigaṇṭha (Jain) ascetics:] “It’s not the case that pleasure is to be attained through pleasure. Pleasure is to be attained through pain. For if pleasure were to be attained through pleasure, then King Seniya Bimbisāra of Magadha would attain pleasure, for he lives in greater pleasure than you, friend Gotama.

[The Buddha:] “Surely the venerable Nigaṇṭhas said that rashly and without reflecting ... for instead, I should be asked, ‘Who lives in greater pleasure: King Seniya Bimbisāra of Magadha or venerable Gotama?’”

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

“In that case, Nigaṇṭhas, I will question you in return. Answer as you please. What do you think: Can King Seniya Bimbisāra of Magadha—without moving his body, without uttering a word, dwell sensitive to unalloyed pleasure for seven days & nights?”

“No, friend.”

“... for six days & nights for five days & nights ... for a day & a night?”

“No, friend.”

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

“That being the case, venerable Gotama dwells in greater pleasure than King Seniya Bimbisāra of Magadha.” — [*MN 14*](#).

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

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

“But cold, lord, is the winter night. The ‘Between-the-Eights’[a period in February] is a time of snowfall. Hard is the ground trampled by cattle hooves. Thin is the spread of leaves. Sparse are the leaves in the trees. Thin are your ochre robes. And cold blows the Verambhā

wind. Yet still the Blessed One says, ‘Yes, young man. I have slept in ease. Of those in the world who sleep in ease, I am one.’”

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

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

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

“Yes, lord.”

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

[Similarly with fevers born of aversion and delusion.]

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

Having cut all ties
& subdued fear in the heart,

calmed, he sleeps in ease,
having reached peace of awareness.”—[AN 3:35](#)

§88. “There are three establishing of mindfulness that a noble one cultivates, cultivating which he is a teacher fit to instruct a group.’ Thus it was said. And in reference to what was it said?

“There is the case where the Teacher—out of sympathy, seeking their well-being—teaches the Dhamma to his disciples: ‘This is for your well-being, this is for your happiness.’ His disciples do not listen or lend ear or apply their minds to gnosis. Turning aside, they stray from the Teacher’s message. In this case the Tathāgata is not satisfied nor is he sensitive to satisfaction, yet he remains untroubled, mindful, & alert. This is the first establishing of mindfulness...

“Furthermore, there is the case where the Teacher—out of sympathy, seeking their well-being—teaches the Dhamma to his disciples: ‘This is for your well-being, this is for your happiness.’ Some of his disciples do not listen or lend ear or apply their minds to gnosis. Turning aside, they stray from the Teacher’s message. But some of his disciples listen, lend ear, & apply their minds to gnosis. They do not turn aside or stray from the Teacher’s message. In this case the Tathāgata is not satisfied nor is he sensitive to satisfaction; at the same time he is not dissatisfied nor is he sensitive to dissatisfaction. Free from both satisfaction & dissatisfaction, he remains equanimous, mindful, & alert. This is the second establishing of mindfulness....

“Furthermore, there is the case where the Teacher—out of sympathy, seeking their well-being—teaches the Dhamma to his disciples: ‘This is for your well-being, this is for your happiness.’ His disciples listen, lend ear, & apply their minds to gnosis. They do not turn aside or stray from the Teacher’s message. In this case the Tathāgata is satisfied and is sensitive to satisfaction, yet he remains untroubled, mindful, & alert. This is the third establishing of mindfulness....

“There are three establishing of mindfulness that a noble one cultivates, cultivating which he is a teacher fit to instruct a group.’ Thus it was said. And in reference to this was it said.” —[MN 137](#)

§89. He who
in the midst of sensualities,
follows the holy life,
always mindful, craving-free;
the monk who is
—through fathoming things—
unbound:
He has no agitations. He,
the thinker
knowing both sides,
doesn't adhere in between. He
I call a great person. He
here has gone past
the seamstress: craving. — [Sn 5:2](#)

§90. The brahman
gone beyond territories,
has nothing that
—on knowing or seeing—
he's grasped.
Unimpassionate for passion,
not impassioned for dis-,
he has nothing here
that he's grasped as supreme. — [Sn 4:4](#).

§91. Not intoxicated with enticements,
nor given to pride,
he's gentle, quick-witted,
beyond conviction & dispassion. — [Sn 4:10](#)

§92. And anyone who has realized,
who is an attainer-of-knowledge here,
having unentangled the bond
to becoming and non-,
free of craving,
untroubled,

undesiring—he,
I tell you, has crossed over birth
& aging.— [Sn 5:4](#).

§93. Here, Hemaka,
with regard to things that are dear
—seen, heard, sensed, & cognized—
there is: the dispelling of passion & desire,
the undying state of unbinding.

Those knowing this, mindful,
fully unbound
in the here & now,
are always calmed,
have crossed over beyond
entanglement in the world.— [Sn 5:8](#)

§94. *The Buddha:*

One free from passion
for all sensuality
relying on nothingness, letting go of all else,
released in the highest emancipation of perception:
He stays there unaffected.

Upasīva:

If, All-around Eye, he stays there,
unaffected for many years,
right there
would he be cooled & released?
Would his consciousness be like that?

The Buddha:

As a flame overthrown by the force of the wind
goes to an end
that cannot be classified,
so the sage free from the name-body

goes to an end
that cannot be classified.

Upasīva:

One who has reached the end:
Does he not exist,
or is he for eternity free from dis-ease?
Please, sage, declare this to me
as this phenomenon [dhamma] has been known by you.

The Buddha:

One who has reached the end has no criterion
by which anyone would say that—
for him it doesn't exist.
When all phenomena [dhamma]
are done away with,
all means of speaking
are done away with as well. — [Sn 5:6](#)

§95. “What do you think, Anurādha: Do you regard form as the Tathāgata?”

“No, lord.”

“Do you regard feeling as the Tathāgata?”

“No, lord.”

“Do you regard perception as the Tathāgata?”

“No, lord.”

“Do you regard fabrications as the Tathāgata?”

“No, lord.”

“Do you regard consciousness as the Tathāgata?”

“No, lord.”

“What do you think, Anurādha: Do you regard the Tathāgata as being in form? Elsewhere than form? In feeling? Elsewhere than feeling? In perception? Elsewhere than perception? In fabrications? Elsewhere than fabrications? In consciousness?.... Elsewhere than consciousness?”

“No, lord.”

“What do you think, Anurādha: Do you regard the Tathāgata as form-feeling-perception-fabrications-consciousness?”

“No, lord.”

“Do you regard the Tathāgata as that which is without form, without feeling, without perception, without fabrications, without consciousness?”

“No, lord.”

“And so, Anurādha—when you can’t pin down the Tathāgata as a truth or reality even in the present life—is it proper for you to declare, ‘Friends, the Tathāgata—the supreme man, the superlative man, attainer of the superlative attainment—being described, is described otherwise than with these four positions: The Tathāgata exists after death, does not exist after death, both does & does not exist after death, neither exists nor does not exist after death’?”

“No, lord.”

“Very good, Anurādha. Very good. Both formerly & now, it is only stress that I describe, and the cessation of stress.” — [SN 22:86](#)

Table of Contents

Titlepage	1
Copyright	2
Introduction	3
Readings	12
Basic Principles	12
The First Noble Truth	16
The Second Noble Truth	19
Sensuality	27
Becoming & Non-becoming	34
The Fourth Noble Truth	39
The Third Noble Truth & Beyond	77