

# Pressing Out Pure Honey

*A Practitioner's Study Guide*

*by*

Sharda Rogell

*A Companion for the  
Majjhima Nikāya  
The Middle Length Discourses  
of the Buddha*

*Based on the Translation  
by Bhikkhu Ñāṇamoli & Bhikkhu Bodhi  
Wisdom Publications, 1995*

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*“Be quiet, venerable sir, make no noise; the Blessed One, the Teacher, is teaching us the Dharma.”...“Let us hear the Dharma the Blessed One is about to teach.” Just as though a man were at a crossroads pressing out pure honey and a large group of people were poised in expectancy, so too, when the recluse Gotama is teaching the Dharma to an assembly of several hundred followers, on that occasion there is no sound of his disciples’ coughing or clearing their throats. For then that large assembly is poised in expectancy: “Let us hear the Dharma the Blessed One is about to teach.”*

—MN 77.6

## FOREWORD

WHEN A STUDENT OF THE DHAMMA has already passed through the gate of introductory books on Buddhism and asks me for advice about how to study the Pāli Canon, the first work I recommend is Ven. Nyanatiloka's excellent anthology, *The Word of the Buddha*, first published in 1906 yet still fresh, vigorous, and illuminating a hundred years later (currently published in Sri Lanka by the Buddhist Publication Society and now also available online on several websites). When the student has finished this anthology and asks me how to proceed further, I next suggest taking up the Nikāyas themselves, and the first collection I recommend is the Majjhima Nikāya, the Middle Length Discourses. The reason I recommend the Majjhima over the other Nikāyas is because (to quote from my introduction) it "combines the richest variety of contextual settings with the deepest and most comprehensive assortment of teachings." But though the Majjhima holds out such rewards, like other Buddhist canonical collections it is difficult to approach without a map.

Sharda Rogell's *Pressing Out Pure Honey* helps to fill this need. She provides concise, distilled resumés of each sutta in the Majjhima, thereby giving the student a helping hand to enter the texts themselves. In reading—or better, *using*—this book, it is important to bear in mind that Sharda does not approach the suttas as a Buddhist scholar or doctrinal specialist; she comes to them as a lay Buddhist practitioner intent on extracting from the suttas wise guidance in the understanding and conduct of life. Her concerns are thus practical and pragmatic rather than doctrinal and theoretical. Her resumés show eminent good sense. On the one hand, she frankly expresses her own hesitations over certain Buddhist doctrines that lie beyond her own experience (and the experience of most people), particularly the teachings on kamma and rebirth, and offers sensible advice about how a modern Westerner should deal with such teachings. Yet, on the other hand, in her notes to the suttas, she states exactly what the texts say without editorializing about passages that challenge her credulity.

*Pressing Out Pure Honey* is not a book to be read straight through from cover to cover. Rather, it is best read sutta by sutta in conjunction with the Middle Length Discourses. Readers might deal with each sutta thus: first read the section in *Pure Honey* dealing with that sutta; then read the sutta itself, checking my endnotes and taking your own personal notes; then return to *Pure Honey* and re-read the section on the sutta to see if Sharda covered any important points you may have overlooked. On a later occasion, you might return to those suttas you found particularly meaningful, read them still again, and reflect more deeply on their significance.

The Buddha's teaching is said to be good in the beginning, good in the middle, and good in the end. But it yields its goodness only to the extent that one is prepared to work hard, to make an earnest effort to learn the Dhamma well,

and to understand it in depth. This work is fulfilled by practice, but practice must be guided by right understanding, and such understanding comes from the suttas. With this book, Sharda Rogell gives the serious Dhamma student a means of access to the wonderful and important suttas of the Middle Length Collection.

Bhikkhu Bodhi

## PREFACE

THIS MANUAL has been prepared as a study guide to Ven. Bhikkhu Ñāṇamoli's translation of the Majjhima Nikāya, The Middle Length Discourses of the Buddha, which was later edited and revised by Ven. Bhikkhu Bodhi. This collection is the second of the Buddha's discourses found in the Sutta Piṭaka of the Pali Canon. Containing some of the most profound discourses in the Canon, it covers a wide range of the Buddha's radical insights into the nature of existence. These include the Four Noble Truths, which are at the core of the Buddha's teachings, and his gradual progressive training on the path to liberation—four foundations of mindfulness, four right kinds of striving, five spiritual faculties, seven factors of enlightenment, the Noble Eightfold Path, and the eight form and formless jhānas, to name but a few. As we read the discourses, we hear the teachings of a living Buddha in dialogue with a variety of people in different strata of India society. We meet his famous disciples, liberated in their own right, passing on the Buddha's teachings. We are taken on a journey through ancient India and are given a clear picture of this time in history more than 2,500 years ago.

This new translation became available in 1995 from Wisdom Publications, in association with the Barre Center for Buddhist Studies. Ven. Bhikkhu Bodhi, an American monk who is the president and editor of the Buddhist Publication Society in Sri Lanka, edited and to some extent revised an original translation of the text by Ven. Bhikkhu Ñāṇamoli, another Western monk, who died in 1960. Ven. Bhikkhu Bodhi says in his preface that he undertook this project to express the discourses in a way that would be "intelligible to a modern reader seeking in the Pali discourses personal guidance in the proper understanding and conduct of life." His efforts were well spent, as I found for the first time drawn to reading "our most reliable source for the original teachings of the historical Buddha Gotama."

In 1985, Christopher Titmuss, one of my colleagues, had bought me three volumes of the Majjhima Nikāya, translated by I. B. Horner, to encourage me to further study the Buddha's teachings. These volumes were considered the long-standing standard translation of this text. Sadly though, after looking through them very cursorily, I put them on the shelf. This was mostly because I found the translation difficult to understand and quite dry. Yet over the years, I continued to be interested to know what the Buddha actually taught. I had not practiced in Asia, but received Dharma teachings primarily from western teachers. Reading the original texts of the Buddha would allow me to see for myself not only where the teachings originated, but also what the Buddha taught and what he did not teach. When Ven. Bhikkhu Bodhi's translation arrived, and I began to read *and* understand, I felt profound gratitude.

The following year, I undertook a silent two-month retreat at Gaia House Meditation Center in south Devon, England, with the intention of studying this new translation. My plan was to study in the mornings and spend the rest of the day in silence, meditation and reflection as a way of assimilating the profound insights of the Buddha. One way that helps me to catch the meaning of things as I read is to take notes. So each morning I wrote down the parts of the discourses that stood out for me and that I would reflect upon later. The next morning I would first reread the discourses and my notes from the day before to be sure that I had fully understood them and would also add anything to the notes that had not previously stood out. I then entered them into my computer with the intention of having a reference manual for later use.

By the end of the retreat, I had read all 152 discourses and had comprehensive notes for each. I also had them in my laptop and was able to print them and bind them into a compact, useful manual. Over the next few years, as the discourses were getting more popular among interested Dharma students, word was getting around that I had these notes. People started to request copies. Eventually, Andy Olendzki from the Barre Center for Buddhist Studies in Massachusetts, a Pali scholar and a teacher of the discourses himself, expressed interest in publishing the notes as a way of making them widely available to people reading the text. We reached an agreement on how best to do this that I felt particularly happy with. The entire manual would be a gift of *dāna* in accord with the way Dharma teachings are offered. This *dāna* not only includes the free distribution, but also includes the time and effort that I and many others have put in to make this publication possible.

After our discussion, I read once again the 152 discourses and edited my notes in such a way that they could be read easily and used by anyone who was interested in studying the *Majjhima Nikāya*. I realize that each time I read the discourses, my understanding deepens and new insights arise into what the Buddha taught. Also, I now have a familiarity with the style of the discourses that makes them much easier to read. At first, the discourses had seemed stilted, and I had found it difficult to extract the meaning. Yet, as I spent time with each discourse, my reading started to flow and the meaning became clearer. This can be attributed to Ven. Bhikkhu Bodhi, who omitted many of the repetitions, and also to Ven. Bhikkhu Ñāṇamoli, who found translations for Pali words that are not too archaic for us modern readers. In this way the meaning comes through much more easily.

I prepared this manual to be used as a companion to this new translation to help guide us through this large body of work. Sometimes, one can feel daunted by the size of the book and the number of discourses, and so can be deterred from even beginning to read the text. My hope is that this manual helps the reader to overcome this hurdle and allows one to begin reading and gaining some insight into at least a few of the important discourses.

I am not a Buddhist scholar, but I am a serious practitioner. In compiling these notes for myself, I was particularly interested in finding references that would help me to live my life in accord with the Buddha's teachings. I did not prepare a commentary on the discourses. I was simply attempting to summarize what I thought were the relevant teachings in each of the discourses for myself as a practitioner. I was looking for useful quotes, passages, similes and stories, and I wanted to have a reference for all the lists. I made few interpretations or conclusions about what I thought was being taught, but mostly paraphrased the text in simple language for easy understanding. When I did interpret, I put my comments in italics with brackets and the abbreviation 'Ed' to distinguish what is directly from the text and what is my personal interpretation. I hope that these comments are accurate and not misleading in any way. (I would appreciate any feedback and can be emailed at: [shardarogell@yahoo.com](mailto:shardarogell@yahoo.com).)

My hope is that this becomes a working manual for you. Obviously, each person will find value in some discourses where I have not. You will find parts of a discourse important that I have left out. By marking down your own references, comments and quotes that you personally find meaningful, this manual can become your own. I think this manual will be valuable for individual practitioners, for your own personal study of the text, as well as for meditation groups. The group could take one of the discourses, study it in the group and follow the suggested practice. Or the group could extract its own practice that is in accord with the discourse. When Dharma teachers are traveling to retreats, particularly overseas, and don't have access to the text, having the manual for reference to the discourses could be helpful.

I feel deep gratitude to Ven. Bhikkhu Ñāṇamoli and Ven. Bhikkhu Bodhi for their immense efforts to bring this translation to us. Ven. Bhikkhu Bodhi's personal comments at the back of the book allow for a depth of understanding that would not be possible otherwise. I am very grateful to Andy Olendzki and Mu Soeng for publishing and distributing this manual through the Barre Center for Buddhist Studies in Massachusetts and for their continued work in making the Buddhadharma available to the wider community. Ven. Thanissaro Bhikkhu read through the manuscript and made invaluable comments and corrections to the manual that gave me confidence in what I prepared. Dana White and Chris Gilboy also read through the manuscript and gave me useful feedback for lay practitioners, for which I am grateful. And I am thankful for my personal dialogues with Christopher Titmuss and Stephen Batchelor while I was working on this manual. They helped to clarify a number of finer points. I thank the Gaia House Committee, who provided the beautiful and serene meditative environment I required to reflect deeply on these teachings. I also want to thank my niece, Wendy Rogell, for her remarkable ability to bring a graphic beauty to the printed page. Her design brought the project alive.

I wish you a very good journey into the Majjhima Nikāya. May it contribute greatly to your supreme awakening.

Sharda Rogell  
Fairfax, California  
December, 2002



## USING THIS MANUAL

### PRACTICES

After the **NOTES** for many of the discourses, I have added a suggested practice that I hope will contribute to integrating the teachings into your worldly life. This was Andy Olendzki's suggestion, for which I am grateful. I think it gives each discourse an immediate practical application. Some of the discourses, though, did not lend themselves well to a practice, so in these cases no practice was given.

### QUOTES AND SIMILES

All the quotes marked by the word, **QUOTE** were said by the Buddha unless indicated otherwise. However, not all the quotes are marked. I marked the ones I wanted to reference easily. I attempted to copy them as accurately as possible, but please double-check them if you are going to use them publicly as the Buddha's word. Of course, there are many worthy quotes, and different ones will likely stand out for each of us.

I also marked the Buddha's wonderful similes that were of interest to me, as well as other reflections, verses, analogies, etc. with a similar bold typeface.

The bracketed numbers in my notes refer to the numbered section within each discourse in the translation of the Majjhima Nikāya from Wisdom Publications, 1995.

### THE EIGHT FORM AND FORMLESS JHĀNAS

The Buddha refers to the jhānas (the eight meditative absorptions) repeatedly as an important part of the gradual path to liberation. However, for most lay practitioners, jhāna practice has not been accessible. In order to attain jhāna, special meditative conditions are needed as aids to deepen concentration. For this reason I did not elaborate on them in my notes. Ven. Bhikkhu Bodhi suggests in his introduction, "The Buddha invariably includes them in the full gradual training because the deep concentration they induce provides a solid base for the cultivation of insight." In another section he says, "The jhānas by themselves do not issue in enlightenment and liberation. As lofty and peaceful as these attainments are, they can only suppress the defilements that sustain in the round of rebirths but cannot eradicate them. To uproot the defilements at the most fundamental level, and thereby yield the fruits of enlightenment and deliverance, the meditative process must be redirected [to] the contemplation of 'things as they actually are' [vipassana meditation], which results in increasingly deeper insights into the nature of existence and culminates in the final goal, the attainment of arahantship."

I think it is worthwhile to note, however, that as much as the Buddha encouraged abiding in these eight attainments as a pathway to liberation, he also states in MN70.15-16 that not all arahants (ones who have reached the true goal) go through all eight jhānas. It is said that there are two kinds of arahants: those liberated-in-both-ways, and those who are liberated-by-wisdom. Those who are liberated-in-both-ways (liberated the physical and mental body) have gone through all eight jhānas, whereas those who are liberated-by-wisdom may have not.

## **KARMA AND REBIRTH**

I find it difficult to know how to interpret the teachings given on karma and rebirth in these discourses. The Buddha says he knows this from direct experience and that is likely to be true. Attaining psychic powers can be a by-product of deep states of concentration, but is out of reach for most of us. The Buddha speaks of the actions of one lifetime bearing fruit in a subsequent lifetime. Because I am not able to know this from direct experience, I rest into an attitude of not knowing. References to past and future lives were largely omitted from my notes, as the question I am more interested in is this: Is there a way to understand the law of karma and rebirth (and this also includes the principle of dependent origination) so that we can understand the present causes that condition experience and bring transformation to our lives right now?

## **TRANSLATION NOTES**

While Ven. Bhikkhu Bodhi was working on the Saṃyutta Nikāya, he made some changes in his translations for some of the words. One change was the rendering of sakkāya, from “personality” to “identity.” He says in the introduction to the Saṃyutta, “Since, under the influence of modern psychology, the word ‘personality’ has taken on connotations quite foreign to what is implied by sakkāya, I now translate it as ‘identity.’ Sakkāya-diṭṭhi accordingly becomes ‘identity view,’ the view of a self, existing either behind or among the five aggregates.” Hence, I have changed the rendering in my notes as well.

## **THE COMMENTARIES**

It is useful to notice when there is a reference to the commentaries in Ven. Bhikkhu Bodhi’s notes. These notes are not necessarily teachings from the Buddha, but rather extrapolations from the original texts. Ven. Bhikkhu Bodhi used these texts to clarify difficult passages in the suttas and to bring out a richer meaning than may appear at first sight. There are two commentaries on the Majjhima. The Majjhima Nikāya Aṭṭhakathā (MA) was composed in the fifth century (about 900 years after the time of the Buddha) by Ācariya Buddhaghosa. About a century or more later, the Majjhima Nikāya Ṭīkā (MṬ) was written. This work, ascribed to Ācariya Dhammapāla, clears up obscure or difficult points in the Aṭṭhakathā. Some say these commentaries are reliable, others say they are not. Because their words are not the word of the Buddha, it is important to test them against your own experience.

## ABBREVIATIONS

These are the same as used in the text:

AN	Aṅguttara Nikāya
DN	Dīgha Nikāya
SN	Samyutta Nikāya
MN	Majjhima Nikāya
Ud	Udāna

## FAVORITES

To help you choose which discourses to read, I have marked the ones that I thought were important, and also those that I simply loved reading, with the symbol ❖.

The following discourses are especially recommended:

2	<i>Sabbāsava Sutta</i> All the Taints
9	<i>Sammāditṭhi Sutta</i> Right View
10	<i>Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta</i> The Foundations of Mindfulness
18	<i>Madhupiṇḍika Sutta</i> The Honeyball
19	<i>Dvedhavitakka Sutta</i> Two Kinds of Thought
20	<i>Vitakkasaṅṭhāna Sutta</i> The Removal of Distracting Thoughts
21	<i>Kakacūpama Sutta</i> The Simile of the Saw
22	<i>Alagaddūpama Sutta</i> The Simile of the Snake
26	<i>Ariyapariyesanā Sutta</i> The Noble Search
28	<i>Mahāhatthipadopama Sutta</i> The Greater Discourse on the Simile of the Elephant's Footprint
29	<i>Mahāsāropama Sutta</i> The Greater Discourse on the Simile of the Heartwood
30	<i>Cūlasāropama Sutta</i> The Shorter Discourse on the Simile of the Heartwood
37	<i>Cūlataṅhāsāriḥaya Sutta</i> The Shorter Discourse on the Destruction of Craving
70	<i>Kīṭāgiri Sutta</i> At Kīṭāgiri
95	<i>Caṅkī Sutta</i> With Caṅkī
109	<i>Mahāpunṇama Sutta</i> The Greater Discourse on the Full-moon Night
118	<i>Ānāpānasati Sutta</i> Mindfulness of Breathing
119	<i>Kāyagatāsati Sutta</i> Mindfulness of the Body
122	<i>Mahāsuññata Sutta</i> The Greater Discourse on Voidness
137	<i>Saḷāyatanavibhaṅga Sutta</i> The Exposition of the Sixfold Base
140	<i>Dhātuvibhaṅga Sutta</i> The Exposition of the Elements
148	<i>Chachakka Sutta</i> The Six Sets of Six
149	<i>Mahāsaḷāyatanika Sutta</i> The Great Sixfold Base

PART ONE  
The Root Fifty Discourses  
*Mūlapaññāsapāḷi*

## 1 *Mūlapariyāya Sutta* The Root of All Things ❖

### SUMMARY

The Buddha analyzes the cognitive process of four types of individuals: the untaught ordinary person, the disciple in higher training, the arahant, and the Tathāgata. He distinguishes between one who has not fully understood (one who still has craving, conceit and views, or in other words, ignorance), one who is on the path to higher training (a *sekha*), and one who has fully understood (the arahant and Tathāgata—see MN1.147 for the distinction between the two).

### NOTES

In his summary, Ven. Bhikkhu Bodhi tells us that this discourse is one of the deepest and most difficult discourses in the Pali Canon. Therefore, it may be best to begin with MN2.

[3-26] The Buddha uses a set of phrases for each of the following to show us how we misperceive: earth, water, fire, air, beings, gods, Pajāpati, Brahmā, the gods of Streaming Radiance, the gods of Refulgent Glory, the gods of Great Fruit, and Overlord, the four immaterial attainments, the seen, the heard, the sensed, the cognized, unity, diversity, all, and Nibbāna.

This is an example of the set of phrases. (Each of the above categories can be substituted.):

[3] The earth is me. I am in earth. I am separate from earth. The earth is mine. I delight in earth. Why do I perceive in this way? Because I have not fully understood it. [26] Nibbāna is me. I am in Nibbāna. I am separate from Nibbāna. Nibbāna is mine. I delight in Nibbāna. Why do I perceive in this way? Because I have not fully understood it.

A disciple in higher training will perceive in this way: [27] The earth is not me. I am not in earth. I am not separate from earth. The earth is not mine. I do not delight in earth. Why do I perceive in this way? So I may fully understand it.

[50] Nibbāna is not me. I am not in Nibbāna. I am not separate from Nibbāna. Nibbāna is not mine. I do not delight in Nibbāna. Why do I perceive in this way? So I may fully understand it.

Note 5 explains how misperception occurs: An ordinary person takes the concept for the thing itself (“it is earth”) and perceives the object through **four perversions of perception** (*saññāvipallāsa*):

1. one sees what is impermanent as permanent
2. painful as pleasurable
3. what is not-self as self
4. what is foul as beautiful (as in AN4:49/ii.52)

Note 6: “The Pali verb ‘conceives’ (maññati), from the root man, ‘to think,’ is often used in the Pali discourses to mean distortional thinking—thought that ascribes to its object characteristics and a significance derived not from the object but from its own subjective imaginings” (egocentric perspective). “...the activity of conceiving is governed by three defilements, which accounts for the different ways it comes into manifestation: craving (taṇhā), conceit (māna) and views (diṭṭhi),” which are underlain by ignorance and are the root of all things. [Ed: Hence the title.]

Note 22: An ordinary person perceives an object; a sekha (anyone who has reached the first three stages of enlightenment explained further in Note 21) directly knows an object. “From earth, he has direct knowledge of earth.” Note 7 points out how one has direct knowledge of the elements. It says one understands by **three types of full understanding**:

1. the full understanding of the known—knowing each of the elements by way of its unique characteristic, function, manifestation and proximate cause. (Descriptions of each can be found in the Visuddhimagga, an encyclopedic work on Buddhist doctrine and meditation compiled by Ācariya Buddhaghosa around the 5thC A.D.)
2. the full understanding by scrutinization—contemplation of elements by way of the three characteristics—impermanence, suffering and not-self
3. the full understanding of abandonment—abandoning desire and lust for elements through the supreme path (of arahantship).

[51] **The arahant:** “A bhikkhu who is an arahant with taints destroyed, who has lived the holy life, done what had to be done, laid down the burden, reached the true goal, destroyed the fetters of being, and is completely liberated through final knowledge.” An arahant has reached the fourth and final stage of enlightenment.

[75-146] The arahant is free from lust, hatred, and delusion through the destruction of lust, hatred, and delusion.

Note 23: Only by an arahant are the defilements fully abandoned. The sekha is urged by the Buddha to refrain from conceiving and delight because disposition to these mental processes still remains within him. With the attainment of stream-entry, the fetter of identity view is eradicated. Thus one can no longer conceive in terms of wrong views, but the defilements of conceit and craving still remain, and the sekha remains vulnerable to conceivings.

“Whereas direct knowledge is the province of both the sekha and the arahant, full understanding is the province exclusively of the arahant, as it involves full abandoning of all defilements.”

[147] Note 28 clarifies the distinction between an arahant and a Buddha (or Tathāgata—the epithet the Buddha uses most often when referring to himself). “While Buddhas and disciple-arahants are alike in abandoning all defilements, there is a distinction in their range of full understanding: whereas disciples can attain Nibbāna after comprehending with insight only a limited number of formations, Buddhas fully understand all formations without exception.”

[171] Delight (nandī) is the root of suffering. “Delight” here means pleasurable involvement and infatuation with an object at the expense of clarity.

## PRACTICE

1. To get a sense of what the Buddha is pointing to, first, using the language in [3] (I and mine), take one thing, like anger, and say to yourself the first five phrases as you connect with the meaning as much as possible: “The anger is me. I am in the anger. I am separate from the anger. The anger is mine, etc.” Then, change to the language in [27] (not I and not mine): “The anger is not me. I am not in the anger, etc.” Notice the quality of the energy you feel as you say each of the phrases. 2. The Buddha asks us to do the same for the words—unity, all, Nibbāna. Do the same exercise as above, and reflect on what this implies about the idea that we are all one.

## 2 *Sabbāsava Sutta* All the Taints ❖

### SUMMARY

The Buddha teaches the bhikkhus (men who have gone forth into homelessness under the guidance of the Buddha’s teaching) seven methods to restrain and eventually destroy all the taints.

### NOTES

The taints (āsavas) are a classification of defilements that “defile, bring renewal of being, give trouble, ripen in suffering, and lead to future birth, ageing and death.” (This is a stock passage in the discourses, as in MN36.47. Also explained on p. 38 in the Introduction.)

The **three taints** are:

1. craving for sensual pleasures,
2. craving for being,
3. ignorance

[3] Basically, when one attends unwisely, unarisen taints arise and arisen taints increase. When one attends wisely, unarisen taints do not arise and arisen taints are abandoned. One can destroy the taints if one knows how to arouse wise attention and can see that unwise attention does not arise.

Note 33 explains: **Unwise attention** is attention that is the wrong means (uppatha), on the wrong track, contrary to the truth, namely attention to the four perversions of perception (see p. 9 of this manual). **Wise attention** is attention that is the right means (upāya), on the right track, that accords with the truth. What does “accords with the truth” mean? Simply perceiving things as they are: impermanent as impermanent, painful as painful, not-self as not-self, foul as foul. Wise attention is at the root of liberation because it leads to development of the Noble Eightfold Path. Unwise attention is at the root of the round of existence because it causes ignorance and craving to increase.

**Seven ways toward the destruction of the taints:**

1. Seeing: seeing refers to the wise attention that leads to stream-entry, the first stage of awakening (from Note 35). Essentially, the Buddha is concerned with the non-arising of sensual desire, of being, and of ignorance.

[5] *An untaught, ordinary person* does *not* understand what things are fit for attention and what things are unfit for attention. Since that is so, he attends to those things unfit for attention and does *not* attend to those things fit for attention. (MN114 has a complete list of what should be cultivated.) [6-10] When one is attending wisely (seeing), these taints do not arise and if they do, they can be abandoned.

[9] *The person of the Dharma* “understands what things are fit for attention and what things are unfit for attention. Since that is so, he does not attend to those things unfit for attention and he attends to those things fit for attention.”

[7-8] When one attends unwisely, one of **six** [speculative] **views** arise:

- a) Self exists for me
- b) No self exists for me
- c) I perceive self with self
- d) I perceive not-self with self
- e) I perceive self with not-self
- f) It is this self of mine that speaks and feels and experiences here and there the result of good and bad actions; but this self of mine is permanent, everlasting, eternal, not subject to change, and it will endure as long as eternity.

(See Note 39 and 40 for further understanding.)

[8] **QUOTE**: “This speculative view, bhikkhus, is called the thicket of views, the wilderness of views, the contortion of views, the vacillation of views, the fetter of views. Fettered by the fetter of views, the untaught ordinary person is not freed from birth, ageing, and death, from sorrow, lamentation, pain, grief, and despair; he is not freed from suffering, I say.”

2. Restraining: **the six sense doors**—the eye, nose, ear, tongue, body and mind faculties.
3. Using: wisely, the robe, food, resting place and medicine, mainly for protection, not for indulgence.
4. Enduring: discomfort of the physical body, unwelcome words.
5. Avoiding: dangerous animals and environments; sitting on unsuitable seats (sexual reference); wandering into unsuitable resorts; associating with bad friends.
6. Removing: arisen thoughts of sensual desire, ill will, cruelty, evil unwholesome (unskillful) states; one abandons them, removes them, does away with them, and annihilates them.
7. Developing: the seven enlightenment factors.



Note 32 points out that “restraint of all the taints” is fivefold: through virtue (by avoiding sexual provocation); through mindfulness (by restraining the sense faculties); through knowledge (by reflecting wisely); through energy (by removing unwholesome thoughts); and through patience (by enduring).

## **PRACTICE**

1. Practice wise attention so you know well how it differs from unwise attention. This means practice perceiving things as they are—impermanent, unsatisfactory (dukkha) and not-self. 2. Choose one of the seven ways toward destroying the taints and put it into practice for a designated period of time so you have a clear sense what is meant. 3. Ask yourself if your views and opinions are based on any of the questions that the Buddha says are unfit for attention.

## **3 *Dhammadāyāda Sutta* Heirs in Dharma**

### **SUMMARY**

This discourse gives instruction in how to become an heir in Dharma rather than an heir in material things. First, the Buddha enjoins the bhikkhus, then Ven. Sāriputta continues on the same theme by explaining how disciples should train to become the Buddha’s heirs in Dharma.

### **NOTES**

[3] Here is a reflection on the wisdom of refusing material things, food in this case, as a training to conduce “fewness of wishes, contentment, effacement, easy support, and arousal of energy.”

[5-8] Sāriputta addresses the bhikkhus: “...In what way do disciples of the Teacher who lives secluded not train in seclusion?” and, later, “...disciples...do not train in seclusion; they do not abandon what the Teacher tells them to abandon; they are luxurious and careless, leaders in backsliding, neglectful of seclusion...” They are told not to do these things. They are urged to abandon “what the Teacher asks them to abandon” [6], namely the evil qualities of greed and hate, anger and revenge, contempt and a domineering attitude, envy and avarice, deceit and fraud, obstinacy and presumption, conceit and arrogance, vanity and negligence [8-15]. They are pointed to the Noble Eightfold Path (the Middle Way) which gives vision and knowledge, “...which leads to peace, to direct knowledge, to enlightenment, to Nibbāna.”

[8] This discourse points to the Noble Eightfold Path. Following the Path rather than the pull of defilements, makes one “an heir in Dharma.”

### **PRACTICE**

Choose a negative tendency in yourself that you would like to work with. Establish a practice that will help you to relinquish that tendency and practice for a period of time. The intention to abandon these tendencies brings you closer to being an “heir in Dharma,” rather than an heir in material things.

## 4 *Bhayabherava Sutta* Fear and Dread ❖

### SUMMARY

The Buddha explains to a brahmin what is needed to practice alone in the jungle without fear and dread, beginning with overcoming the five hindrances. He then goes on to describe his own experience of conquering fear when striving for enlightenment. He entered into the four jhānas and on three watches of the night attained the three knowledges: the recollection of his past lives, the passing away and reappearance of beings (according to their actions), and the Four Noble Truths.

### NOTES

Monks may have a difficult time in the jungle because they are unable to concentrate and lack purity in three ways—bodily, verbally and mentally. Due to the defect of their unpurified ways, these good recluses evoke unskillful fear and dread. The unpurified ways are given in:

**[4-19] A list of unpurified ways the Buddha has overcome:**

Unpurified bodily conduct, verbal conduct, mental conduct, and livelihood; being covetous and full of lust; having a mind of ill will and intentions of hate (rather than a mind of lovingkindness); being overcome by sloth and torpor; being restless and of unpeaceful mind; being uncertain and doubting [*note here the five hindrances*]; being given to self-praise and disparagement of others; being subject to alarm and terror; being desirous of gain, honor, and renown; being lazy and wanting in energy; being unmindful and not fully aware; being unconcentrated and with straying mind; and being devoid of wisdom. It is because the Buddha has overcome each of these that he is not prone to fear and dread. [*Ed: This is what makes the difference!*]

[20] The Buddha recommends that if while in the sitting posture, the fear and dread do come, not to change posture until the fear has subdued. The same for walking, standing, or lying down: continue in the posture until the fear and dread have subdued.

[32] When the Buddha knew his mind was liberated, there came the knowledge, **QUOTE:** “It is liberated.’ I directly knew, ‘Birth is destroyed, the holy life has been lived, what had to be done has been done, there is no more coming to any state of being.” This is the stock announcement of final knowledge or arahantship.

[34] In case the brahmin thinks that the Buddha stays in the forest because he is not yet free from lust, hate, and delusion, the Buddha clarifies for him that he stays in the forest, not for purification, but because **QUOTE:** “I see a pleasant abiding for myself here and now, and I have compassion for future generations.”

### PRACTICE

1. Take time to reflect on the ways in which difficult mental, verbal and bodily pattern in yourself lead to fear. 2. What is your relationship to the words, “purity” and “impurity”? What do they evoke in you? 3. Notice how a fearful feeling may take you away from doing something wholesome for yourself, (e.g., like giving a talk to a group of people). Practice staying with the fear, continuing with what you are doing, and noticing how and when and if the fear subsides.

## 5 *Anaṅgaṇa Sutta* Without Blemishes ❖

### SUMMARY

Ven. Sāriputta gives a discourse on the meaning of blemishes, explaining that a bhikkhu becomes blemished when he falls under the sway of evil wishes. He describes the advantages of abandoning these evil wishes, thereby gaining honor, respect, reverence, and veneration.

### NOTES

[9] ‘Blemish’ is a term for the spheres of evil, unwholesome wishes that lead to anger and bitterness.

[2-7] Ven. Sāriputta describes **four kinds of persons** found existing in this world:

1. A person who has a blemish but doesn’t know it. This person can be expected neither to arouse zeal nor to make effort to abandon that blemish, so will die with a mind defiled. Suppose a bronze dish is brought from a shop covered with dirt and stains, and the owners neither used it nor had it cleaned but put it away in a dusty corner. Would the bronze dish get more defiled and stained later on? Yes. (The **SIMILE** of the bronze dish is used throughout this discourse.)
2. A person who has a blemish and knows it. This person can be expected to arouse effort to abandon that blemish. Suppose a bronze dish is brought from a shop covered in dirt and stains, and the owners had it cleaned and did not put it in a dusty corner. Would the dish get brighter and cleaner? Yes.
3. A person who has no blemish and has no understanding of this. This person can be expected to be attracted to the beautiful and therefore lust will grow in the mind. (Note 70: An attractive object is the basis for lust, or for the arising of unarisen sensual desire and for the growth and increase of arisen sensual desire—as in SN46.2/v.64.) Suppose a bronze dish is brought from a shop clean and bright, and the owners neither used it nor had it cleaned but put it in a dusty corner. Would the bronze dish get more defiled and more stained later on? Yes.

4. A person who has no blemish and has understanding of this. This person can be expected not to be attracted to the beautiful and therefore lust will not grow in the mind. Suppose a bronze dish is brought from the shop clean and bright, and the owners used it and had it cleaned and did not put it in a dusty corner. Would the bronze dish get cleaner and brighter later on? Yes.

The first and third kinds of persons are considered inferior; the second and fourth are considered superior.

[10-28] Ven. Sāriputta gives nineteen examples of evil wishes. [29-30] He continues to use the bowl simile to show what can happen when blemishes are unabandoned and when they are abandoned. Abandoning evil, unwholesome wishes allows one to “emerge from the unwholesome and establish [oneself] in the wholesome” [33].

### **PRACTICE**

Be aware of how “blemishes” arise in your own mind, and as you practice letting go (not acting upon them), notice if you seem more honorable to yourself and appear more so to others.

## **6 *Ākañkheyya Sutta* If a Bhikkhu Should Wish**

### **SUMMARY**

The Buddha encourages the bhikkhus to train arduously: undertake the precepts, be restrained and perfect in conduct, be devoted to internal serenity, do not neglect meditation, be possessed of insight and dwell in seclusion. The discourse names many of the aspirations of the holy life, for example, “May I be agreeable to my companions,” as well as aspiring for the destruction of the fetters (a tenfold group of defilements), and complete deliverance. (This discourse refers only to the five lower fetters.)

### **NOTES**

This discourse is useful to reflect on what is worth aspiring for in the holy life.

The phrasing of the aspiration is useful. For example, “May I become a conqueror of discontent and delight, and may discontent and delight not conquer me.”

According to Note 77, the teaching in this discourse comprises the entire threefold training: training in higher virtue, in concentration or the higher mind, and in higher wisdom.

### **PRACTICE**

Make your own aspiration for the practice in the form of a wish. Repeat it each day before your meditation practice, and notice what happens when you have the clarity of intention.

## 7 *Vatthūpama Sutta* The Simile of the Cloth

### SUMMARY

Using a simple simile of dyeing a cloth, the Buddha points out the difference between a defiled mind and a purified mind, and shows the way to gain perfect confidence.

### NOTES

**SIMILE:** If a cloth were defiled and stained, it would dye poorly and be impure in color. Why? Because of the impurity of the cloth. If a cloth were pure and bright, it would look well-dyed and pure in color. Why? Because of the purity of the cloth.

[3] The **15 imperfections that defile the mind:**

- |                           |                 |
|---------------------------|-----------------|
| 1. ill will               | 9. fraud        |
| 2. anger                  | 10. obstinacy   |
| 3. revenge                | 11. presumption |
| 4. contempt               | 12. conceit     |
| 5. a domineering attitude | 13. arrogance   |
| 6. envy                   | 14. vanity      |
| 7. avarice                | 15. negligence  |
| 8. deceit                 |                 |

With direct knowledge of the imperfections of the mind, one abandons them, thus bringing perfect confidence in the three jewels: the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha. One with such virtue abides with a mind imbued with the four brahmavihāras. (Here the Buddha does not say to cultivate the brahmavihāras, but rather points out that one with such virtue will abide there [16].)

[20] This comprises four stanzas about the foolishness of bathing in a “sacred” river for purification, popular in India and elsewhere, then and now. The Buddha says this will not purify an evil-doer and instead points to bathing in the practice of virtue.

[21] A phrase that is often repeated **QUOTE:** “Master Gotama has made the Dharma clear in many ways, as though he were turning upright what had been overthrown, revealing what was hidden, showing the way to one who was lost, or holding up a lamp in the dark for those with eyesight to see forms.”

### PRACTICE

Reflect on the phrase in [18], “one bathed with the inner bathing.” What does this mean to you? What action would you need to take for this “inner bathing”?

## 8 *Sallekha Sutta* Effacement

### SUMMARY

The Buddha teaches the way of effacement (meaning the way to remove the defilements). He lists 44 modes of effacement, which fall into several fixed sets of doctrinal categories (e.g., factors of the Noble Eightfold Path, three of the five hindrances, ten of the sixteen imperfections that defile the mind, and so on). He then tells us that even the inclination of mind toward wholesome states is of great benefit and, therefore, that we should incline the mind toward the 44 modes. He next points out how we can practice avoidance with the 44 modes, then how we can follow, first, the way leading upwards and, second, the way of extinguishing the defilements.

## NOTES

Note 106: *Sallekha* means austerity or ascetic practice, used by the Buddha to signify the radical effacing or removal of defilements.

[3] The Buddha points out **how views are eradicated**:

“If [the object] in relation to which those views arise, which they underlie, and which they are exercised upon is seen as it actually is with proper wisdom thus: ‘This is not mine, this I am not, this is not my self,’ then the abandoning and relinquishing of those views comes about.” Note 105 points out that views are eradicated through contemplation of the five aggregates, with the wisdom of insight culminating in the path of stream-entry.

[4-11] Those who attain the eight meditative absorptions might think they have eradicated defilements, but they are mistaken because they are using them not as a basis for insight, but only as a means of enjoying bliss and peace. In and of themselves, these attainments are simply “pleasant abidings here and now.”

[12-17] The Buddha points out **five ways to practice**:

1. the way of effacement
2. the way of inclining the mind
3. the way of avoidance
4. the way leading upwards
5. the way of extinguishing.

In his long lists, he uses the phrase, “Others will do this; [however] we shall abstain from doing this here...”

Interestingly, the Buddha points out that even inclining the mind toward wholesome states is beneficial. This is the cause of the subsequent actions that arise.

[14-16] He points out that the direction for us is always clear, for we always have the opposite action to look to (e.g., a person given to cruelty has non-cruelty by which to avoid it). We are not left in the dark as to how to proceed. He also points out that all these wholesome states lead us upward and that they enable us to extinguish our defilements so that we may help not only ourselves but also others.

[18] The Buddha says at the end that he is teaching out of compassion for our welfare.

## PRACTICE

If you are involved in unwholesome action, notice how the path to change that behavior is clear when you look at the opposite behavior. For example, if you are given to gossiping, there is abstention from gossiping by which to avoid it.

## 9 *Sammādiṭṭhi Sutta* Right View ❖

### SUMMARY

This comprehensive discourse is given by Ven. Sāriputta. He begins by defining what is wholesome and the root of the wholesome, and what is unwholesome and the root of the unwholesome. Using the format of the Four Noble Truths (understanding the object, the origin of the object, the cessation of the object, and the way leading to the cessation of the object), he goes through nutriment, the Four Noble Truths, and all twelve factors of dependent origination.

### NOTES

Ven. Sāriputta names **five ways in which a noble disciple is “one with right view”**:

1. When a noble disciple understands the unwholesome and the root of the unwholesome, the wholesome and the root of the wholesome [3-8]

**The ten unwholesome courses of action:**

- |                      |                 |
|----------------------|-----------------|
| a) killing           | f) harsh speech |
| b) stealing          | g) gossip       |
| c) sexual misconduct | h) covetousness |
| d) false speech      | i) ill will     |
| e) malicious speech  | j) wrong view   |

The first three are bodily actions, the next four are verbal actions, and the last three are mental actions. The **roots** for these unwholesome actions are greed, hatred, and delusion. (More on the ten courses of action, with examples, is found in MN41.8-10.)

**The ten wholesome courses of action** are the opposite—the abstention from each course of unwholesome action. The **roots** for these wholesome actions are non-greed, non-hatred and non-delusion.

2. When one understands nutriment, its origin, its cessation and the way leading to its cessation. [9-12] There are **four kinds of nutriment** for the life continuity of beings:

- a) physical food for the body
- b) contact for feeling
- c) mental volition for consciousness
- d) consciousness for name and form.

Craving is the origin of nutriment, cessation of craving is its cessation, the way leading to its cessation is the Noble Eightfold Path. (There are three kinds of craving: sensual pleasures, being and non-being.)

3. When one understands the **Four Noble Truths** [13-19].

4. When one understands the **twelve links of dependent origination** (listed in reverse order) [20-67]. Ven. Sāriputta explains for each of the links its origin, its cessation and the way leading to its cessation:
- a) aging and death
  - b) birth
  - c) being—**three kinds of being**: sense-sphere being, fine-material being and immaterial being. (Here, “being” includes actual planes of rebirth and the types of karma that generate rebirth into those planes.)
  - d) clinging—**four kinds of clinging**: clinging to sensual pleasures, views, rules and rituals, a doctrine of self
  - e) craving—**six classes of craving**: craving for forms, sounds, smells, flavors, tangibles, and mind-objects
  - f) feeling—**six classes of feeling**: feeling born of eye-contact, ear-, nose-, tongue-, body- and mind-contact
  - g) contact—**six classes of contact**: eye-contact, ear-, nose-, tongue-, body-, and mind-contact.
  - h) the sixfold base—**six bases**: eye-base, ear-, nose-, tongue-, body-, and mind-base
  - i) name and form—**five mental factors** (nāma): feeling, perception, volition, contact, and attention; and **materiality** (rūpa): the four elements and the materials which are formed from them
  - j) consciousness—**six classes of consciousness**: eye-consciousness, ear-, nose-, tongue-, body-, and mind-consciousness
  - k) formations—**three kinds of formations**: bodily, verbal, and mental formations
  - l) ignorance—**Ignorance** is considered to be not knowing the Four Noble Truths [66]. In this discourse, it is said that with the arising of ignorance, there is the arising of the taints.
5. When one understands **the three taints**: sensual desire, being, and ignorance [68-71]

#### **PRACTICE**

This discourse contains some of the Buddha’s most significant teachings. It is worthwhile to take your time and contemplate each section.

### **10 Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta The Foundations of Mindfulness ❖**

#### **SUMMARY**



This is the most important discourse by the Buddha on the training of mindfulness meditation, with particular attention given to developing insight. The Buddha begins by declaring that the four foundations of mindfulness are the direct path leading to the realization of Nibbāna. He then gives detailed instructions on the four foundations: the contemplation of the body, feelings, mind, and mind-objects.

## NOTES

[2] **QUOTE:** “Bhikkhus, this is the direct path for the purification of beings, for the surmounting of sorrow and lamentation, for the disappearance of pain and grief, for the attainment of the true way, for the realization of Nibbāna—namely, the four foundations of mindfulness.”

*Sati*—mindfulness or attentiveness directed to the present; *paṭṭhāna*—domain or foundation.

**The contemplation of the body, feelings, mind, and mind-objects.** For each of the four foundations, the Buddha directs us to contemplate:

1. the body as a body (or feelings as feelings, mind as mind, and mind-objects as mind-objects). Note 138 mentions that a body is a body, not a man, woman, person, etc. (with similar considerations holding true for feelings, mind, and mind-objects).
2. internally
3. externally,
4. internally and externally,
5. the arising factors,
6. the vanishing factors,
7. both the arising and the vanishing factors, and
8. mindfulness that “there is a body” (or “there is feeling,” or “there is mind,” or “there are mind-objects”) “is simply established to the extent necessary for bare knowledge and mindfulness”[5].

The Buddha urges us to know each of the four foundations distinctly from one another.

In this discourse, there are **twenty-one exercises in contemplation:**

**Body** [4-31]: (fourteen exercises) Mindfulness of breathing (*ānāpānasati*); contemplation of the four postures; clear comprehension (*sampajañña*); foulness (32 parts of the body); four elements; nine “charnel ground contemplations” reflecting on the impermanent nature of the body and on this body’s having the same nature as a corpse.

**Feeling** [32-33]: (one exercise) Noting differences among pleasant, painful and neither-pleasant-nor-painful feelings; also the distinction among feelings that arise due to the householder’s life (worldly feelings) and feelings due to renunciation (unworldly feelings) (see Note 152).

**Mind** [34-35]: (one exercise) Contemplation of mind is actually awareness of different mind-states (which includes emotions) and the mental factors that condition the mind in any moment; they include: mind affected by lust, hate, delusion, sloth (leads to contracted mind), and restlessness (leads to distracted mind) [*Ed: Note here the presence of the five hindrances*]; exalted mind (jhānas); unsurpassed mind (4th jhāna or the fully awakened mind); unexalted and surpassed mind (ordinary mind at the level of sense-sphere consciousness); concentrated mind and unconcentrated mind; liberated mind. (Note 155 points out that in this case “liberated mind” is the recognition of a temporarily liberated mind, because the satipaṭṭhāna practice is a preliminary path.)

**Mind-objects** [36-45]: (five exercises) Mind-objects in terms of the five hindrances; the five aggregates; the six sense bases; the seven enlightenment factors; and the Four Noble Truths. Mind-objects are considered to cover all phenomena classified by way of the categories of Dharma.

Note 158: Contains good information about the **five hindrances**:

1. Sensual desire arises through attending unwisely to a sensually attractive object and is abandoned by meditation on a foul object.
2. Ill will arises through attending unwisely to a repugnant object and is abandoned by developing loving-kindness.
3. Sloth and torpor arise by submitting to boredom and laziness and are abandoned by arousing energy.
4. Restlessness and remorse arise through unwisely reflecting on disturbing thoughts and are abandoned by wisely reflecting on tranquillity.
5. Doubt arises through unwisely reflecting on dubious matters and is abandoned by study, investigation, and inquiry.

A popular **QUOTE**: [46]: “If anyone should develop these four foundations of mindfulness in such a way for seven years, one of two fruits could be expected for him: either final knowledge here and now, or if there is a trace of clinging left, non-return. Let alone seven years... If anyone should develop these four foundations of mindfulness in such a way for six years... for five years... for four years... three years... two years... one year... seven months... six... five... four... three... two months... one month... half a month... seven days, one of two fruits could be expected for him: either final knowledge here and now, or if there is a trace of clinging left, non-return.”

## **PRACTICE**

This discourse is the basis of vipassana meditation and needs to be studied and understood well.

## **11 Cūḷasīhanāda Sutta The Shorter Discourse on the Lion’s Roar**

### **SUMMARY**

This discourse emphasizes how the Buddha's teachings differ from those of all others, particularly by rejecting any doctrine of self. Even though other recluses may have confidence in their Teacher, their Dharma, their Sangha, and are fulfilling the precepts, they are still clinging to the view of either being (eternalism) or non-being (annihilationism), or to a doctrine of self.

## NOTES

[2] The Buddha uses the expression, "roar your lion's roar." (Note 166: A lion's roar is a roar of supremacy and fearlessness, a roar that cannot be refuted.)

**Four things that give authority** to roar the lion's roar in the Buddha's order are:

1. Confidence in the Teacher
2. Confidence in the Dharma
3. Fulfillment of the precepts
4. Companions in Dharma, who are dear, whether laypeople or monastics.

[9-17] Understanding **the four kinds of clinging**:

1. to sensual pleasures,
2. to views,
3. to rites and rituals
4. to a doctrine of self.

The Buddha points out that recluses in disciplines other than his have one, two, three or four kinds of clinging. If they have abandoned the first three, they will still have the belief in a doctrine of self unless they are followers of the Buddha's teaching. Note 174 [14]: The Commentary teaches that clinging to sensual pleasures is abandoned by the path to arahantship, the other three clings by the path to stream-entry. *[Ed: Note that this is what the commentary teaches. Ven. Thanissaro Bhikkhu points out that as far as he can ascertain, the Buddha never talked about this relationship.]*

[6-8] **Two views**:

1. of being (eternalism)—belief in an eternal self.
2. of non-being (annihilationism)—the denial of any principle of continuity as a basis for rebirth and karma retribution (definitions are from Note 170).  
*[Ed: An alternative interpretation of being-views and non-being-views can be found in SN12:15.]*

Note 173 [12] points out that, because other spiritual teachers lack understanding of not-self (clinging to a view of self), their claim to fully understanding the other three forms of clinging is suspect.

In Note 175 [16], the way to abandon clinging is described. First, clinging is traced back to its root-cause, ignorance. Destruction of ignorance is shown to be the means to eradicate clinging. This is the last fetter to go.

## PRACTICE

Reflect on whether you have the authority to roar the lion's roar using the criteria laid down in the discourse. Of the four things that give this authority, what areas need more attention?

## 12 *Mahāsīhanāda Sutta* The Greater Discourse on the Lion's Roar

### SUMMARY

In this discourse, the Buddha talks about his many superior qualities, including a list of ten powers of the Tathāgata and many other lists that show explicitly how spiritually advanced he is. Of particular interest is his description of the time he practiced austerities.

### NO NOTES

## 13 *Mahādukkhakkhanda Sutta* The Greater Discourse on the Mass of Suffering ❖

### SUMMARY

Once more the Buddha shows the wisdom of his teaching by explaining what is the gratification and danger of, and escape from, sensual pleasures. He goes into a long explanation on the danger of sense pleasures, ascribing the cause of the mass of suffering as clinging to sense pleasures. He also explains the gratification and danger of, and escape from, material form and feeling. In this discourse, we get a good sense of the times in which the Buddha lived.

### NOTES

#### Sense Pleasures

[8] The “mass of suffering” referred to in this sutta is caused by clinging to sensual pleasures. *[Ed: Ven. Thanissaro Bhikkhu has noted that there are other forms of suffering that do not come from clinging to sense pleasure, but instead come from clinging to the subtle feelings in jhāna, mentioned below.]*

[7] *What is the gratification of sense pleasures?* The pleasure and joy that arise dependent on five cords: forms (eye), sounds (ear), odors (nose), flavors (tongue), and tangibles (body).

[8-15] *What are the dangers?* Extreme physical conditions and danger to the body, property and lack thereof, quarrels and anger, death and deadly suffering, and misconduct and unfavorable rebirths.

[16] *What is the escape?* The abandonment of desire and lust for sense pleasures.

#### Material Form

[18] *What is the gratification?* The pleasure and joy that arise dependent on material form.

[19-29] *What is the danger?* Dependence on permanence.

[30] *What is the escape?* The abandonment of desire and lust for material form. *[Ed: In reading the section on material form, one can get a strong sense of the truth of impermanence.]*

## Feeling

The Buddha uses the sublime states of jhāna to show the gratification and danger of, and escape from, feeling.

[32-35] *What is the gratification?* Freedom from pain and suffering.

[32] One does not choose affliction for oneself or another, but experiences only feeling that is free of affliction. *[Ed: This is a subtle point worth reflecting on. The Buddha may be pointing to the feeling that is free of pain as another potential source of attachment. We can easily think of that as a “non-feeling,” or that we are not feeling.]*

[36] *What is the danger?* Feelings are impermanent, suffering, and subject to change.

[37] *What is the escape?* The abandonment of desire and lust for feeling.

## PRACTICE

1. Know what it is like to feel the gratification of a sense pleasure. Feel the sensations in the body and notice the state of mind. Reflect on and know the danger of a sense pleasure. Reflect if the gratification is worth the danger. 2. Know this for material form and feeling as well, as instructed in this discourse. (Feeling can be experienced as pleasant, unpleasant or neutral.) Spend some time in the day, if only for a few moments, experiencing the felt-sense of each so you know well what is being pointed to.

## 14 *Cūḷadukkhakkhanda Sutta* The Shorter Discourse on the Mass of Suffering

### SUMMARY

This discourse continues from the last one on the theme of sensual pleasures. The Buddha points out how pleasure from the jhānas can help one let go of the worldly pleasures. There is an exchange between the Buddha and some Nigaṇṭha (Jain) recluses where, based on his own experience, he challenges their views on the need for asceticism.

### NOTES

[4-5] The Buddha points out that experiencing the first and second jhānas brings more rapture and pleasure than do sense pleasures; this helps to free the mind from clinging to sense pleasures. The higher jhānas are “more peaceful than that.”

[21-22] The Buddha states that he can, without moving his body or uttering a word, experience the “peak of pleasure” for up to seven days.

### PRACTICE

Identify moments in the day when pleasure arises that is related neither to the sense pleasures nor to something you are thinking about.

## 15 *Anumāna Sutta* Inference

### SUMMARY

Ven. Mahā Moggallāna points out what makes a bhikkhu difficult or easy to admonish or instruct. This discourse provides us with a list of traits to review in order to discover which ones need work and which do not. When, after review, we discover we do not need to work in a particular area, we “can abide happy and glad, training day and night in wholesome states.”

### NOTES

*[Ed: The commentaries suggest that doing this review every day is worthwhile. Perhaps it would be beneficial to do it at least once. I appreciate the point that if one knows one is free of needing work in an area, one can abide happily, training in already arisen wholesome states of mind.]*

### PRACTICE

Review each question put forth to discover which areas need attention and which do not. Make a list of those traits that need attention, and practice remedying those traits.

## 16 *Cetokhila Sutta* The Wilderness in the Heart

### SUMMARY

The Buddha points out fifteen factors to help a practitioner grow, increase, and be fulfilled in this Dharma and Discipline, to break out and be capable of enlightenment.

### NOTES

Note 217: *Cetokhila* is translated as “wilderness in the heart,” as rigidity, rubbish, or a stump in the mind. *Cetaso vinibandha* is translated as “shackle in the heart,” as something that binds the mind, clenching it like a fist.

#### **The fifteen factors that help someone train for enlightenment:**

[3-7] When one has abandoned the “**five wildernesses of the heart**”:

1. doubt in the Teacher
2. doubt in the Dharma
3. doubt in the Sangha
4. doubt about the training
5. anger with companions.

[8-25] When one has abandoned the “**five shackles in the heart**”:

6. craving for sensual pleasures
7. craving for the body (one’s own)

8. craving for form (another body)
9. over-indulgence in food and sleep (laziness)
10. aspiring to become a god.

[26] When one has developed the “**four bases for spiritual power**”:

11. concentration due to zeal
12. concentration due to energy
13. concentration due to purity of mind
14. concentration due to investigation (and determined striving).
15. When one has enthusiasm (usso|hi) (Note 220: Also translated as energy, which is to be applied everywhere.)

[27] **SIMILE:** Suppose there was a hen with eight or so eggs that she had covered, incubated, and nurtured properly. Even though she did not wish: “Oh, that my chicks might pierce their shells with their claws and beaks and hatch out safely!” yet the chicks are capable of hatching out safely anyhow. So, too, a bhikkhu who thus possesses the fifteen factors is capable of breaking out to enlightenment.

#### **PRACTICE**

Reflect on which of these fifteen factors are the weakest for you and take the appropriate steps to strengthen them, either through resolving the doubt, letting go of clinging, or developing your strength of concentration.

### **17 *Vanapattha Sutta* Jungle Thickets**

#### **SUMMARY**

Here the Buddha emphasizes that, in regard to where one is practicing, if one is making progress, then whether the requisites are scarce or plentiful, one should stay where one is. If one is under a certain teacher and is making progress, one should stay. If one is not making progress and the requisites are scarce, or even if they are plentiful, one should leave. If under a teacher, progress is not being made, no matter what, leave. What is important is the progress, not how well one is taken care of.

#### **NO NOTES**

#### **PRACTICE**

The next time you go to a retreat, notice if the austerity of the environment disappoints you and you to want to leave the retreat. If the teachings are beneficial, can you accept what is offered at the facility gratefully?

### **18 *Madhupiṇḍika Sutta* The Honeyball ❖**

#### **SUMMARY**

This is an important discourse on *papañca*. *Papañca* is the proliferation and projection of mind that emerges from the process of cognition, and gives rise to perceptions and notions that overwhelm and victimize a person. After the Buddha has finished speaking, Ven. Mahā Kaccāna gives the detailed meaning; he includes the sequence of mental processes that generates this mental suffering.

## NOTES

[4] The Buddha proclaims that **QUOTE**: “perceptions no more underlie that brahmin who abides detached...free from craving for any kind of being.” Note 227 explains that for the Buddha, “perceptions no longer awaken the dormant underlying tendencies to defilements.” It is important to note that the Buddha does not say that the tendencies are not there, but rather they are not awakened. So, in the contact with feelings and perceptions (or in the process of cognition, knowing, or bare awareness) the underlying tendencies of lust or aversion do not arise in relationship to the object. This is enumerated in [8].

[8] An important **PASSAGE**: “...as to the source [of *papañca*]...if nothing is found there to delight in, welcome, and hold to, this is the end of the underlying tendency to lust...” The sentence continues with the other tendencies of aversion, views, doubt, conceit, desire for being, ignorance, resorting to weapons, quarreling, and malice and false speech.

Note 229 points out: “Cognition is itself ‘the source through which perceptions and notions tinged by mental proliferation beset a man.’ If nothing in the process of cognition is found to delight in...the underlying tendencies of the defilements will come to an end.”

This note also points out that in the commentaries, **the three springs of *papañca*** are the factors of “craving, conceit, and views—on account of which the mind embellishes experience by interpreting it in terms of ‘mine,’ ‘I’ and ‘my self.’” [Ed: “*Mine*” is related to craving, “*I*” is related to conceit, and “*myself*” is related to views.]

### [16] The sequence of *papañca*:

1. Dependent on the eye and forms, eye-consciousness arises
2. The meeting of eye, forms and eye-consciousness is called contact
3. With contact as the condition (according to dependent origination), there is feeling
4. What one feels, that one perceives (Note 232: Feeling and perception are inseparable; from MN43.9: Feeling, perception and consciousness are impossible to separate in order to describe the difference between them, for what one feels, that one perceives, and what one perceives, that one cognizes)
5. What one perceives, that one thinks about
6. What one thinks about, that one mentally proliferates (*papañca*)
7. With what one has mentally proliferated as the source, perceptions and notions tinged by mental proliferation beset a man with respect to past, future, and present forms cognizable to the eye.



*[Ed: Bhikkhu Ñāṇananda, in his book Concept and Reality, makes a useful observation with regard to this list: the language changes from the impersonal in steps 1-3 (with contact as a condition, there is feeling) to the personal agent in step 4 (what one feels, one perceives) and then the agent becomes the victim of the papañca in step 7.]*

Note 232: “What is perceived as ‘this’ is thought about in its differences and is thus diversified from ‘that’ and from ‘me.’ *[Ed: This is separation and fragmentation.]* This diversification—involving craving for form, wrong view about permanence of form, etc., and the conceit ‘I am’—leads to preoccupation with calculating the desirability of past and present forms with a view to obtaining desirable forms in the future.”

[22] Honeyballs can still be found in India, particularly in Varanasi. They are known as *kirkadams* in Hindi.

## **PRACTICE**

1. When a sequence of thoughts occurs, see if you can identify the arising of delight in relation to those thoughts. Notice if there is the tendency toward proliferation due to this delight. 2. If so, see if you can notice the felt-sense of the unsatisfactory element (*dukkha*) of this proliferation.

## **19 Dvedhavitakka Sutta Two Kinds of Thought ❖**

### **SUMMARY**

The Buddha divides thought into two classes: thoughts of sensual desire, ill will and cruelty; and thoughts of renunciation, non-ill will (*mettā*) and non-cruelty (*karuṇā*). This discourse states simply that unwholesome thought bring about unhappiness, and wholesome thoughts bring about happiness. Unwholesome thoughts can be replaced by wholesome thoughts (and, even better, a quiet, concentrated mind). Knowing this, we can bring about happiness and freedom from pain.

### **NOTES**

This is an important discourse, one that is at the base of what is taught today. It is a training discourse based on the Buddha’s experience before enlightenment.

[3-5] With mindfulness, aware that a thought of sensual desire has arisen, one can reflect on the consequences of dwelling on that thought, noting the pain it brings to oneself and to others, and how it obstructs wisdom and leads away from *Nibbāna*. Reflecting in this way can make that thought subside. The Buddha said, “Whenever a thought of sense desire arose in me, I abandoned it, removed it, did away with it” (thereby showing the need to exert some effort and energy, rather than simply letting such thoughts just subside on their own). This also demonstrates the power of wise reflection. The same applies to thoughts of ill will and cruelty.

[6 and 11] **QUOTE:** “Whatever [one] frequently thinks and ponders upon, that will become the inclination of [one’s] mind. If [one] frequently thinks and ponders upon thoughts of sensual desire, [one] has abandoned the thought of renunciation to cultivate the thought of sensual desire, and then [one’s] mind inclines to thoughts of sensual desire.”

His instructions to us: Abandon the thought of desire to cultivate the thought of renunciation. If one frequently thinks and ponders upon thoughts of non-ill will, then one should incline one’s mind to thoughts of mettā; if one frequently thinks and ponders upon thoughts of non-cruelty, then one should incline one’s mind to thoughts of karuṇā. Good **SIMILES:** [7] and [12].

[8] When thoughts of renunciation or mettā or karuṇā arise, we can see that those thoughts do not lead to our pain, nor to others’ pain, and do not obscure wisdom nor block the way to Nibbāna. At this point, nothing has to be done; one only has to be mindful that these states are here.

[8-10] A good instruction from the Buddha about thinking. He points out that excessive thinking and pondering might tire the body, even in wise reflection. He doesn’t say that it is wrong but that it disturbs the mind and interferes with concentration. Better to steady the mind, quiet it, bring it to singleness and concentrate it so that the mind is not disturbed.

[25-26] **SIMILE** for the path to happiness.

## **PRACTICE**

Notice when the mind is inclining toward negativity. Reflect on the pain that this tendency brings to yourself and to others. Then, with conscious intention, incline the mind to more wholesome thoughts of letting go, loving-kindness or compassion. What changes do you observe in yourself when you do this?

## **20 Vitakkasaṅḥāna Sutta The Removal of Distracting Thoughts ❖**

### **SUMMARY**

Here the Buddha suggests five methods to work with unwholesome thoughts in the mind. If unwholesome states are not arising, then one needs only to be mindful so they do not arise unnoticed. Doing this, one is “a master of the courses of thought.”

### **NOTES**

[3-7] There are **five suggested methods to work with unwholesome states in the mind** (desire, hatred and delusion) when the thoughts are persistent. They should be applied in the following sequence:

1. Replacing—giving attention instead to that which is wholesome
  - a) Desire: if toward a being, the remedy is to meditate on foulness; if toward a thing, the remedy is to meditate on impermanence.
  - b) Ill will: if toward a being, the remedy is to meditate on mettā; if toward a thing, the remedy is to meditate on the elements.

- c) Delusion: the remedy is to live with a teacher; study the Dharma; inquire into its meaning; listen to the Dharma, inquire into its causes. (These examples are from Note 240.)
2. Reflecting on the danger of those thoughts (as in MN19.3)
  3. Forgetting and not giving them attention—looking away, *[Ed: Skillful distraction—for example, this can mean letting the thoughts chatter away as they lie in the background of our mind while we stay focused on the breath. It can also mean if I am in a lot of pain, physical or emotional, it might be better to take the attention off the pain to something more uplifting, like making a phone call to a friend or going out for a walk.]*
  4. Stilling the thought-formation, or inquiring into the cause of the thought. *[Ed: There are a few interpretations of this: 1. Inquiry into the cause of the thought enables one to move from grosser to a more subtle thought or mind state, and the thought may cease altogether. 2. It may also mean that thought processes entail some physical tension. When the tension is relaxed, the thoughts go away.]*
  5. Clenching one's teeth and crushing mind with mind. (Note 243: crushing the unwholesome with the wholesome.)

There are many useful **SIMILES** throughout this section, although some are very harsh.

An interesting point here for our practice is in [8]: When one works with one's thoughts in this way so that one's mind becomes steadied internally, quieted, brought to singleness, and concentrated, one is called "a master of the courses of thought." **QUOTE:** "He will think whatever thought he wishes to think and he will not think any thought that he does not wish to think."

Again we see that the problem is with the suffering, with the unwholesome mind states, not with thinking *per se*. When the mind is wholesome, we need only to be mindful so that the unwholesome does not take hold.

## **PRACTICE**

The training here is very specific. Practice the five ways to work with distracting thoughts as needed.

## **21 Kakacūpama Sutta The Simile of the Saw ❖**

### **SUMMARY**

This discourse is a challenging and relevant training on how to develop compassion, lovingkindness, equanimity and patience when faced with disagreeable speech, whether trivial or gross, even when we are physically attacked or fatally wounded by someone.

### **NOTES**

The **SIMILE**: of the saw [20] is this: If bandits were to sever you savagely limb by limb with a two-handed saw, you would train your mind thus: “My mind will be unaffected, and I shall utter no evil words; I shall abide compassionate for their welfare, with a mind of loving-kindness, without inner hate.” This quality is what makes mettā a “brahma-vihāra,” a divine abode. The power of mettā is that the mind is steady and unflinching in the face of ill will, abuse, and even violence.

Whatever the course of speech or action, we first train our minds as quoted above. We then send mettā to the person involved, and end by expanding the mettā out to the all-encompassing world.

[11] **Five courses of speech** that others may use when addressing us. Their speech may be:

1. timely or untimely
2. true or untrue
3. gentle or harsh
4. connected with good or with harm
5. spoken with a mind of mettā or with inner hate.

A good **STORY** [9] shows we can be peaceful if we are not confronted with aggression but may not be steady in disagreeable situations. Kālī was clever, nimble, and neat in her work, and gave Mistress Vedehikā no reason to be upset, so word spread around the village what a kind and peaceful woman the mistress was. Kālī wanted to find out whether the cause for Mistress Vedehikā’s absence of anger was her own fine work or an actual lack of anger in Mistress Vedehikā, so she tested her. She found out that the anger was lying dormant, for after provoking her mistress slightly she got her head cracked open.

[12-18] The Buddha uses wonderful **SIMILES** to show how we should train when affected by disagreeable speech:

1. Be like the earth, without hostility and ill will, even when someone tries to destroy it
2. Be like empty space, formless and invisible
3. Be like the river Ganges, deep and immense, unable to be set on fire
4. Be like a catskin bag, rubbed and rid of crackling.

Each simile ends with: you “shall abide pervading the all-encompassing world with a mind similar to the [earth, empty space, river Ganges, catskin bag], abundant, exalted, immeasurable, without hostility and ill will.” This is how you should train.

## **PRACTICE**

1. The way to begin practicing with feelings of anger toward another is to pay attention to your relationship to your anger. See if you are angry at yourself for feeling angry, or if you have aversion to your anger. This is the place to soften your resistance. Work with this.      2. What would it be like to have a mind like the earth, empty space, the river Ganges, and a catskin bag? Using each example, try to get a felt-sense for each. Reflect on whether there is value in this.

## 22 *Alagaddūpama Sutta* The Simile of the Snake ❖

### SUMMARY

The discourse begins with a lively admonishment by the Buddha toward Aritṭha. Then the Buddha points out the importance of learning the Dharma for the right reasons—to grasp the Dharma correctly, not to criticize others and win debates. He uses the simile of the snake: to grasp a snake with the cleft of a stick (which is safe and likened to correct understanding of the Dharma), not by its coils or tail with one’s hand (which is dangerous and likened to wrong understanding of the Dharma). In the summary of the translation, this discourse is said to culminate “in one of the most impressive [formal discourses] on non-self found in the Canon.”

### NOTES

The **SIMILE** of the snake is in sections [10-12].

There is also the famous **SIMILE** of the raft [13]. There is a great expanse of water whose near shore is dangerous and fearful. The far shore is safe and free of fear. A man builds a raft to carry him over the water and, once he is across, he wonders about carrying it further it on his head. The Buddha tells us that the sole purpose of the raft is for crossing over; it is not for grasping, nor for carrying around after the man has reached the far shore. *[Ed: Ven. Thanissaro Bhikkhu notes that this simile points to a difference between Theravada and Mahayana teachings. In the Diamond Sutra, we are told that we get to the further shore by abandoning the raft. Here we are taught to hold onto the raft until we get across. Then we abandon it.]*

[14] When the Buddha tells us to “abandon even good states,” Note 255 points out that it is the “*attachment* to the good states that should be abandoned, not the good states themselves.”

[15-17] Regard the five aggregates as well as the view of an eternal self as: “This is not mine, this I am not, this is not my self.” In this way, one is not agitated about what is non-existent. (Note 260 refers to both external and internal non-existent conditions.)

[18-19] To be free of agitation about what is non-existent externally (loss or non-acquisition of possessions), one does not think, “I had it! I’ve lost it! May I have it! I do not get it!”

[20-21] To be free of agitation about what is non-existent internally: not to have the view “This is self, this is the world; after death I shall be permanent, everlasting, eternal, not subject to change; I shall endure as long as eternity.” When one hears the Dharma for the elimination of all standpoints, and underlying tendencies, for the destruction of craving, for cessation, for Nibbāna, one does not think thus: “So I shall be annihilated! So I shall perish! I shall be no more!”

[26-29] Seeing “not my self” in the five aggregates, one becomes disenchanted, dispassionate, and liberated.

[30-36] The arahant—who is untraceable here and now (see Note 266).

[37-38] An important clarification of the Buddha’s teaching on anattā (not-self—see also Note 268). Here the Buddha shows that he is not teaching annihilationism, the extermination of an existing being, but that “what I teach is suffering and the cessation of suffering” (a famous **QUOTE**).

Here the Buddha reminds us to teach what we understand to be true. If someone scolds or harasses us, we feel no bitterness. If someone reveres or venerates us, we feel no joy or elation. We simply teach what we know to be true.

An important **SIMILE** on not-self [41].

### **PRACTICE**

Be watchful of the arising of such thoughts as, “I had it. I lost it,” and notice the associated agitated feeling that arises due to attachment to the object. See if you can let go of the possessive view, perhaps by reflecting, “This is not mine,” and notice if the agitation disappears.

## **23 Vammika Sutta The Ant-hill**

### **SUMMARY**

The Buddha helps to unravel a riddle that comes to Kumāra Kassapa in the night, giving him instructions for his training to attain Nibbāna.

### **NOTES**

The instruction is essentially this: This body (the ant-hill) is subject to impermanence; throw out ignorance; throw out despair due to anger; abandon doubt, the five hindrances, the five aggregates, the five cords of sensual pleasures, delight and lust; and remain one who has destroyed the taints.

### **PRACTICE**

For one week, notice if what you think and ponder in the evening is based on your actions during the day, and if your actions during the day are based on your thinking and pondering in the evening.

## **24 Rathavinīta Sutta The Relay Chariots**

### **SUMMARY**

A meeting between two great beings, where Ven. Puṇṇa Mantāṇiputta explains to Ven. Sāriputta that the goal of the holy life—final Nibbāna—is to be reached by way of the seven stages of purification, for which relay chariots are used as a simile.

### **NOTES**

The important point in this discourse is that the holy life is not lived for purification of virtue, of mind, of view, for overcoming doubt, for path-knowledge, for insight into the way, nor for vision, but only for attaining Nibbāna without clinging. However, the true goal cannot be attained without these purifications.

[9] The **seven purifications**: Note 288 says these are the “scaffolding” for the entire Visuddhimagga, and briefly describes each one; the clarifications are:

1. purification of virtue: unbroken adherence to the moral precepts one has undertaken
2. purification of mind: the overcoming of the five hindrances through the attainment of access concentration and the jhānas
3. purification of view: the understanding that defines the nature of the five aggregates
4. purification by overcoming doubt: the understanding of conditionality [*Ed: not-self*]
5. purification by knowledge and vision of what is the path and what is not the path: correct discrimination between the false path of the ecstatic, exhilarating experiences, and the true path of insight into impermanence, suffering and not-self
6. purification by knowledge and vision of the way: the ascending series of insight knowledges up to the supramundane paths
7. purification by knowledge and vision: the supramundane paths

Each purification relies on its predecessors for progress, as in using relay chariots— **SIMILE**: The goal of reaching Nibbāna without clinging is kept in mind [14-15].

## **PRACTICE**

Reflect on what your motivation is for practice. Do you keep the goal of reaching Nibbāna without clinging firmly in mind, or do you have other motivations?

## **25 Nivāpa Sutta The Bait**

### **SUMMARY**

The Buddha uses the simile of deer and deer-trappers to show the obstacle of being hooked by the five cords of sensual pleasure (the bait). If one becomes intoxicated and falls into negligence, then Māra (the deer-trapper) can do what he likes. Māra cannot, however, follow one into the eight jhānic states, as there Māra becomes blindfolded.

### **NOTES**

Using the deer **SIMILE**, the Buddha refers to the **four kinds of recluses** (the deer herd):

1. Those who went unwarily right into the bait (the material things of the world) and became intoxicated [8]

2. Those who went into the wilderness, but when things got hard lost their resolve and returned to the bait [9];
3. Those who did not go directly into the bait, but got lost in their views (the ten speculative views (see MN63) which were popular at the time) and so failed to get free of Māra's power [10];
4. Those who made their living place where Māra could not go—the eight attainments, or absorptions [11].

Sections [12-19] include descriptions of each jhānic state.

Notes 295 and 296 explain that a recluse who surmounts the base of neither-perception-nor-non-perception and so abides in the cessation of perception and feeling, with taints destroyed through wisdom, *permanently* blindfolds Māra, whereas a recluse entering the eight attainments only *temporarily* blindfolds Māra.

### PRACTICE

To what extent are you getting caught in the trap of the material world? In what way have you “moved away” from temptation of the material world, either physically (renunciation of things you want) or mentally (wise restraint)? At this point, does your restraint come about with effort or non-effort?

## 26 Ariyapariyesanā Sutta The Noble Search

### SUMMARY

The Buddha gives the bhikkhus a long account of his own quest for enlightenment from the time of his life in the palace through to his transmission of the Dharma to his first five disciples.

### NOTES

An important **PASSAGE** [5-12] where the Buddha describes the search by one who is subject to birth, aging, sickness, death, sorrow, and defilements, for objects of attachment (examples are listed in the text) that are subject to the same conditions. He is essentially saying, if I am subject to birth, aging, sickness and death, why should I seek that which is the same? He names this the ignoble search. Then he describes the noble search, which seeks the unborn, the unaging, the unailing, the deathless, the sorrowless, the undefiled supreme security from bondage, Nibbāna. Later, he equates Nibbāna with the stilling of all formations, the relinquishment of all attachments, and the destruction of craving [19].

In [19] the Buddha muses over why he thinks no one will understand the profundity of the Dharma. In [20] is Brahmā Sahampati's passionate plea to the Buddha to teach rather than remain silent. [*Ed: Note that Uruvelā is the ancient name for Bodh Gaya, the place where the Buddha was enlightened.*]

The last section on the eight attainments [34-42] is repeated in MN25.



[Ed: At this point in the text, we start to see three primary themes making repeated appearances: the dangers of sensual pleasures, the danger of things because they are subject to impermanence (birth and death), and the place of the eight attainments.]

## **PRACTICE**

1. Reflect on the things you tend to search for in your life. How many of them would count as objects of an ignoble search? How many would be noble? Reflect on how the noble search turns us away from the world and toward the spiritual. 2. Reflect on what your life would be like now had the Buddha remained silent and Buddhadharmā had not been born into this world. If gratitude arises, allow it to expand throughout your whole body.

## **27 Cūḷahatthipadopama Sutta The Shorter Discourse on the Simile of the Elephant's Footprint**

### **SUMMARY**

The Buddha uses the simile of the elephant's footprint to show how one must not come to a conclusion too hastily about the certainty of whether one is fully enlightened. The same need for caution applies to whether the Dharma is well proclaimed by the Buddha and whether the Sangha is practicing the good way. This discourse gives a clear picture of a Buddhist monk's training by including a full step-by-step account of what is expected of him.

### **NOTES**

[15] Interestingly, both "covetousness *and grief*" are stated, signifying desire *and aversion*, attraction to *and repulsion from* sense-objects. One uses restraint toward even unpleasant or foul objects, so that aversion does not arise in the mind. One needs to be watchful of the arising of aversion, as well as the arising of desire (Note 322).

Also Note 322 (From the Vsm I, 53-59): In working with non-grasping, the terms "signs" and "features" are mentioned. Signs (nimitta) are distinctive qualities of the object which, when grasped at unmindfully, can kindle defiled thoughts. Features (anubyañjana) are the details that may subsequently catch the attention when the first perceptual contact has not been followed up by restraint.

### **PRACTICE**

1. Be clear how you would use "restraint" toward foul or unpleasant things so that aversion can be diminished in your mind. Take this on as a practice by paying attention to objects toward which you feel aversive. Practice not letting the aversion increase. 2. Consider the criteria you are using to decide who is fully enlightened. Does this discourse cast any doubt on those criteria?

## 28 *Mahāhatthipadopama Sutta* The Greater Discourse on the Simile of the Elephant's Footprint ❖

### SUMMARY

This is an important discourse that is involved, yet clear and precise. Ven. Sāriputta begins with a statement about the Four Noble Truths and proceeds to explain the impersonal (not-self) aspect of each of the four elements (earth, water, fire and air), showing how they relate to the five aggregates affected by clinging.

### NOTES

[2] **QUOTE:** "...just as the footprint of any living being that walks can be placed within an elephant's footprint... the elephant's footprint is declared the chief of them...so too, all wholesome states can be included in the Four Noble Truths."

Repeated throughout the discourse are the distinctions between "I," "mine," and "I am." They represent the three obsessions of "I" (identity view, *sakkāyadiṭṭhi*), "mine" (craving, *taṇhā*), and "I am" (conceit, *māna*) (see Note 332).

For each element, it is said [6] that "Both the internal and the external element are simply the (earth, water, fire and air) element" in order to show the non-difference between the inner and the outer. The inner (bones, blood, digestion, wind in the bowels, for example) are more easily identified as "mine" whereas the outer are more readily seen to be "impermanent, subject to destruction, disappearance, and change." When one sees with the view of not-self, one is dispassionate toward the elements and the aggregates.

[8] **A MEDITATION on not-self using the elements.** If one who has seen an element as it actually is, is scolded or harassed, one can reflect, "There is a painful feeling at the ear door. Is it dependent or independent? It is dependent on contact. Contact is impermanent; feeling is impermanent; perception is impermanent; formations are impermanent; and consciousness is impermanent." This makes one as imperturbable as a tree that is being abused. There is no difference.

[9] Again (as in the Simile of the Saw MN21.20) even when one is savagely attacked, no hatred arises toward the attacker if one sees the impersonal nature of the body.

[10] "Equanimity supported by the wholesome." Note 337 points out that this means the equanimity of insight, the sixfold equanimity of neither attraction nor aversion toward agreeable or disagreeable objects that appear at the six sense doors ("sixfold" and "six sense doors" refer to the five senses and mind). When one sees that equanimity is not established in oneself through reactivity arising toward another or in some difficult situation, urgency to practice should be aroused. If one sees that equanimity is present, one can be satisfied and know one has done the work.

Good **SIMILES:** For each of the external elements, an example is used:

[7] **Earth:** “there comes a time when...the external earth element vanishes. When even this external earth element, great as it is, is seen to be impermanent, subject to destruction, disappearance, and change, what of this body...which lasts but a while?”

[12] **Water:** sometimes carries away villages, towns...countries. At times, the waters in the great ocean are abundant, at others, they are not even ankle deep, perhaps even not enough to wet a joint of a finger...so what of this body, which lasts but a while?

[17] **Fire:** can burn up villages, towns...countries, burning out due to lack of fuel only when it comes to green grass, a road, rock, water, or a fair open space. There comes a time when one tries to make fire with cocks’ feathers and hide parings...so what of this body, which lasts but a while?

[22] **Air:** sweeps away villages, towns...countries. In the last month of the hot season when one seeks wind by means of a fan or bellows, even the strands of straw in the drip-fringe of the thatch do not stir... so what of this body, which lasts but a while?

[26] **Space: QUOTE:** “...just as when a space is enclosed by timber and creepers, grass, and clay, it comes to be termed ‘house,’ so too, when a space is enclosed by bones and sinews, flesh and skin, it comes to be termed ‘material form.’” Note 338 adds that as the four elements of which the body is made are shown to be mere elements, this stresses its egoless nature, “not belonging to a self; they are without being, without a soul.”

[28] It is said that the removal of desire and lust for these five aggregates affected by clinging is the cessation of suffering. In the first part of this passage, Ven. Sāriputta goes through each aggregate and says, “The material form, in what has thus come to be is included in the material form aggregate affected by clinging.” This means that “what has thus come to be” includes the entire complex of factors arisen by way of eye-consciousness and each of the other four kinds of consciousness. This shows that any occasion of sense experience is contained within the truth of suffering (Note 340). (See also MN44.) Also, in [5] “...what is the material form aggregate affected by clinging? It is the four great elements and the material form derived from the four great elements.” This is everything, right here. *[Ed: A useful reflection is that four other words synonymous with “craving” (taṇhā) are used: desire (chanda, which is also translated as blind zeal), indulgence (ālaya), inclination (anunaya), and holding (ajjhosaṇa). Each represents a different aspect of craving.]*

[28] **QUOTE:** “One who sees dependent origination sees the Dharma; one who sees the Dharma sees dependent origination. And these five aggregates affected by clinging are dependently arisen.”

## PRACTICE

Practice the meditation the Buddha gave in section [8]. Notice to what degree seeing the nature of emptiness of the five aggregates lessens the reactive mind.

**29 *Mahāsāropama Sutta* The Greater Discourse on the Simile of the Heartwood ❖**

**30 *Cūḷasāropama Sutta* The Shorter Discourse on the Simile of the Heartwood ❖**

**SUMMARY**

These two discourses are nearly identical in their content. Using the **SIMILE** of a great tree possessed of heartwood, sapwood, inner bark and outer bark, twigs and leaves, the Buddha points out how the holy life is not for gain, honor and renown, nor simply for the attainment of virtue, nor the attainment of concentration, nor for knowledge and vision. It is for the unshakable deliverance of the mind. This is the goal of this holy life, its heartwood, and its end.

**NOTES**

These two discourses are primarily distinguished by the change of the phrase, “He becomes intoxicated” to the phrase “He arouses no desire to act, he makes no effort for the realization of those other states that are higher and more sublime than gain, honor, and renown; he hangs back and slackens.” MN30.12-23 refers to the eight absorptions as higher states than knowledge and vision. Note 353 explains that this is so because the jhānas are being treated as the basis for the attainment of cessation and the destruction of the taints, as pointed out in [21].

**PRACTICE**

Reflect on how you might be “becoming intoxicated” with what you have attained in your practice and how you might be stopping short of attaining the goal set out by the Buddha.

**31 *Cūḷagosīṅga Sutta* The Shorter Discourse in Gosīṅga**

**SUMMARY**

The Buddha visits three of his disciples and inquires how they live so harmoniously together, a situation he describes as “blending like milk and water.” He suggests that all gods and humans should remember how the three disciples are, out of compassion for the world, practicing for the welfare and happiness of the many.

**NO NOTES**

**32 *Mahāgosīṅga Sutta* The Greater Discourse in Gosīṅga**

**SUMMARY**

At an informal gathering of the Buddha's most renowned disciples, each describes the exceptional qualities of one who is living the holy, or spiritual life, according to his own personal ideal.

#### NOTES

[9] Ven. Sāriputta explains that the power of meditation comes by having mastery over our mind, not letting the mind wield mastery over us. Through such mastery, we can abide in any attainment that we choose.

[17] Note 363 points out that the disciples' replies hold up the ideal of a bhikkhu who has already achieved proficiency in a particular sphere of the holy life, while the Buddha's reply focuses on the ultimate purpose of that life itself—striving for the mind liberated from the taints.

#### PRACTICE

Because the Buddha encourages us to practice “not clinging” in both our sitting practice and daily activities, if you emphasize mindfulness of both clinging and non-clinging you may achieve more clarity with regard to what the Buddha is talking about.

### **33 Mahāgopālaka Sutta The Greater Discourse on the Cowherd**

#### SUMMARY

The Buddha teaches eleven abilities that prevent a practitioner's growth in the Dharma and eleven abilities that contribute to it.

#### NOTES

[17- 27] **Eleven abilities that lead to growth, increase and fulfillment in the Dharma** (A useful list):

1. Understanding that all material form of whatever kind consists of the four elements
2. Understanding that, whether one is a fool or a wise person, one is characterized by one's actions
3. Abandoning desire, ill will and cruelty—all evil, unwholesome states
4. Practicing restraint and guarding the sense doors and mind-objects so that greed and/or aversion do not arise in the mind
5. Teaching others in detail the Dharma as oneself has learned and mastered it
6. Going to learned ones and asking pertinent questions in order to delve into the meaning of the Dharma
7. Gaining inspiration and gladness in the Dharma
8. Understanding the Noble Eightfold Path as it actually is
9. Understanding the four foundations of mindfulness as they actually are
10. Taking in moderation what is offered

11. Maintaining loving-kindness (bodily, verbally and mentally, both openly and privately) to elders of long-standing and to the leaders of the Sangha.

#### **PRACTICE**

Choose one ability from the list that you think could use some attention, and for one week strengthen this ability. The following week, continue with another ability. (Working with one for a month may be more suitable for some.)

### **34 Cūḷagopālaka Sutta The Shorter Discourse on the Cowherd**

#### **SUMMARY**

The Buddha warns about following teachers who do not understand the Dharma. If people put their faith in these teachers, they will be harmed and will suffer. He says such people are like cattle that meet with calamity if an inexperienced cowherd tries to take them across the Ganges to the other shore. On the other hand, those who put their faith in skilled spiritual practitioners find welfare and happiness.

#### **NOTES**

This discourse is a good warning for people who want to teach before they are ready.

### **35 Cūḷasaccaka Sutta The Shorter Discourse to Saccaka**

#### **SUMMARY**

This is a good story where Saccaka, a Nigaṇṭha's son who considered himself an unexcelled debater, tries to take on the Buddha, who then turns Saccaka's assertions upside-down. He demonstrates to Saccaka that the five aggregates are not-self because one can gain no mastery over them.

#### **NOTES**

This good **STORY** gives a sense of the historical setting in which the Buddha taught.

[13] **QUOTE:** "When you say thus: 'Material form is my self,' do you exercise any such power over that material form as to say: 'Let my form be thus; let my form not be thus'?" In other words, if we have no mastery or perfect control over material form, how can we call it "myself"? The Buddha takes Saccaka to task as he goes through the other four aggregates of feeling, perception, (mental) formations and consciousness. [*Ed: This dialogue demonstrates a point I have often heard on retreats to explain not-self.*]

[20] **QUOTE:** "...is material form permanent or impermanent?" – "Impermanent, Master Gotama." – "Is what is impermanent suffering or happiness?" – "Suffering, Master Gotama." – "Is what is impermanent, suffering, and subject to change fit to be regarded thus: 'This is mine, this I am, this is my self'?" – "No, Master Gotama."

#### **PRACTICE**

Start with the aggregate of the body. Pay close attention to how much power you have over the body. For example, can you prevent illness, or aging? Then take another aggregate. Reflect deeply on the truth of not-self.

### **36 Mahāsaccaka Sutta The Greater Discourse to Saccaka ❖**

#### **SUMMARY**

This is another dialogue with Saccaka. This time the Buddha describes what it means when an arisen pleasant feeling does not invade one's mind and remain because the body is developed, and arisen painful feeling does not invade one's mind and remain because the mind is developed. He gives another account of his experiences before his enlightenment (compare with MN26).

#### **NOTES**

[8-9] Note 384 explains that "development of body" is insight (seeing the three characteristics) and "development of mind" is concentration (going beyond painful feelings by entering into one of the absorptions).

[19] The Buddha points out again that one does not have to indulge in tremendous austerities to arouse pain for the purpose of transcending the pain. If one lives mentally and bodily withdrawn from sensual pleasures and the desire, thirst, etc. for them has been fully abandoned and suppressed, one is still capable of enlightenment whether one feels painful feelings or not.

[20-30] The Buddha describes his rather intense austerity practices. He points out, "...my body was overwrought and uncalm because I was exhausted by the painful striving. But such painful feeling that arose in me did not invade my mind and remain."

[31-34] An important section marking the Buddha's change in attitude toward pleasure as no longer something to be feared, with an important **STORY** of the Rose-apple Tree.

Here the Buddha recalls the time when he was young, sitting in the cool shade of a rose-apple tree, feeling rapture that was not due to sensual pleasures, but was born of seclusion from sense pleasures and unwholesome states when he entered into the first jhāna. He realized that there was no reason to be wary of this pleasure because it had nothing to do with sense pleasure and unwholesome states. Still, "...such pleasant feeling that arose in me did not invade my mind and remain." The Buddha is clearly pointing out that the arising of pleasure not born from sense pleasures, the pleasure of the wholesome states of jhāna, is not to be feared, whereas pleasure based on unwholesome states is to be feared, as it leads to delusion.

[46-47] The Buddha affirms that one's sleeping during the day does not necessarily mean one is deluded. One is deluded who has not abandoned the taints that defile, ripen in suffering and lead to future birth.

### **PRACTICE**

The difference between enjoyment of pleasurable experiences without attachment and indulgence in sensual experience can often be subtle. Choose one activity that you enjoy, like walking in nature or spending time with friends, and examine if there is any craving arising in relation to that activity, or whether there is pure enjoyment without craving (sometimes this distinction is difficult to recognize).

## **37 Cūḷataṇhāsāṅkhaya Sutta The Shorter Discourse on the Destruction of Craving ❖**

### **SUMMARY**

Wishing to discover if Sakka, ruler of gods, has understood the meaning of a short discourse the Buddha had given to him, Ven. Mahā Moggallāna makes a brief trip to the Heaven of the Thirty-three. The Buddha had told Sakka that nothing is worth clinging to, and that, whatever feelings arise, one should contemplate the impermanence in those feelings.

### **NOTES**

This is the brief discourse the Buddha gave on the destruction of craving that is an important one to contemplate.

[3] **QUOTE:** "When a bhikkhu has heard that nothing is worth adhering to, he directly knows everything; having directly known everything, he fully understands everything; having fully understood everything, whatever feeling he feels, whether pleasant or painful or neither-painful-nor-pleasant, he abides contemplating impermanence in those feelings, contemplating fading away, contemplating cessation, contemplating relinquishment. Contemplating thus, he does not cling to anything in the world. When he does not cling, he is not agitated. When he is not agitated, he personally attains Nibbāna."

[Ed: "There is nothing worth clinging to" was one of Ajahn Buddhadasa's favorite quotes, and is often used by Joseph Goldstein, one of my teachers.]



[3] Note that the translation says “impermanence in those feelings.” This points to directly experiencing the feeling tone, in the body, with mindfulness, not just thinking about it or observing it.

## **PRACTICE**

1. Notice the agitation that arises from clinging to some object or experience. Contemplate for a few minutes the impermanence, the fading away and the cessation of that agitation due to non-clinging. 2. Know the difference between directly experiencing a feeling and thinking about it and/or observing it.

## **38 *Mahātaṇhāsāṅkhaya Sutta* The Greater Discourse on the Destruction of Craving ❖**

### **SUMMARY**

This is an important discourse on dependent origination and the destruction of craving. After reprimanding the bhikkhu Sāti about the view he was proclaiming—that the same consciousness runs through the round of rebirths—the Buddha explains from every angle the correct way to view dependent origination, showing how all phenomena of existence arise and cease through conditions.

### **NOTES**

[7] **QUOTE:** “...I have stated consciousness to be dependently arisen, since without a condition there is no origination of consciousness.”

[8] Note 404: There is no transmigration of consciousness across the sense doors. When one type of consciousness arises, it ceases when its supporting conditions end (e.g., eyes and forms, ears and sounds, etc.).

[11] **QUOTES:** “This has come to be... Its origination occurs with that as nutriment... With the cessation of that nutriment, what has come to be is subject to cessation.” [19] “When this exists, that comes to be; with the arising of this, that arises.” [22] “When this does not exist, that does not come to be; with the cessation of this, that ceases.”

[23] The understanding of dependent arising puts an end to the uncertainty of views about the past, “Was I in the past? Was I not in the past?” or about the future, “Will I be in the future? What shall I be in the future?” and to perplexity about the present, “Am I? Am I not? What am I?” (Refer to MN2, as these are the things listed there as unfit for attention.)

[24] One should speak about things only from personal knowledge, “...of what you have known, seen, and understood for yourselves.”

[40] Here the Buddha points out how mindfulness of feeling can break the chain of suffering: If one does not delight in, welcome or remain holding to the feeling, delight in feelings ceases. With the cessation of delight comes cessation of clinging; cessation of being; cessation of birth, aging and death, sorrow, pain, grief...this whole mass of suffering.

The chain is broken between feeling and craving (contact—feeling//—craving—clinging—being, karmic action). Note 414: Feeling arises due to past cravings, but if one does not delight in the feeling, craving will not have the opportunity to arise and set off reactions of like and dislike that provide further fuel for the round.

## PRACTICE

Notice how you can experience pleasant, unpleasant or neutral feeling without delighting in or holding to the feeling itself. Know the energetic response of “holding” to the feeling. Then notice what happens to the craving.

## 39 *Mahā-Assapura Sutta* The Greater Discourse at Assapura

### SUMMARY

This is another discourse where the Buddha lists what a bhikkhu should do to undertake the training as a recluse (as in MN53 and MN107).

### NOTES

#### The training:

1. One should be possessed of shame and fear of wrongdoing. Note 416: Shame (*hiri*) has the characteristic of disgust with evil, is dominated by a sense of self-respect, and manifests as conscience. Fear of wrong-doing (*ottappa*) has the characteristic of dread of evil, is dominated by a concern for the opinion of others, and manifests as fear of doing evil. These are two complementary qualities designated by the Buddha “the guardians of the world” (AN i.51). [*Ed: Fear of wrong-doing can also arise because one simply knows it will cause suffering.*]
2. One should purify bodily, verbal, and mental conduct (details in MN41).
3. One should purify one’s livelihood.
4. One should guard one’s sense doors.
5. One should be moderate in eating [9]. Here is the popular reflection to do before eating.
6. One should be devoted to wakefulness [10]. Here is reference to sitting and walking as a practice in order to purify obstructive states.
7. One should be possessed of mindfulness and full awareness (*sati-sampajañña*) in all that one does.
8. One should purify one’s mind of the five hindrances. **SIMILES:** Abandoning the five hindrances is likened to freedom from debt, overcoming illness, release from prison, freedom from slavery, and crossing a desert safely.
9. Then, one enters into the four *jhānas*.

10. Finally, one attains the three true knowledges: recollects past lives, sees beings passing away and reappearing, and has the knowledge that leads to the destruction of the taints. All along, one never loses sight of the goal of liberation, and never thinks one has arrived while there is more to be done. (Similar list as in MN53, which describes fifteen practices, listed in a different order, for disciples in higher training. Also in MN107.3-10).

[15-18] **The progression of the four jhānas**, with the Pali terms (the definitions are from the Visuddhimagga). This is known as right concentration in the Noble Eightfold Path:

With the factors of vitakka (thought, applied thought), vicāra (sustained thought), pīti (rapture), sukha (happiness), (pīti and sukha are born of seclusion) and ekaggatā (unification of mind), one enters into the first jhāna. After the mind is tranquil and unified, vitakka and vicāra drop away and with the factors of pīti, sukha (born of concentration) and ekaggatā, one enters into the 2nd jhāna. The rapture drops away, pleasure remains and, with the mind unified, (with mindfulness and full awareness), one abides in equanimity (factor of equanimous happiness, upekkhā-sukha) and enters the 3rd jhāna. Upekkhā-sukha drops away, one has neither-pain-nor-pleasure, one abides in purity of mindfulness due to equanimity (upekkhā), and, with the unification of mind, one enters the 4th jhāna.

#### **PRACTICE**

Reflect on whether you perceive your practice as a training, and if so, how are you training and what are you training for? Do you need to make some sacrifices for the sake of your training?

### **40 Cūḷa-Assapura Sutta The Shorter Discourse at Assapura**

#### **SUMMARY**

A continuation of the previous discourse, stating that just because one takes on the austerity practices of a recluse, it does not make one a recluse. What makes a recluse is inner purification from defilements.

#### **NOTES**

The first ten of these “stains for a recluse” are included among the sixteen imperfections that defile the mind (see MN7.3).

**SIMILE:** [4] “Suppose the weapon called a *mataja*, well whetted on both edges, were enclosed and encased in a patchwork sheath. I say that such a bhikkhu’s going forth is comparable to that.”

[8-12] When one sees oneself purified of all unwholesome states, one sees oneself as liberated from them. One enters into the jhānas and one's mind is imbued with loving-kindness, compassion, appreciative joy and equanimity. **SIMILE:** [13] It is as if there were a pond with clear, agreeable cool water, transparent, with smooth banks, delightful. If a man, scorched and exhausted by hot weather, weary, parched, and thirsty, came from any direction, having come upon the pond he would quench his thirst and his hot-weather fever. He gains internal peace, then because of that internal peace he practices the way proper to the recluse.

### **PRACTICE**

Just calling oneself a meditator or a teacher doesn't make one a meditator or a teacher. Reflect on the internal qualities you need to merit being called a meditator or a teacher, and what you need to do in order to live up to your role. The simile in [4] may be helpful for this reflection.

### **41 Sāleyyaka Sutta The Brahmins of Sala**

### **42 Verañjaka Sutta The Brahmins of Verañja**

### **SUMMARY**

In these two discourses, identical except for a few word changes, the Buddha explains to groups of brahmin householders the courses of bodily, verbal and mental conduct (the ten courses of unwholesome and wholesome action as in MN9 and MN113) that lead to rebirth in lower realms or to higher rebirth and deliverance.

### **NOTES**

The causes and conditions for why some beings, after death, reappear in states of deprivation and others reappear in happy destinations are directly related to whether their conduct is in accordance with the Dharma. **Here is a list of the ten courses of wholesome and unwholesome conduct:**

#### **Bodily conduct:**

1. killing (violent, merciless); Noble: putting aside weapons; abiding compassionate toward all beings
2. stealing (theft of others' wealth and property); Noble: not stealing
3. sexual misconduct (intercourse with women who are protected); Noble: not engaging in sexual misconduct. *[Ed: Note that this teaching is for householders. Monks and nuns follow celibacy. See my notes in MN117 on right action.]*

#### **Verbal conduct:**

4. lying intentionally (for one's own end, for another's or some trifling worldly end); Noble: speaking words that are beneficial and true. *[Ed: See my notes in MN58 on noble speech.]*

5. speaking maliciously (in order to create division and delighting in this); Noble: reuniting those who are divided; promoting friendships; delighting in harmony.
6. speaking harshly (words that are rough, hurtful to others, offensive, angry, not helpful for concentration); Noble: uttering words that go to the heart, are loving and courteous.
7. gossiping (saying what is not fact, at the wrong time, contrary to the Dharma; speech that is worthless, unreasonable, immoderate, unbeneficial); Noble: uttering words that are worth recording, are beneficial and reasonable.

**Mental conduct:**

8. coveting (wishing for what others have, that it be mine instead of theirs); Noble: not coveting.
9. having a mind of ill will and intentions of hate (wishing for harm of others) Noble: wishing for others' happiness
10. holding wrong view, distorted vision (there is no result of good or bad actions; there is no this or other world; there are no parents, no enlightened beings, etc.); Noble: holding right view.

**PRACTICE**

1. Reflect on where you draw the line between wholesome and unwholesome action. What criteria makes this determination? Is the line subjective, depending on how you are viewing the action and the circumstance at the time? Are the Buddha's criteria subjective? 2. Reflect on ways that you could live a more noble life.

**43 Mahāvedalla Sutta The Greater Series of Questions and Answers ❖**

**SUMMARY**

Ven. Mahā Koṭṭhita meets with Ven. Sāriputta and asks questions about the Dharma in order to refine his understanding. Both this discourse and the next are excellent in their way of expounding various subtle points of Dharma.

**NOTES**

[3] "One who is wise," understands the Four Noble Truths.

[4-6] Consciousness knows the feeling tone (vedanā) of experience. Consciousness knows feeling as its direct object. Wisdom and consciousness are conjoined and are impossible to separate. (But Note 432 explains that, whilst they are conjoined in that they arise and cease simultaneously and share a single sense base, they are not actually inseparable because, while wisdom always requires consciousness, consciousness can occur without wisdom.)

Wisdom is to be developed (as the factor of right view on the Path). Consciousness is to be fully understood (as one of the five aggregates).

[7] Feeling itself feels. There is no other (separate) feeler. Feeling is not a thing, but an activity. Note 434: Feeling is simultaneously a quality of the object and an affective tone of the experience by which it is apprehended. *[Ed: The fact that feeling is a quality of the object itself denotes the impersonal nature of feeling, that there is no separate feeler. Therefore, I underlined the word, “simultaneously.” Ven. Thanissaro Bhikkhu points out that the fact that feeling is simultaneously a quality of the object and an affective tone of the experience is important for distinguishing between old karma (the ‘given’ in an experience) and new karma (what you choose to add to it).]*

[9] Feeling, perception and consciousness are conjoined on every occasion of consciousness and cannot be separated. What one feels, one perceives; what one perceives, one cognizes.

[10] Five faculties referred to are the five sense doors (as in [21]).

[11] “...with what does one understand a state that can be known?” “...one understands a state that can be known with the eye of wisdom.” The purpose of wisdom is direct knowledge, full understanding and abandoning. *[Ed: A useful distinction: What understands is wisdom, what knows is consciousness, as in [4]—consciousness cognizes, knows its object. This is why we give wisdom teachings in addition to mindfulness teaching. The vehicle of mindfulness is used in order to deepen our wisdom. Mindfulness, in and of itself, is not enough to end suffering. It is only one factor of the eightfold path.]*

Note 438 says wisdom is called an eye because it is like an organ of spiritual vision.

[13] **Two conditions for the arising of right view:** The voice of another and wise attention. (Note 440: “The voice of another” is the teaching of beneficial Dharma. Only in the case of paccekabuddhas and fully enlightened Buddhas are these two conditions not required—they attain enlightenment depending solely on wise attention.)

[14] Right view arises assisted by five factors: virtue, learning, discussion, serenity and insight. *[Ed: These are the characteristics generated on retreat.]*

[18] A clear description of the first jhāna.

[24-25] The difference between one who is dead and one who is in cessation of perception and feeling is that one’s vitality is not exhausted, one’s heat has not been dissipated, and one’s faculties become exceptionally clear.

**SIMILE:** in Note 448: The faculties during the ordinary course of life are impinged upon by sense objects soiled like a mirror placed at a crossroads, but the faculties of one in cessation become exceptionally clear like a mirror placed in a case and deposited in a box.

[27-35] Signless deliverance of mind (temporary cessation), immeasurable deliverance of mind (brahmavihāras), deliverance of mind through nothingness (third formless jhāna), and deliverance of mind through voidness (insight into selfless nature: “This is void of a self or of what belongs to a self” e.g., I, me, mine). All of these are mundane except the first (signless—insight into Nibbāna). (In MN127.8, also exalted deliverance of mind—kasiṇa jhāna.)

[35] Unshakeable deliverance of mind—void of lust, hate, delusion—equals arahantship. This is the best of all because it is not temporary like the others.

[37] Note 458: Immeasurable, nothingness, voidness and signless are all names for Nibbāna.

## PRACTICE

Look carefully at the feeling tone that arises in relation to an object, for example, someone's smiling face, seeing a stranger, or smelling rotten food. See if you can understand how the feeling tone is both a quality of the object and something you bring to the experience. In other words, notice the impersonal nature of feeling (vedanā) as distinct from its subjective side.

## 44 *Cūḷavedalla Sutta* The Shorter Series of Questions and Answers ❖

### SUMMARY

This discourse is a discussion between bhikkhuni Dhammadinnā and her former husband, the lay follower Visākha. It includes many excellent points on identity, feelings (vedanā), cessation and Nibbāna.

### NOTES

[2] Identity is considered to be the five aggregates affected by clinging. (The correct translation apparently is, according to Note 460: the five aggregates that become the condition for clinging.) *[Ed: This note is an interesting reflection—the five aggregates are not suffering in themselves, but become the condition for clinging.]*

[3] Origin of identity—craving for sensual pleasures, craving for being, and craving for non-being.

[4] Cessation of identity—identity ceases when one lets go of that same craving.

[5] The way leading to the cessation of identity is the Noble Eightfold Path.

[6] Is that clinging the same as or apart from the five aggregates affected by clinging? It is neither the same as nor apart from them. Clinging takes the five aggregates as its object, but is also part of the five aggregates.

[7] **Twenty kinds of identity view** come to be when one clings to the five aggregates as 'self.' *[Ed: I have changed the translation from "personality view" in accordance with Ven. Bhikkhu Bodhi's change in his translation in the *Saṃyutta Nikāya*.]*

**SIMILES** in Note 462, which illustrates the four basic modes of identity view in regard to material form (from the commentaries): We may regard material form as self, in the way the flame of a burning oil lamp is identical with the color (of the flame); or we may regard self as possessing material form, as a tree possesses a shadow; or we may regard material form in self, as the scent is in the flower; or we may regard self as in material form, as a jewel is in a casket.

[8] How does identity view not come to be? One does not cling to the five aggregates as self.

[11] The Noble Eightfold Path is divided into three parts (aggregates):

Virtue—right speech, action, livelihood

Concentration—right effort, mindfulness, concentration

Wisdom—right view, intention

[15] “One applies thought, sustains thought, then breaks out in speech.” This shows how thought and speech are intricately linked.

[16-21] This is a whole section on the cessation experience. *[Ed: Note 467 says cessation can be attained only by non-returners. This fact invites reflection into understanding what is meant by cessation, especially as different Buddhist traditions relate to the experience of cessation in different ways.]*

[24] Neutral feelings (neither pleasant nor unpleasant) are considered pleasant when they are known and painful when there is no knowledge of them. *[Ed: This indicates that there is some tonal quality in every moment rather than nothing at all in some moments.]*

[25] Each feeling has an underlying tendency—pleasant feeling has lust as its underlying tendency, painful feeling has aversion as its underlying tendency, neither painful nor pleasant feeling has ignorance as its underlying tendency. [26] But the underlying tendency does not underlie all feeling. [28] In the first jhāna, lust is abandoned “and the underlying tendency to lust does not underlie that.” Note 474 points out that the tendency is well suppressed by the jhānas, rather than abandoned, but through continuity and insight, lust is eradicated by the path of the non-returner.

Also in [28] is the comment that when one has a longing for freedom, grief arises with that longing as a condition; one abandons aversion and the underlying tendency to aversion is not present. Note 475 explains that, with the longing for freedom arises “grief based on renunciation” (MN137.13), and that the tendency to aversion is not actually abandoned; rather, spurred on by that longing, one practices with determination and thereby eradicates aversion by attaining the path of the non-returner.

## **PRACTICE**

1. Reflect on how your sense of self is generated by clinging to the five aggregates as self. What does this mean to you? See if you can identify any of the ways that you may be clinging that brings your sense of identity into view. 2. Choose one of the aggregates and try to see how you relate it to your sense of self. For instance, feeling: Do you equate yourself with your feelings? Do you feel you possess your feelings? Are “you” in the feelings? Are the feelings in you?

## **45 Cūḷadhammasamādāna Sutta The Shorter Discourse on Ways of Undertaking Things ❖**

### **SUMMARY**



The Buddha explains four ways of undertaking things, distinguished according to whether they are painful or pleasant now and whether they ripen as pain or pleasure in the future. He points out that no matter whether one is feeling pain from lust, hate and delusion now, or pleasure from being free of these things now, the important thing is whether or not one is living the holy life that brings pleasure in the future.

## NOTES

There is a lot to reflect on in both this discourse and the next about how to realize transformation in our lives in terms of cause and effect.

### **The four ways of undertaking things:**

1. The way that is pleasant now and ripens in the future as pain (good **SIMILE:** in [4])
2. The way that is painful now and ripens in the future as pain.
3. The way that is painful now and ripens in the future as pleasure.
4. The way that is pleasurable now and ripens in the future as pleasure.

The Buddha encourages us to have wisdom to know that indulging in lustful experiences brings pain in the future.

[5] If one is doing painful things to oneself now, e.g., austerities, they will ripen only as more pain in the future. *[Ed: This would have been a very radical statement at the time, as austerity practice was highly regarded in many circles.]*

[6] Even if one is constantly feeling pain and grief born of lust, strong hate and delusion, if one leads the perfect and pure holy life, then after death, one can still be reborn in a happy destination. The same is true for one who is not afflicted with these things.

## PRACTICE

In order to bring more self-understanding, think of one activity that you do that corresponds to each of the four ways of undertaking things.

## **46 Mahādhammasamādāna Sutta The Greater Discourse on Ways of Undertaking Things ❖**

### SUMMARY

Here the Buddha clearly and simply states the truth of cause and effect. He shows how we can bring about our own transformation by applying wisdom to the way we undertake things. An ignorant person does not know what things should and should not be cultivated and followed. A wise person knows what things should and should not be cultivated and followed. Examples are given for each.

## NOTES

[2] The Buddha states a wish that people have (that is as relevant today as 2,500 years ago!): “If only unwished for, undesired, disagreeable things would diminish and wished for, desired, agreeable things would increase,” or, in other words, “If only things I don’t want would go away, and I could get what I really want more often.” He then goes on to tell us why it happens this way and how to get more of the things we want in our life. How practical!

[6] He says, An ignorant person does not know what things should be cultivated and followed, and what things should not be cultivated and followed and therefore avoided. Not knowing this, he cultivates and follows things that he should not, and he does not cultivate and follow the things that he should. It is because of this that unwished for, undesired and disagreeable things increase for him, and wished for, desired and agreeable things diminish. This happens because one does not see clearly (ignorance). *[Ed: This sounds so obvious yet is a critical point. With ignorance, one does not know what one is doing that reinforces pain in one’s life. Mindfulness is what starts to make these things clear to us.]*

An ignorant person cultivates that which brings pain and does not avoid it, so his pain increases. Because he does not see clearly, he does not know what will decrease his pain, nor does he know what will increase his pleasure. *[Ed: Clearly this is our human dilemma.]*

[10] A wise person knows what things should be cultivated and followed, and what things should not be cultivated and followed and therefore avoided. Knowing this, he cultivates things that should be cultivated, and does not cultivate things that should not be. He follows things that should be followed and does not follow what shouldn’t be. It is because of this that unwished for, undesired and disagreeable things diminish for him, and wished for, desired and agreeable things increase.

A wise person knows what will increase his pain so he does not cultivate it and he avoids it, so his pain diminishes. He knows what will increase his pleasure. The key here is the knowing.

[10-13] A wise person reflects thus (**right view**, same as MN45):

1. This way is painful now, and will ripen as pain in the future. (I will not cultivate it; I will avoid it.)
2. This way is pleasant now, and will ripen as pain in the future. (I will not cultivate it; I will avoid it.)
3. This way is painful now, but will ripen as pleasure in the future. (I will not avoid it; rather, I will cultivate it.)
4. This way is pleasurable now, and will ripen as pleasure in the future. (I will not avoid it; rather, I will cultivate it.) *[Ed: It is worth reflecting on the fact that there is pleasure that one need not avoid. Particularly at the beginning of one’s practice, people often think they have to avoid anything pleasurable, as if any experience of pleasure will lead to more bondage.]*

[14-17] The Buddha uses the ten wholesome and unwholesome courses of action (as in MN42) to show what will ripen as pain and what as pleasure. He points out that one can feel pain or pleasure in committing an evil, unwholesome act, and that the pain of abstaining from an unwholesome action now will bear the fruit of pleasure in the future.

The four **SIMILES** at the end are good [18-22]: Like horrible tasting poison—*dukkha* now, *dukkha* later. Like sweet tasting poison—*sukha* (pleasure) now, *dukkha* later. Like horrible tasting medicine—*dukkha* now, *sukha* later. Like sweet tasting medicine—*sukha* now, *sukha* later.

## **PRACTICE**

Take one of the activities from the last discourse practice [MN45]. Knowing that action will ripen either as pleasure or pain, take specific steps either to transform the unwholesome action or to encourage the wholesome action.

## **47 *Vimamsaka Sutta* The Inquirer**

### **SUMMARY**

The Buddha invites the bhikkhus to make an investigation of himself (the Buddha) in order to find out whether or not he is fully enlightened. He gives them a list of criteria to review.

### **NOTES**

**The criteria by which to know whether the Buddha or anyone else is fully enlightened.** One should investigate with respect to two kinds of states—states cognizable by the eye (bodily action) and through the ear (speech):

1. No defiled states
2. Consistently right conduct (no “mixed states”—sometimes pure, sometimes impure)
3. Purified conduct (“cleansed states”)
4. Attainment of these wholesome states over a long time rather than recently
5. Absence of conceit or arrogance following attainment of renown and fame
6. Restrained without fear, not by fear; no indulgence in sense pleasures because of the destruction of lust.

One can place confidence in a teacher with these qualities.

## **PRACTICE**

Review these criteria for any teacher who claims to be fully enlightened before placing full confidence in that teacher.

## **48 *Kosambiya Sutta* The Kosambians**

## SUMMARY

When the bhikkhus at Kosambī are engaged in a dispute, the Buddha teaches them six qualities that create love and unity. Of the last and “highest” quality, right view, he teaches seven more qualities that will, if practiced, lead one to the complete destruction of suffering. These are also called the seven knowledges attained by a stream-enterer.

## NOTES

[6] **The six qualities** that, once practiced, create love and respect and lead to helpfulness, concord, non-dispute and unity (the Buddha mentions them to the bhikkhus stuck in a dispute) are:

1. Bodily acts of loving-kindness both in public and in private toward their companions in the holy life
2. Verbal acts of loving-kindness...
3. Mental acts of loving-kindness...
4. Using things in common and unreserved sharing of any kind of gain, including food, that accords with the Dharma
5. Possessing in common those virtues that are unbroken (sīla)
6. Possessing in common with one’s companions the noble right view (sammā ditṭhi—right view is the right understanding of the Four Noble Truths; it leads to the destruction of suffering).

[7-15] The highest, most comprehensive and conclusive of these six qualities is the noble right view. How does it lead one to the destruction of suffering? The following are also called **seven knowledges** that are attained by one who is a stream-enterer (see note 498).

1. One reflects, “Is there any obsession left in myself that is interfering with my ability to know or see things as they actually are, (e.g., Am I obsessed with any of the five hindrances? Am I obsessed with speculation about this world or the other world? *[Ed: The key word here is obsession.]*”
2. One understands, “When I pursue, develop, and cultivate this view, I obtain internal serenity, I personally obtain stillness.”
3. One understands, “There is no other recluse or brahmin outside [the Buddha’s Dispensation] possessed of a view such as I possess.”
4. One knows, “I possess the character of a person who possesses right view,” such that one is able to admit to a wrong-doing, whether intentional or unintentional, and enter upon restraint. **SIMILE:** Just as a young tender infant lying prone at once draws back when he puts his head or foot on a live coal, so too, that is the character of a person who possesses right view.
5. One knows, “I possess the character of a person who possesses right view,” such that, even though one is active in various matters for one’s companions’ well-being, yet one has keen regard for training in higher virtue, higher mind and higher wisdom. **SIMILE:** Just as a cow, while watching her new calf, will graze.

6. One knows, “I possess the strength of a person who possesses right view,” such that, when one is taught the Dharma, one heeds it, hears it with eager ears, engages it with all one’s mind.
7. One knows, “I possess the strength of a person who possesses right view,” such that, when one is taught the Dharma, one gains gladness from it and inspiration in its meaning.

## PRACTICE

Review the list of the seven knowledges and reflect on how each applies to you in your practice now. Pay particular attention to whether you are obsessed with any of the five hindrances, to your ability to admit wrongdoing, and to whether you still gain inspiration and gladness from hearing the Dharma.

## 49 *Brahmanimantanika Sutta* The Invitation of a Brahmā ❖

### SUMMARY

A dramatic dialogue between Buddha and the god Brahmā who has taken up the pernicious view that the heavenly world over which he presides is eternal and that there are no higher states beyond. The Buddha tries to dissuade him from this wrong view.

### NOTES

Note 499: Here the “theoretical contest between Baka the Brahmā and the Buddha soon gives way to a gripping deep-level confrontation between Māra and the Buddha—Māra as craving demanding the affirmation of being, the Enlightened One pointing to the cessation of being through the uprooting of delight.”

Section [11-23] is worthy of reflection; it uses the same categories as in MN1 but approaches Nibbāna in a unique way. The wording is the same for each category: “Brahmā, having directly known earth as earth, and having directly known that which is not commensurate with the earthness of earth, I did not claim to be earth, I did not claim to be in earth, I did not claim to be apart from earth, I did not claim earth to be mine, I did not affirm earth.”

Note 511 adds important information here in that it points out some difficulties in the translation. Also from note 511: “...what is ‘not commensurate with the earthness of earth’ is Nibbāna, which is detached from all that is conditioned.”

[27] Key **STANZA** for reflection (uttered by the Buddha after he had supernaturally vanished from Brahmā’s presence):

Having seen fear in every mode of being  
 And in being seeking for non-being,  
 I did not affirm any mode of being  
 Nor did I cling to any delight [in being].

Note 514 points out that the Buddha’s knowledge encompasses both being and non-being at the same time that it transcends them. It is useful to understand that the Buddha is not rejecting being and not clinging to non-being, yet transcends both, without rejecting or clinging.

## **PRACTICE**

Take one or two objects that have some personal meaning for you (like a part of your body, or a car, or a piece of jewelry, or a person close to you) and apply the five phrases that the Buddha repeats throughout the discourse—“I did not claim to be (my body), I did not claim to be in my body, I did not claim to be apart from my body, I did not claim my body to be ‘mine,’ I did not affirm my body.” See what this provokes for you.

## **50 *Māratajjanīya Sutta* The Rebuke to Māra**

### **SUMMARY**

Māra attempts to harass Ven. Mahā Moggallāna, but Moggallāna tells Māra a story of when he was a Māra and warns him of the dangers involved in creating trouble for a disciple of the Buddha.

### **NOTES**

The teaching highlighted here points to the power of practicing the brahmavihāras in order to overcome hostility and ill will toward people who are troubling us. It is worth noting that the Buddha points to all four of the brahmavihāras, not just mettā.

[18] He also encourages **four other kinds of meditation**:

1. contemplating foulness of the body
2. perceiving repulsiveness in nutriment
3. perceiving disenchantment with all the world
4. contemplating impermanence in all formations.

Note 528: MA quotes a discourse stating that these four meditations are the antidotes for, respectively, sexual desire, craving for tastes, attraction to the world, and infatuation with gain, honor, and praise.

[31] **QUOTE:**

“There has never been found a fire  
which intends, ‘Let me burn the fool,’  
But a fool who assaults a fire  
Burns himself by his own doing.”

In other words, any time we try to hurt another, we—of our own initiative—hurt ourselves.

## **PRACTICE**

It might be helpful to imagine that strong forces of mind, like lust, anger, dullness, excitability and doubt, are Māra visiting us, rather than identifying with the mind-state as “me.” When these mind-states arise, say to yourself, “Māra, I see you. Don’t harass me.” This can be an effective antidote to help you see the impersonal nature of these states of mind.

PART TWO  
The Middle Fifty Discourses  
*Majjhimaññāsapāḷi*



## 51 *Kandaraka Sutta* To Kandaraka

### SUMMARY

The Buddha gives a discourse to Pessa, the elephant driver's son, and Kandaraka, the wanderer, but before he finishes, the boy departs. The Buddha continues for the bhikkhus, naming four kinds of persons who exist in the world. He sets out the training that is the same as in other discourses. This discourse includes a comprehensive list of rules for his disciples in regard to food and personal care. It also shows that the Buddha is truly interested in non-harming, particularly toward animals and the environment.

### NOTES

[5] The **four kinds of persons** who live in the world are:

1. those who torment themselves (through self-mortification)
2. those who torment others (through harming animals and human beings, namely: butchers, trappers and hunters, fishermen, robbers, executioners, prison wardens) [9]
3. those who torment both themselves and others (essentially monarchs and high priests preparing for and carrying out animal sacrifices)
4. those who torment neither themselves nor others and live truly holy lives
5. The Buddha says the fourth kind of person is the one who "satisfies my mind."

[12-28] **The training for the holy life** includes the standard list, but with more detail.

[8-15] The Buddha's compassion toward plants and animals and his attitude toward the non-harming of all beings are quite apparent in this discourse, which contains a comprehensive list of rules for his disciples in which he specifically names abstaining from injuring seeds and plants.

## 52 *Aṭṭhakanāgara Sutta* The Man from Aṭṭhakanagara ❖

### SUMMARY

Ven. Ānanda teaches a householder eleven "doors to the deathless" by which a bhikkhu can attain the supreme security from bondage.

### NOTES

[3] The initial question is, "...has any one thing been proclaimed by the Blessed One..." whereby one who is diligent can cause one's unliberated mind to be liberated?

[4-14] The **eleven “doors to the deathless,”** used as a basis for the development of insight and the attainment of arahantship, are the four jhānas, the four brahmavihāras, and the first three immaterial attainments. The fourth immaterial attainment is not included because it is too subtle for insight. The insight is that whatever is conditioned and volitionally produced is impermanent and subject to cessation. One sees this for each of the “doors.”

*[Ed: I think these are called “doors to the deathless” because they access a full, but temporary release from the taints. They also give insight the firm basis it needs to do its work. Therefore, if one can see that these, too, are conditioned and volitionally produced, and subject to cessation, this is the supreme insight that liberates. The reason for this emphasis is also cultural, because saints of the time were claiming these states to be Nibbāna.]*

Note 552: **A method for developing “insight preceded by serenity”** (see also AN4:170/ii.157): One emerges from the jhānic state and contemplates that the state is brought into being by conditions, particularly volition, and contemplates the jhāna with insight into the three marks of existence (impermanence, suffering and not-self).

[15] The discourse ends with **SIMILES**: “Just as if a man seeking one entrance to a hidden treasure came all at once upon eleven entrances to a hidden treasure...” and “Just as if a man had a house with eleven doors and when that house caught on fire, he could flee to safety by any of these eleven doors, so I can flee to safety by any one of these eleven doors to the Deathless.”

## **PRACTICE**

Even in sublime states, we are directed to be watchful for any clinging that may arise in relationship to those states. Reflect on the fact that all states of mind arise due to conditions and are subject to change. Be aware of the arising of any clinging to mind states. At different times during the day, turn your attention to your mind state and note that it is merely a mind state, temporary and impersonal.

## **53 Sekha Sutta The Disciple in Higher Training**

### **SUMMARY**

Ven. Ānanda gives a discourse at the Buddha’s request on the fifteen factors involved in higher training for a disciple who has entered upon the way.

### **NOTES**

The **fifteen factors** (11 factors plus 4 jhānas), using conduct (caraṇa), or virtue as a training guide for those who have entered the first three stages of the stream of enlightenment. (This is nearly identical to the list for training in the holy life MN39 and MN107.)

[6] “A noble disciple is possessed of virtue, guards the sense doors of his sense faculties, is moderate in eating, and devoted to wakefulness; he possesses seven good qualities; and he is one who obtains at will, without trouble or difficulty, the four jhānas that constitute the higher mind...”

[7] Virtue—of perfect conduct, using the training precepts of the Vinaya (the training principles for monks and nuns); the discourse also mentions that, seeing fear in the slightest fault, one trains in the precepts. (MN41—detailed list for kinds of conduct) *[Ed: Bhaya is the Pali word translated here as “fear.” Ven. Thanissaro Bhikkhu mentions that translating bhaya as “danger,” rather than “fear,” seems more accurate in this context. This translation is congruent with the reference to the “danger of sense pleasures” in the other suttas, i.e., MN54.]*

[8] Guarding the sense doors. On sensing an object with one of the six sense doors, do not grasp at its signs or features. If left unguarded, evil, unwholesome states of greed and sorrow might invade one. One practices by way of restraint. *[Ed: In regard to the mind door, I find it interesting that the Buddha rarely mentions stopping thought but is concerned primarily with restraining or destroying the unwholesome states; in MN125.24, however, there is mention of not thinking in relation to the four foundations of mindfulness.]*

[11] **Seven good qualities:**

1. Placing faith in the Buddha’s enlightenment
2. Having shame, being ashamed of engaging in evil, unwholesome deeds
3. Having fear of wrong-doing (see my notes in MN39 on shame and fear)
4. Learning well and penetrating the teachings
5. Being energetic in developing wholesome states and overcoming unwholesome states
6. Having mindfulness (Note 560—mindfulness is a condition for a keen memory)
7. Being wise, possessing wisdom. (Note 561: “This is the wisdom of insight and of the path, capable of penetrating the rise and fall of the five aggregates. Path wisdom is ‘penetrative’ because it pierces through and eradicates the mass of greed, hate, and delusion; insight wisdom is called penetrative because it pierces through them temporarily and because it leads to penetration by the path.” See also MN122.16.)

**PRACTICE**

Notice how shame and fear play a part for you on the Noble Eightfold Path. Reflect on how these are good qualities and how they serve to restrain your actions and cut through unwholesome mind states.

**54 Potaliya Sutta To Potaliya**

**SUMMARY**

The Buddha talks to the householder Potaliya about the eight abandonments in the Noble One’s Discipline that lead to the cutting off of affairs. He gives many similes for the dangers of sense pleasures.

## NOTES

[4] The **eight abandonments** in the Noble One's Discipline that lead to the cutting off of affairs:

1. of killing
2. of stealing
3. of false speech
4. of malicious speech
5. of rapacious greed [*Ed: willingness to use unscrupulous means*]
6. of spiteful scolding
7. of angry despair (notice that "angry" here is an adjective for the despair)
8. of arrogance.

By practicing each abandonment, its opposite—the particular unwholesome activity—drops away. In this way, the practice of abandonment acts as a support for wholesome conduct.

[5-14] As another form of support, one refrains from and abandons these unwholesome activities by reflecting on the suffering one brings upon oneself. When one carries out the unwholesome activities, **one suffers in four ways** (these are repeated for each of the eight abandonments):

1. by blaming oneself
2. by being rebuked by the wise
3. by going to an unhappy destination after death
4. by the arising of the taints, vexation, and fever.

[15-21] The **SIMILES** for the dangers of the sense pleasures. Here are two: [19] Sensual pleasures are like a dream. Suppose a man dreamt about lovely parks, groves, meadows, and lakes, and on waking he saw nothing of them. In the same way, sensual pleasures provide much suffering and despair, the danger in them is great. [20] Sensual pleasures are like borrowed goods. Suppose one parades around in a fancy carriage and fine-jeweled earrings that are on loan, and then the owners take them back. Wouldn't one become dejected? In the same way, sensual pleasures provide much suffering and despair, the danger in them is great.

[22-25] The cutting off of one's affairs is not completed until one recollects one's past lives, sees beings with the divine eye and destroys the taints.

## PRACTICE

Take one of the eight ways of cutting off one's affairs and give support to destroying its related unwholesome activity by reflecting on the suffering brought on by continuing with the activity. For example, reflect on the pain caused by speaking harshly to others. Give support to change by practicing the opposite, wholesome behavior. Speaking gently and kindly is one way to practice. Another way is to reflect on the use of unwelcome words that are beneficial (see MN58).

## 55 *Jīvaka Sutta* To Jīvaka

### SUMMARY

This is the discourse in which the Buddha lays down his rules for eating meat. He clearly states that what makes food permissible and blameless has to do with the attitude with which the food is eaten, rather than the food itself, in this case, meat.

### NOTES

**Meat eating:** [5] The Buddha states that one should not eat meat that is seen, heard, or suspected to have been killed specifically for oneself. One is permitted to eat meat when it has come from a living being that has not been seen, heard or suspected to have been slaughtered specifically for oneself. Note 574: “The lay Buddhist’s precept of abstaining from the taking of life would prohibit him from killing for his food, but does not proscribe purchasing meat prepared from animals already dead.”

[6-11] What is important is one’s attitude upon taking the meat. One lives with a mind imbued with the four brahmavihāras. If invited to a meal, one can accept if one likes. One eats without thoughts of having food such as this in the future (clinging thoughts). One eats without infatuation. One sees the danger in clinging and knows the escape from the danger. The important aspect is that under these circumstances, one would not be choosing for one’s own pain, for another’s pain, or for the pain of both. The food would therefore be blameless.

The Buddha goes through this sequence for each of the four brahma-vihāras. He states, in each case, that any lust, any hate, any delusion that would give rise to ill will, cruelty, discontent, or aversion have been abandoned in him, **QUOTE:** “...cut off at the root, made like a palm stump, done way with so that they are no longer subject to future arising.” This is through his attainment of arahantship. (Here, ill will, cruelty, discontent, or aversion are the opposites of mettā, compassion, appreciative joy and equanimity respectively.)

[12] The Buddha outlines the demerits a host will accrue in slaughtering a living being specifically for an honored guest.

### PRACTICE

Since whether we eat meat or not is a personal matter, take time to reflect on the factors that influence your decision in relationship to meat-eating. In this way, your decision is made consciously. Also, take time to notice the degree of delight that arises when eating food generally. See if you can identify any clinging aspect.

## 56 *Upāli Sutta* To Upāli

### SUMMARY

This discourse is a good story that gives us a flavor of the time of the Buddha. Upāli, a disciple of the Nigaṇṭhas, goes to debate the Buddha about which is the most reprehensible for the performance of evil actions—the body, speech or mind. Upāli is won over by the Buddha’s brilliance and his “converting magic” and becomes a noble disciple—a stream-enterer. His former teacher comes to him afterwards in complete disbelief.

## NOTES

[3] Of the **three kinds of action**, bodily, mental or verbal, for the performance of evil actions, the Nigaṇṭhas say bodily action is the most vile.

[4] The Buddha responds that mental action leading to the performance of unwholesome acts is the most reprehensible.

[11-14] The Buddha gives Upāli **four examples how the mind is more powerful than the body**:

1. By being “mind-bound” at the time of death, one can be reborn in a particular realm. (“Mind-bound” means bound by attachment in the mind.)
2. If one wills something, there is consequence, and this is a mental action.
3. If one had supernormal powers one could wipe out a village, whereas someone with a sword could not.
4. A tale from the Jātakas.

**SIMILE:** “Just as a clean cloth with all marks removed would take dye evenly, so too, while the householder Upāli sat there, the spotless immaculate vision of the Dharma arose in him.”

[18] Upāli is converted by the Buddha’s examples.

## 57 *Kukkuravatika Sutta* The Dog-duty Ascetic

### SUMMARY

The Buddha meets two ascetics, one who imitates the behavior of a dog, the other who imitates the behavior of an ox. He reveals to them the futility of their practices and gives them a discourse on karma and its fruits.

### NOTES

[7-11] **Four kinds of action**:

1. Dark action with dark result
2. Bright action with bright result
3. Dark and bright action with dark and bright result (Note 607: a medley of actions)

4. Action that is neither dark nor bright with neither dark-nor-bright results (action that leads to the destruction of action). Note 608 explains this as the volition of the four supramundane paths (the four stages of enlightenment) culminating in arahantship. “Although the arahant performs deeds, his deeds no longer have any karmic potency to generate new existence or bring forth results even in the present existence.”

[8-11] “Thus I say, beings are the heirs to their actions.” This is stated for each kind of action. Note 602 reminds us that volition is what brings about an action, e.g., unwholesome (or dark) volitions bring about dark actions.

## **PRACTICE**

Think of a recent situation where a decision you made produced an unhappy or dark result. Think of one in which the result was happy or bright. Notice how your decisions are responsible for producing either a dark existence or a bright existence here and now. Reflect on the importance of being mindful of the choices you are making. Many of our choices are not very conscious. Practice making your choices more conscious as a way to direct your actions in a more wholesome way.

## **58 *Abhayarājakumāra Sutta* To Prince Abhaya ❖**

### **SUMMARY**

This is a useful discourse on speech. After Prince Abhaya attempts to trick the Buddha with a question, the Buddha teaches him what kinds of speech he himself would and would not utter.

### **NOTES**

**Speech the Buddha would utter:** *beneficial and true*, knowing the correct time (timely speech) out of compassion for beings:

1. Speech that is true, correct and beneficial, even though it is unwelcome and disagreeable.
2. Speech that is true, correct and beneficial, and is welcome and agreeable.

*[Ed: This is the form of speech we are taught to aspire to on retreats: both truthful and useful. If something is not beneficial, even when true, it is better not to speak. Ven. Thanissaro Bhikkhu calls attention to the fact that the Buddha does not entertain the possibility that false speech could ever be beneficial.]*

**Speech the Buddha would not utter:** *unbeneficial, whether true or untrue*

1. Speech that is untrue, incorrect, unbeneficial, and unwelcome and disagreeable.
2. Speech that is untrue, incorrect, and unbeneficial, but welcome and agreeable (such as malicious gossip).
3. Speech that is true and correct, but unbeneficial, and unwelcome and disagreeable.

4. True and correct, but unbeneficial, and welcome and agreeable (even if it is truthful and welcomed, if it is not helpful, let it go).

## **PRACTICE**

Notice whether your speech is truthful as well as useful. If it is untruthful or unbeneficial, attempt to refrain from speaking and notice the consequences. Pay particular attention to the times when you think your speech is true and beneficial, but the listener finds it unwelcome and disagreeable. These are the most difficult situations in which to discern whether our speech is in fact beneficial and timely.

## **59 Bahuvedanīya Sutta The Many Kinds of Feeling**

### **SUMMARY**

The Buddha clears up the question of why someone may be confused as to how many kinds of feeling there are, for he has presented many different lists: two kinds of feeling, three kinds, five, six, eighteen, thirty-six and one hundred and eight different kinds of feeling. This discourse also describes the progressive pleasure one attains from the eight meditative attainments, and from the attainment of cessation. It also states how people should act when hearing something well-taught that differs slightly from the well-taught things they have already heard.

### **NOTES**

Note 616 is helpful in explaining the different lists of feelings to which the Buddha has referred.

[7-15] If anyone says that the pleasure felt from the five sense cords was the utmost pleasure, then the Buddha wouldn't agree. He says the pleasure felt from the jhānas increases with each jhāna and then through the four formless jhānas, culminating in the cessation of perception and feeling. *[Ed: Interestingly, the Buddha does not say the pleasure attained from the liberated mind is the highest pleasure.]*

At the end [16], when the Buddha is asked how he could say the cessation of perception and feeling could be described as pleasurable, he responds by saying, "The Tathāgata describes pleasure not only with reference to pleasant feeling, rather as any kind of pleasure wherever and in whatever way it is found." Note 618 says "both felt pleasure and unfelt pleasure are found..." (The latter refers to the attainment of cessation.) The Tathāgata describes both as pleasure in the sense that they are without suffering—*niddukkhabhāva*" (being without dukkha; bhāva is being). Pleasure is that which is without suffering. *[Ed: Because the word happiness is so misunderstood, the same could be said—happiness is that which is without suffering.]*

## **PRACTICE**



Pay attention during the times you are experiencing pleasure through one of the five senses and notice if there is any element of suffering in the experience. (This would arise through the clinging.) Notice how the suffering is caused not by the pleasurable feeling but rather by the clinging to it.

## 60 *Apaṇṇaka Sutta* The Incontrovertible Teaching ❖

### SUMMARY

The name of the discourse means an uncontradictable teaching. The Buddha gives the brahmin householders of Sālā a long discourse on untangling a number of wrong views and why it would be to their advantage to hold to right view. There are five doctrines explored: of nihilism, of non-doing, of non-causality, of no immaterial realms and of no cessation of being. This discourse holds particular interest for those who want to know about these five different doctrines.

### NOTES

An uncontradictable teaching also carries the implication of a teaching that holds no matter what, e.g., assumptions that keep one safe no matter what the actual nature of reality may be.

[7] **QUOTE:** "...and brahmins do not see in unwholesome states the danger, degradation, and defilement, nor do they see in wholesome states, the blessing of renunciation, the aspect of cleansing." This point runs through this discourse. It is the most important aspect of understanding karma. Each of the words mentioned here—danger, degradation, defilement, renunciation and cleansing, or purification—is important to reflect upon in order to fully understand the meaning of this teaching. The danger, degradation, defilement are reflected in the four kinds of suffering (as in MN54.6). The blessing is practicing the way of abandoning and cutting off those fetters, and increasing the likelihood of reappearing in a happy destination in the future.

[5] **Doctrine of Nihilism:** "There is nothing given,...no fruit or result of good and bad actions; no this world, no other world; no mother,...no good and virtuous recluses and brahmins in the world who have themselves realized..." In other words, nothing exists so nothing matters. Note 625 mentions that this doctrine denies the existence of an afterlife and of karmic retribution.

[11] "Since there actually is another world..." The Buddha proclaims this. This is right view, right intention, and right speech, non-opposition to noble ones, convincing others to accept true Dharma, avoidance of self-praise and disparagement of others. These wholesome states thus come into being based on right view.

[13-16] **Doctrine of Non-doing:** "There is no action (evil or good) done by the doer." This is wrong view. "One who intends, "There is no doing." This is wrong intention. If one says or teaches this, this is wrong speech and untrue Dharma. In other words, this doctrine means it doesn't matter what kinds of actions one does.

[19] “Since there actually is doing...” The Buddha proclaims this. This is right view, right intention, and right speech (as in [11]).

[21] **Doctrine of Non-causality:** “There is no cause or condition for the defilement of beings...for the purification of beings... All beings... are without mastery, power, and energy; molded by destiny, circumstance and nature...” In other words, we have no control or choice over what happens or the outcome of events. Everything is predetermined.

[27] “Since there actually is causality...” The Buddha proclaims this (as in [11] and [19]).

If one holds the view of nihilism or non-causality (destiny), one would not have any interest in good conduct because one would not see any danger in evil deeds or blessings in good deeds. This is also wrong view, wrong intention and wrong speech.

[29-31] **Doctrine of no immaterial realms:** “There are definitely no immaterial realms.”

[34] **Doctrine of no cessation of being:** One’s view, according to the Buddha, definitely determines the outcome of one’s rebirth. If one clings to the view “there is no cessation of being,” it is unlikely that one will attain Nibbāna. If one has the view “there is cessation of being,” there is the *possibility* that one will attain Nibbāna, but not certainty. One practices even if one has doubts about the existence of cessation of being because this is a better wager just in case it is true.

## PRACTICE

Reflect on your own relationship to each of the five doctrines presented, as well as your relationship to the idea of rebirth. If you have doubts about rebirth, what is your motivation for practice?

## 61 *Ambalaṭṭhikārahulovāda Sutta* Advice to Rāhula at Ambalaṭṭhikā ❖

### SUMMARY

In this very clear discourse, the Buddha describes to his son, Rāhula (who is said to have been seven years old at the time), the way to purify bodily, verbal, and mental action. The way is to reflect before, during, and after engaging in an action about whether it will have, is having, or has had painful results or pleasurable results. This is a popular teaching given on retreats.

### NOTES

[7] To begin the training, the Buddha tells Rāhula not to utter a falsehood even as a joke. [*Ed: The Buddha begins here probably to show that honesty is a prerequisite for the practice recommended in the remainder of the sutta.*]

[8-18] **The way to purify** before an action, during an action, and after engaging in an action, whether by body, speech, or mind, is to repeatedly reflect:

1. Will this action lead to, is this action leading to, or has this action led to my own pain, another's, or both? Is it an unwholesome action with painful consequences? *[Ed: Ven. Thanissaro Bhikkhu points out that two of the questions, "is this action leading to, or has this action led to" indicate an important part of the teaching on karma, that karma can have both immediate consequences (while you are doing it) or consequences over time (after it is done).]*
2. When reflecting, if one knows that it is unwholesome, one should definitely not begin doing it or continue doing it. If it is wholesome, then it is all right to do it in the present, or to continue doing it in the future.
3. If afterwards one realizes one did something wrong, one should confess it to the Teacher or to one's wise companions, and should use restraint in the future. Note 639 points out that unwholesome thoughts do not require confession as a means of exoneration. Yet one should be repelled, ashamed, and disgusted by such an action rather than confessing it.
4. If the action leads to pleasant results, then one should "abide happy and glad, training day and night in wholesome states."

*[Ed: Notice the Buddha encourages us to abide in the pleasure that arises as a fruit of our wholesome actions. We do not have to be afraid of this.]*

#### **PRACTICE**

1. Take time for the reflection suggested in this discourse, using one unwholesome behavior and one wholesome behavior that you notice in yourself.
2. Consider, or maybe even try, confessing an act of wrong-doing to a friend or your teacher.
3. This discourse encourages us to recognize our mistakes, to admit them, and to learn from them. Remember a mistake you made in the past and reflect on what you have learned from the action so that you will not repeat the same mistake in the future. This will bring about wholesome karma.

## **62 Mahārāhulovāda Sutta The Greater Discourse of Advice to Rāhula**

#### **SUMMARY**

The Buddha advises Ven. Rāhula to practice a variety of meditations: on the emptiness of the five aggregates, on the five elements, on the four brahmavihāras, on foulness, on impermanence, and on mindfulness of breathing.

#### **NOTES**

##### **[18-24] Meditation antidotes:**

1. to abandon ill will—loving-kindness
2. to abandon cruelty—compassion
3. to abandon discontent—appreciative joy
4. to abandon aversion or reactivity—equanimity
5. to abandon lust—foulness

6. to abandon the conceit “I am”—the perception of impermanence (see MN122.16 for reference to the arising and disappearing of the five aggregates)
7. to die calmly—mindfulness of breathing (in accordance with the Ānāpānasati Sutta MN118) so that the last in-breath and out-breath can be known.

[13-17] **SIMILES:** Be like the earth. No matter what is thrown on it, clean things or dirty things, the earth is not humiliated. Develop meditation like the earth. Then agreeable and disagreeable contacts will not invade your mind and remain.

The same with water, fire, air and space: Clean things and dirty things are washed in water. Water is not humiliated. Clean things and dirty things are burned by fire. Fire is not humiliated. Clean things and dirty things are blown by air... Just as space is not established anywhere, develop meditation that is like space.

### **PRACTICE**

Practice the following instruction that the Buddha gave to Rāhula during one of your meditations. I have modified it here:

Develop your meditation like space, for when you do this, agreeable and disagreeable contacts will not invade your mind or remain. Just as space is not secured anywhere, do not secure your mind anywhere. Develop your mind like space.

## **63 Cūḷamāluṅkya Sutta The Shorter Discourse to Māluṅkyāputta**

### **SUMMARY**

The monk who was given this discourse by the Buddha was prepared to leave the holy life if the Buddha could not declare what he had left undeclared. The Buddha makes quite clear what he has and has not declared and why. The monk was satisfied.

### **NOTES**

[2] **The ten speculative views** (as in MN72). The Buddha has left undeclared—whether:

1. the world is eternal or
2. is not eternal;
3. the world is finite or
4. is infinite;
5. the soul is the same as the body or
6. the soul is one thing and the body another (see Note 718);
7. after death, a Tathāgata exists or
8. does not exist or
9. both exists and does not exist or,

10. neither exists nor does not exist (see Note 719).

No matter what the view, there is still the reality of birth, aging, death...despair, the destruction of which the Buddha goes on to prescribe. *[Ed: The Buddha is definite on so many issues, yet he left open to question the above issues on existence. He is not willing to posit any view at all on these matters. This shows his masterfulness.]*

[9-10] The Buddha has declared the Four Noble Truths. Why has he declared this and not the other views? The Four Noble Truths are beneficial and will lead to dispassion and cessation, to Nibbāna. The others are speculative views and are not beneficial to dispassion, to cessation, to peace, to direct knowledge, to enlightenment, to Nibbāna.

This discourse contains the well-known **SIMILE** [5] about the man who is pierced with **the poisoned arrow** and refuses to let the surgeon remove it until he knows who was responsible for the shooting, what kind of arrow it was, etc., and in the meantime dies. In the same way, if one will not lead the holy life until the teacher makes declarations on all of one's unanswered questions, one will die before reaching the goal.

#### **PRACTICE**

If you are spending time speculating about philosophical views, ask yourself whether this interferes with the nuts and bolts of practice—that is, bringing an end to suffering.

### **64 Mahāmāluṅkyā Sutta The Greater Discourse to Māluṅkyāputta ❖**

#### **SUMMARY**

This is an important teaching on the destruction of the lower five fetters. It is a clear and precise instruction for the attainment of the levels of either non-returner or arahant by turning the awareness directly to the Deathless as an object of meditation.

#### **NOTES**

##### **Lower five fetters:**

1. adherence to rules and rituals
2. identity view (belief in the five aggregates as self) *[Ed: This has been changed from personality view.]*
3. doubt (about the teachings)
4. sensual desire
5. ill will.

[3] **SIMILE:** A young tender infant would not have the notion of these five things. Would it be said that the infant has eradicated these five fetters? Because the infant does not even have the notion “identity,” how could identity view arise in the infant, or “doubt” or “sense desire”? Yet the underlying tendencies (anusayas) lie within the child.

[5] An ordinary person who abides with a mind obsessed and enslaved by identity view does not understand the escape from it; it is habitual and uneradicated in that person (as are the other lower four fetters).

[6] A noble disciple does not abide with a mind obsessed and enslaved by identity view. The disciple understands the escape from it and abandons the identity view and the underlying tendency. (This also applies to the other four lower fetters.)

Note 651: The fetters, even when they do not come to active manifestation, continue to exist at the anusaya level so long as they have not been eradicated by the supramundane paths. The defilements are distinguished as occurring from subtler to grosser manifestations. For example,

1. anusaya level—They remain as mere latent tendencies in the mind triggered when a suitable cause arises.
2. pariyutthāna level—They rise up to obsess and enslave the mind.
3. vītikkama level—They motivate (activate) unwholesome bodily and verbal action.

[7] There is a path to the destruction of the taints, and anyone not coming to that path will not know how to abandon these five fetters. What is the path?

[8] When the Dharma is being taught to one for the cessation of identity, one’s mind must enter into it and acquire confidence, steadiness and decision (**SIMILE:** as a strong man could swim safely across a brimming river Ganges, while a feeble man could not).

[9] While abiding in each of the eight jhānas, one applies insight to the five aggregates in order to see impermanence, suffering, and not-self. (In the four immaterial jhānas there are only four aggregates because material form is not present.) Upon seeing this, one turns one’s mind away from those states and **QUOTE:** “directs it toward the deathless element thus: This is the peaceful, this is the sublime, that is, the stilling of all formations, the relinquishing of all attachments, the destruction of craving, dispassion, cessation, Nibbāna.” This is the path to the destruction of the taints (arahantship). If the taints are not destroyed, then with the destruction of the five lower fetters, one becomes a non-returner.

Note 655: This passage shows the development of insight upon a basis of serenity (samatha) using jhāna. Note 656: One is actually taking Nibbāna as an object and directing one’s mind to it. Note 659: Those disciples who attain liberation through serenity (concentration) are said to gain *deliverance by mind*. Those who emphasize wisdom are said to gain *deliverance by wisdom*. Different people have different faculties.

## **PRACTICE**

Reflect on the three manifestations of the defilements. Notice in your own experience how they take shape. Notice particularly the difference between a defilement at the mental level and when it changes into the grosser level of verbal and bodily action (and how, in the grosser form, the consequences are greater). Reflect on the ramifications of allowing a latent tendency to “rise up and obsess the mind.”

## 65 *Bhaddāli Sutta* To Bhaddāli

### SUMMARY

Ven. Bhaddāli, a monk who ordained in old age, has much difficulty following the training precepts. The Buddha admonishes him and teaches him the advantages of following the training. He also talks about why some monks are admonished repeatedly and why others are not.

### NOTES

[27] The Buddha gives a lovely example about someone who should not be admonished even though he has committed several offenses. When someone is progressing on the path with faith and love (toward the teacher/s), if he were to be repeatedly admonished, he might lose his faith and love. **SIMILE:** It is as if someone had only one eye: his friends and relatives would guard this eye, thinking, “Let him not lose this one eye.” In the same way, this faith and love must be guarded. He may lose it if action is taken against him and he is repeatedly admonished.

[33] There is also a **SIMILE** of a young thoroughbred colt being trained. With each step along the way he will experience something new, something he has never done before. For example, wearing the bit, the harness, keeping in step, running in a circle, prancing, etc., he will display some contortion and writhing, but with constant repetition and gradual practice, he becomes peaceful in that action. In the end, he becomes worthy of the king, in the king’s service. In the same way, one practices until one is beyond training (an arahant).

[34] **The ten qualities of “one beyond training”:**

1. Right view
2. Right intention
3. Right speech
4. Right action
5. Right livelihood
6. Right effort
7. Right mindfulness
8. Right concentration [*Ed: The first eight make up the Noble Eightfold Path.*]
9. Right knowledge—knowledge pertaining to the fruit of arahantship
10. Right deliverance—the arahant’s deliverance from all defilements. [*Ed: See also MN117.34*]

### PRACTICE

Reflect on the ways that you may admonish yourself for where you are in your practice (even subtle negative evaluations)—“I should be further along after all this time.” Notice how this could undermine your faith in your own possibility to realize the Dharma, and in the Dharma itself. Remind yourself that you are still on the path, entering new territory all the time.

## **66 *Laṭukikopama Sutta* The Simile of the Quail ❖**

### **SUMMARY**

The Buddha gives a teaching to Ven. Udāyin on the importance of abandoning every fetter, no matter how trivial it may seem, including any attachment to the eight meditative attainments. Included are some good similes on how the situation itself is not what determines whether something is binding or not, but how one views it.

### **NOTES**

The **SIMILES** here are worth attention. They all show how one’s view determines whether something is difficult to abandon or not. The one that stands out [11-12] is the description of the destitute man who lives in a dilapidated hovel, with only an old wicker bed, some grain and pumpkin seed in a pot, and “one hag of a wife.” He sees a bhikkhu meditating in a park under the shade of a tree, washed and contented after eating a delicious meal. He thinks, “How pleasant his state is. If only I could shave off my hair and put on a yellow robe and go forth from home life into homelessness. ” But he feels tethered to his hovel, etc. Someone might say, “But those are feeble, weak, rotting, coreless tethers.” Would he be speaking rightly? No. For this destitute man, those are a “strong, stout, tough, unrotting tether and a thick yoke.” Then the Buddha gives the example of a rich man. One may think he would be tethered by all his attachments, but he walks away easily. For him, they are a weak tether.

[13] **Four kinds of persons** practicing the way to the abandoning of attachments: the first tolerates memories and intentions associated with attachment, he does not abandon them; the second does not tolerate them, he abandons them; and the third does not tolerate them but his mindfulness is sluggish. The first three are still fettered (even the non-returner can have craving and delight in thoughts of worldly enjoyment). The fourth is unfettered: the arahant, who is divested of attachments.

### **PRACTICE**

Think of a situation where you may be able to do something differently if you were to change your point of view about it. See if you can change your view and then partake in the action. This may involve making a phone call or a more important life decision.

## **67 *Cātumā Sutta* At Cātumā**



## SUMMARY

The Buddha is displeased with the carelessness of the newly ordained monks training under Ven. Sāriputta and Mahā Moggallāna who have just arrived to see him. In the end, he gives them a teaching about the four fears to be overcome by those who have gone forth into homelessness.

## NOTES

The first part of this discourse shows that even the Buddha can lose his patience. However, another point of view is that he simply decides that true, beneficial but unwelcome words had to be spoken (see MN58.)

[14-19] **Four fears to overcome** for those who have entered the homeless life (areas in which one might forsake the training and revert to the “low” life. An **ANALOGY** is used – “What would one fear when one is in the water?”):

1. fear of waves—angry despair (e.g., being told by bhikkhus, who may be younger than themselves, what to do and not do)
2. fear of crocodiles—gluttony (e.g., being told when and what to eat and
3. when and what not to eat)
4. fear of whirlpools—sensual pleasures (e.g., seeing lay people enjoy themselves and wanting that again – “Formerly, when we were in the home life, we were endowed with the five sense pleasures and enjoyed ourselves with them. My family has wealth; I can both enjoy wealth and make merit.”)
5. fear of sharks—women (e.g., seeing women along the way who are scantily clothed and seductive; lust arises and one forsakes the training).

## 68 *Naḷakapāna Sutta* At Naḷakapāna

### SUMMARY

The Buddha explains to a group of bhikkhus (who happen to be well-known ones who had recently gone forth at the time of this discourse) why, when a disciple dies, he states that person’s level of attainment and plane of rebirth.

### NOTES

[9] The Buddha thinks that when faithful people hear this, they are inspired and gladdened and will direct their minds to such a state. This will lead to their welfare and happiness for a long time.

It is worthwhile to note that when the Buddha reviews different people’s levels of attainment, he includes both a bhikkhu as well as a bhikkhuni in the attainment of final knowledge (arahant), non-returner, once-returner and stream-enterer. He includes both a male lay follower as well as a female lay follower in the first three levels of attainment.

## 69 *Gulissāni Sutta* Gulissāni

### SUMMARY

Ven. Sāriputta describes the proper training for a forest-dwelling monk. These training principles are repeated elsewhere.

### NO NOTES

## 70 *Kīṭāgiri Sutta* At Kīṭāgiri ❖

### SUMMARY

While admonishing two monks, the Buddha asks them if they have ever known him to give teachings that did not make wholesome states increase, and unwholesome state decrease. He also tells them of the seven kinds of noble persons in the world.

### NOTES

Section [6-10] is similar to the teaching in MN45 on the four ways of undertaking things.

[14-21] There are **seven kinds of persons in the world**. Some disciples still have work to do with diligence, and some have finished their work. They are classified according to their dominant faculty, either wisdom or faith.

#### **Those who have finished are:**

1. liberated-in-both-ways: liberated from the physical body by the formless attainments and from the mental body by the path of arahantship; their taints are destroyed by seeing with wisdom
2. liberated-by-wisdom: without abiding in the formless attainments; through insight, their taints are destroyed.

#### **Those who still have work to do are:**

1. body-witnesses (wisdom): They abide in the formless attainments with some taints destroyed.
2. attained-to-view (wisdom): Without abiding in the formless attainments but with some taints destroyed, they have reviewed and examined with wisdom the teachings of the Buddha.
3. liberated-by-faith (faith): Without abiding in the formless attainments, and with some taints destroyed, their faith is planted, rooted, established in the Buddha.
4. Dharma-followers (wisdom): Without abiding in the formless attainments, and with taints not yet destroyed by seeing with wisdom, they have sufficiently gained a reflective acceptance of the teachings of the Buddha and have the five spiritual faculties (faith, energy, mindfulness, concentration, wisdom).

5. faith-followers (faith): Without abiding in the formless attainments, and with taints not yet destroyed by seeing with wisdom, they yet have sufficient faith and love for the Buddha and have the five spiritual faculties.

[22] Final knowledge is not achieved all at once. It is achieved by gradual training, by gradual practice, by gradual progress.

[27] This section emphasizes the sense of urgency to practice until one reaches either arahant or non-returner by making the resolve: “My energy shall not be relaxed so long as I have not attained what can be attained...”

## **PRACTICE**

Reflect on whether your dominant faculty is one of faith or wisdom. Reflect on your own sense of urgency for liberation and the way you are using the predominant faculty to reach the goal.

## **71 *Tevijjavacchagotta Sutta* To Vacchagotta on the Threefold True Knowledge ❖**

### **SUMMARY**

In this short conversation between the Buddha and Vacchagotta, the Buddha denies possessing complete knowledge of everything at all times and in all states. He says the correct description of him would be that he possesses the Threefold Knowledge: recollection of his past lives, ability to see the lives of others, and true deliverance of mind by wisdom.

### **NOTES**

This discourse points out that it is possible for one to be omniscient and all seeing, but it would be excessive to assert that knowledge and vision can be *continuously present*. Note 714 explains that the Buddha was omniscient in the sense that all knowable things are *potentially accessible* to him. He cannot, however, know everything simultaneously and must bring up whatever he wishes to know.

[11] Vacchagotta asks if there is a householder who, without abandoning the fetter of householdership has, on the dissolution of the body, made an end to suffering? The Buddha says no, but there are those who have not abandoned this fetter who have gone to heaven. Note 715 explains “the fetter of householdership” is an attachment to the requisites of a householder, land, wealth, grain, etc., although there is mention in the texts of some individuals who attained arahantship as lay people.

## **72 *Aggivacchagotta Sutta* To Vacchagotta on Fire ❖**

### **SUMMARY**

This discourse is difficult but worthwhile to contemplate. It points to the conceptual and linguistic problems in attempting to describe the indescribable. It continues the dialogue between Vacchagotta and the Buddha, this time on the topic of why the Buddha does not hold any speculative views. With the simile of the extinguished fire, he attempts to explain why the terms “reappears” or “does not reappear” do not apply when speaking about what happens to a Tathāgata after death.

## NOTES

*[Ed: Ven. Bhikkhu Bodhi’s notes for this discourse are very helpful.]*

The speculative views are the same as in MN63.

[14] **QUOTE:** The Buddha declares that speculative views are a “thicket of views, a wilderness of views,” that are “beset by suffering... and by fever, and do not lead to...Nibbāna.”

[15] But he will declare to be true what he has directly seen, in this case, the appearance and disappearance of the five aggregates. **QUOTE:** “...With the destruction, fading away, cessation, giving up and relinquishing of all conceivings, all excogitations [that which is thought out carefully], all I-making, mine-making, and the underlying tendency to conceit, the Tathāgata is liberated through non-clinging.”

[19] This **SIMILE** is a good one for explaining why one cannot describe what happens to a Buddha after death. In essence, the conversation between the Buddha and Vacchagotta goes:

The Buddha: Would you know if a fire is burning before you?

Vacchagotta: Yes.

B: What does it depend on for its burning?

V: It depends on grass and sticks (fuel).

B: Would you know when it was extinguished?

V: Yes.

B: Which direction would it go—north, south, east or west?

V: “That does not apply... The fire burned in dependence on its fuel of grass and sticks. When that is used up, if it does not get any more fuel, being without fuel, it is reckoned as extinguished.”

B: “So too, Vaccha, the Tathāgata has abandoned that material form by which one describing the Tathāgata might describe him.” *[Ed: He has also abandoned the other four aggregates.]* “...he is profound, immeasurable, unfathomable like the ocean. The term ‘reappears’...‘does not reappear’...‘both reappears and does not reappear’...‘neither reappears nor does not reappear’ does not apply.”

## PRACTICE

1. It is worthwhile to examine whether you are holding on to any of the ten views that the Buddha declares speculative, that do not lead to enlightenment. Reflect on the difference between speculation and direct experience, and why one leads to enlightenment and the other does not. 2. What is the fuel that keeps your fire burning?

### **73 *Mahāvaccagotta Sutta* The Greater Discourse to Vacchagotta ❖**

#### **SUMMARY**

This discourse completes Vacchagotta’s journey with his going forth and his attainment of arahantship.

#### **NOTES**

[7-12] In this discourse, the Buddha confirms that there are others, both men and women, who have realized for themselves direct knowledge here and now with taints destroyed. When Vacchagotta asks if there were women who have realized, the Buddha says, yes, definitely, hundreds. When Vacchagotta asks if there are men and women lay followers, dressed in white, leading a celibate life, who are non-returners, and whether there are men and women lay followers, dressed in white, still enjoying sensual pleasures, who have become once-returners and stream-enterers, he answers in the same way.

Then Vacchagotta uses this **SIMILE** [14]: “Just as the river Ganges inclines toward the sea, slopes toward the sea, flows toward the sea, and merges with the sea, so too Master Gotama’s assembly with its homeless ones and its householders inclines toward Nibbāna, slopes toward Nibbāna, flows toward Nibbāna, and merges with Nibbāna.”

[18-24] Vacchagotta asks for instruction for arahantship. The Buddha, giving instructions in the form of making a resolve to incline the mind in these directions, using “May I...,” tells him to develop serenity and insight by:

1. directing his mind to the supernormal powers (listed in [19])
2. directing his mind to the divine ear element
3. directing his mind to understanding the minds of other beings
4. directing his mind to recollecting his own past lives
5. seeing the lives of others with the divine eye
6. realizing true deliverance.

### **74 *Dīghanakha Sutta* To Dīghanakha**

#### **SUMMARY**

The Buddha points out to Dīghanakha that the reason to drop all views is that there will always be an opposing view that will lead to disputes and quarrels with those who hold it. A wise person foresees this and does not take up another view. This is how there comes to be an abandoning of views. Once Dīghanakha understands, the Buddha goes on to teach him insight through impermanence of the body and feeling, and he becomes a stream-enterer. Ven. Sāriputta, who is fanning the Buddha, hears the discourse and becomes an arahant(!).

## NOTES

There are **three views** referred to:

1. “Everything is acceptable to me”
2. “Nothing is acceptable to me”
3. “Something is acceptable to me, something is not acceptable to me.”

Note 734 points out that one of the commentaries calls these three views eternalism, annihilationism and partial eternalism respectively.

In [13], the Buddha refers to the need to use speech that is “currently being used in the world without adhering to it” (conventional speech). Note 737 refers to passages where an arahant may use the words “I” and “mine” without giving rise to conceit or misconceiving them as a self or ego (SN1:5/i.14). See also DN9.53/i.202, where the Buddha says of expressions employing the word “self”—“These are merely names, expressions, turns of speech, designations in common use in the world, which the Tathāgata uses without misapprehending them.”

## PRACTICE

1. Reflect on whether you incline your mind toward any of the three views. 2. When expressing strong views with others, notice how this brings about disputes. Decide if you want this effect. Question whether there is a time and a place for these disputes.

## 75 *Māgandiya Sutta* To Māgandiya

### SUMMARY

In conversation with the hedonist Māgandiya, the Buddha explains the dangers of clinging to sense pleasures when there is something far superior to delight in. The Buddha uses many similes to demonstrate his points. In the end, Māgandiya becomes one of the arahants.

### NOTES

The Buddha talks of knowing the origin, disappearance, gratification, danger and escape of the six sense bases and their objects (as in MN13).

[10] This is a good description of the Buddha's state of mind and achievement in his understanding. It is also a useful brief summary of his teachings from his personal story: **QUOTE:** "...having understood as they actually are the origin, the disappearance, the gratification, the danger, and the escape in the case of sensual pleasures, I abandoned craving for sensual pleasures, I removed fever for sensual pleasures, and I abide without thirst, with a mind inwardly at peace. I see other beings who are not free from lust...and I do not envy them. Why is that? Because there is, Māgandiya, a delight apart from sensual pleasures, apart from unwholesome states, which surpasses divine bliss. Since I take delight in that, I do not envy what is inferior, nor do I delight therein."

Essentially, the discourse can be summed up in this way: Would someone who is enjoying the pleasures of heaven envy a human being's enjoyment of sense pleasures? No. In the same way, having known the delight apart from sense pleasures, why envy anything inferior, when one has known that which is superior?

[15-16] The **SIMILE** of the leper shows how we can have a "perverted perception" of perceiving pleasure in what is really painful.

[17] "...the more they are burned by their fever for sensual pleasures, yet they find a certain measure of satisfaction and enjoyment in dependence on the five cords of sensual pleasure."

Christopher Titmuss' summary for this discourse: "One is defrauded, deceived and cheated by the mind through grasping after the five aggregates. One must know and see the ultimate truth for oneself, then the dukkha ends." [*Ed: One must see the emptiness of the five aggregates.*]

## **PRACTICE**

By putting your attention directly into the immediate pleasurable sensation, see if you can actually detect the suffering (or painful) element in the fever of sense pleasures that arises from the clinging to the pleasurable object.

## **76 Sandaka Sutta To Sandaka**

### **SUMMARY**

Ven. Ānanda addresses a large group of wanderers about the ways one can be dissuaded from the holy life and explains the holy life that is truly fruitful. This discourse will be useful to those interested in the views that were held by other sects at the time.

### **NOTES**

[6-17] **Four ways that negate the living of the holy life** (the first three are also found in MN60.5-28):

1. Doctrine of nihilism [7, 8]
2. Doctrine of non-doing [10, 11]
3. Doctrine of non-causality (destiny) [13, 14]

#### 4. Another version of non-causality [16,17]

[21] A useful part of this discourse is the description of the **four kinds of holy life without consolation** (or reward). This means that when one is considering whether or not to enter the holy life, one could be dissuaded if one reflects that:

1. The teacher proclaims that events happen in one's life for some mysterious reason and that one is victim to these events (determinism); "...I did this because I had to..."
2. The teacher is a traditionalist, one who regards oral tradition as truth; the legends are handed down; some are well-remembered, some are not.
3. The teacher is a reasoner; the teachings are hammered out by his own reasoning, some are well reasoned and some are not.
4. The teacher is dull and confused; when asked a question, he engages in verbal wriggling (eel-wriggling); the doctrine roams around here and there.

[34-52] The holy life that is truly fruitful (same as in MN51.12-28).

[52] Here the point is made that we can't know something all the time. Only when consciousness is directed to an object does knowing take place. Awareness of an object is not continuous and uninterrupted.

#### **PRACTICE**

Reflect on the qualities of your own teacher/s, using the criteria in this discourse to evaluate whether they are teaching the Dharma in a fruitful way.

### **77 Mahāsakuludāyi Sutta The Greater Discourse to Sakuludāyin ❖**

#### **SUMMARY**

This is a long discourse given to a group of well-known wanderers. It reviews the Buddha's whole progression of teachings, providing information that is repeated throughout the discourses. The Buddha gives five reasons for why he is venerated and honored.

#### **NOTES**

[6] I like this **QUOTE** about how the Buddha's disciples listen to his teachings: "Just as though a man were at a crossroads pressing out pure honey and a large group of people were poised in expectancy, so too, when the recluse Gotama is teaching the Dharma to an assembly of several hundred followers, on that occasion there is no sound of his disciples' coughing or clearing their throats."

[7-8] The Buddha asks Udāyin why he thinks he is honored and revered and Udāyin names **five reasons why the Buddha is honored**:

1. He eats little, and commends eating little.
2. He is content with taking any kind of robe, and commends contentment with taking any kind of robe.
3. He is content with any kind of almsfood, and commends contentment with any kind of almsfood.



4. He is content with any kind of resting place, and commends contentment with any kind of resting place.
5. He is secluded, and commends seclusion.

In response, the Buddha points out that there are many living on much less than he. This is not enough to revere him.

[10] The Buddha says there are the **five other reasons why his disciples honor him**:

1. He possesses the supreme aggregate of virtue.
2. He has direct knowledge and vision; he teaches the Dharma with a sound basis in a convincing manner.
3. He possesses the supreme aggregate of wisdom; he is able to foresee any arising problem in any doctrine.
4. He explains the Four Noble Truths.
5. He proclaims the way to develop wholesome states through a progressive training.

[15-38] **The Buddha's progressive training**, with good explanations and **SIMILES**:

the four foundations of mindfulness  
 the four right kinds of striving  
 the four bases for spiritual power  
 the five faculties  
 the five powers  
 the seven enlightenment factors  
 the Noble Eightfold Path [*Ed: See my notes for MN151*]  
 the eight liberations  
 the eight bases for transcendence  
 ten kasiṇas  
 four jhānas  
 insight knowledge  
 the kinds of supernormal power  
 divine ear element  
 understanding minds of others  
 recollection of past lives  
 the divine eye  
 the destruction of the taints

[16] The **four right kinds of striving (or the four great efforts)** involve the awakening of:

1. zeal for the non-arising of unarisen unwholesome states—effort to avoid through guarding the six sense doors with wisdom
2. zeal for the abandoning of arisen unwholesome states—effort to overcome by using the five methods of expelling unwholesome thoughts (see notes for MN20)
3. zeal for arising of unarisen wholesome states—effort to develop

4. zeal for the continuance, non-disappearance, strengthening, increase, and fulfillment of arisen wholesome states—effort to maintain.

[17] The **four bases for spiritual power** consist of concentration due to:

1. zeal (diligence, desire) and determined striving
2. energy and determined striving
3. purity of mind and determined striving
4. investigation and determined striving.

[18] The **five faculties** (also known as the five spiritual faculties and the five powers) are:

1. faith
2. energy
3. mindfulness
4. concentration
5. wisdom.

[22] **The eight liberations:**

1. possessed of material form, one sees forms
2. not perceiving form internally, one sees forms externally
3. one is resolved only upon the beautiful
4. one enters upon and abides in the base of infinite space
5. one enters upon and abides in the base of infinite consciousness
6. one enters upon and abides in the base of the base of nothingness
7. one enters upon and abides in the base of neither-perception-nor-non-perception
8. one enters upon and abides in the cessation of perception and feeling

[24] The **ten kasiṇas** (see Note 768) are meditation objects, each derived from a physical object that provides support for acquiring the inwardly visualized sign, such as the earth-, water-, fire- etc. kasiṇa.

## 78 *Samaṇamañḍikā Sutta* *Samaṇamañḍikāputta* ❖

### SUMMARY

The carpenter Pañcakanga is not satisfied with a teaching he receives from a wanderer. He consults with the Buddha, who gives him a teaching on unwholesome and wholesome habits and intentions: what they are, where they originate from, where they cease without remainder, and how to practice the way to the cessation of both. He ends with a list of the ten qualities that mark someone as truly accomplished.

### NOTES

[10-13] Note 773 points out that the phrase “these unwholesome habits cease without remainder” refers to the fruit of stream-entry. Note 774: On the path of stream-entry, one is said to be practicing for the cessation of unwholesome habits. Once one has attained stream-entry, these unwholesome habits are said to have ceased. *[Ed: Note that the word “habits” is used for the Pali word “sīla”].*

An interesting point is that the Buddha shows the way to the cessation not only of unwholesome habits but also of wholesome habits. Note 775 clarifies this by explaining that for the arahant, virtuous habits no longer generate karma, so his actions cannot be described as wholesome.

The **description of unwholesome and wholesome habits and intentions** follows the format of the Four Noble Truths (suffering with its definition, its origin, its cessation and the path leading to its cessation):

1. What are unwholesome habits? Unwholesome bodily and verbal actions, and evil livelihood.  
*What do they originate from?* From the mind. A mind that is affected by lust, hate and delusion.  
*Where do they cease without remainder?* One abandons these actions and develops good actions.  
*How does one practice the way to their cessation?* By applying the four right kinds of striving (also known as the four great efforts; see my notes in MN77 for description).
2. What are wholesome habits? Wholesome bodily and verbal habits, and pure livelihood.  
*What do they originate from?* The mind that is unaffected by lust, hate or delusion. *[Ed: I find the wording interesting here. “A mind that is unaffected” implies that there is a mind pure and undefiled, not that there is no mind.]*  
*Where do they cease without remainder?* One does not identify with one’s virtue, and understands as it actually is that deliverance of mind and deliverance by wisdom are where these wholesome habits cease without remainder.  
*How does one practice the way to their cessation?* By applying the four right kinds of striving.
3. What are unwholesome intentions? Intentions of sensual desire, ill will and cruelty.  
*What do they originate from?* From a perception of desire, ill will or cruelty.  
*Where do they cease without remainder?* In the first jhāna.  
*How does one practice the way to their cessation?* By applying the four right kinds of striving.
4. What are wholesome intentions? Intentions of renunciation, non-ill will and non- cruelty.  
*What do they originate from?* From a perception of renunciation, non-ill will and non- cruelty.  
*Where do they cease without remainder?* In the second jhāna.  
*How does one practice the way to their cessation?* By applying the four right kinds of striving.

[8, 9] The Buddha uses **SIMILES** of the young tender infant whose actions are not unwholesome, yet the infant is not free. Likewise, even though one is not engaged in evil bodily actions, evil speech, evil intentions, or evil livelihood, one is not considered accomplished. To be considered accomplished, one must possess the **ten qualities of “one beyond training,”** (qualities of the arahant listed in [14]; also see my notes for MN65).

#### **PRACTICE**

Reflect on the four right kinds of striving (detailed in MN77) which emphasize “awakening of zeal.” Choose a particular wholesome state (e.g., generosity, friendliness) and awaken zeal for its continuity and strengthening. What would it mean to “awaken zeal” for unarisen wholesome states? What would it mean to awaken zeal for the non-arising of unarisen unwholesome states? You may find the wording of these awkward; however, through reflection, you can understand their meaning.

### **79 *Cūḷasakuludāyī Sutta* The Shorter Discourse to Sakuludāyin** **80 *Vekhanassa Sutta* To Vekhanassa**

#### **SUMMARY**

These two discourses are essentially the same, although in Sutta 80, the Buddha uses sense pleasures to explain that there is a higher pleasure “than this.” In the first discourse, in conversation with one of the wanderers, the Buddha asks Udāyin (also known as Sakuludāyin) to explain what he means when he makes certain statements, thereby showing how empty his teachings are. The Buddha then goes on to teach him to follow the Buddha’s training for the holy life to deliverance in order to realize “an entirely pleasant world.” In Udāyin’s assembly of wanderers, they had been taught sublime states up to the third jhāna. That state was considered the goal, fruition. When the Buddha says there are states higher than that, the assembly goes into an uproar (at MN79.26).

#### **NO NOTES**

### **81 *Ghaṭikāra Sutta* Ghaṭikāra the Potter**

#### **SUMMARY**

The Buddha tells Ven. Ānanda an inspiring story shedding light on one of the Buddha’s previous lives, as a student of the Buddha Kassapa. He recalls the purity of his friend, Ghaṭikāra the potter, who encouraged him to meet his teacher and who was Kassapa’s chief lay supporter.

#### **NOTES**

This sutta has some important themes for lay people. It shows the power of what can happen when we strongly encourage our friends toward the Dharma. Also, the fact that Ghaṭikāra was so devoted to the Buddha Kassapa but did not go forth as a monastic because of his felt responsibility to his aging parents speaks to the dilemma of many devoted Buddhists and verifies a valid alternative path for lay people. Even though Ghaṭikāra was not well-off, he was in absolute rapture about being able to give the little he had in support of the Buddha Kassapa. This reminds us of the happiness that arises when we support those who have chosen the way of the robe, as well as others who have given their life to the Dharma.

### **PRACTICE**

Take time to reflect on the choices you are making in your life that are shaping your path in the Dharma. Make your choices conscious. For example, how do you determine how many retreats to sit a year, or when to have Dharma discussions with friends? Consider whether there are ways you can be more generous toward your friends, or toward monastics and lay teachers. Reflect on the happiness that is returned to you from these deeds.

## **82 *Raṭṭhapāla Sutta* On Raṭṭhapāla ❖**

### **SUMMARY**

This is a very good **STORY** about a young man who wants to go forth but does not get his parent's permission. He tells them that if they do not let him go, he will starve to death. After some time they give their permission. The story continues when he comes back after a number of years and shows the strength of his mastery of the Buddhadharma by not being tempted by his father's expectations. In the end he makes four useful summaries of the Dharma.

### **NOTES**

Ven. Raṭṭhapāla is questioned as to why he went into homelessness without incurring one of the **four kinds of loss** that can spur people into homelessness:

1. loss through aging
2. loss through sickness
3. loss of wealth
4. loss of relatives

He responds by giving **four useful summaries of the Dharma** (good **QUOTES**) [35-42]:

1. “[Life in] any world is unstable, it is swept away.” (Note 802: It is swept toward aging and death.)
2. “[Life in] any world has no shelter and no protector.” We have to feel our pain alone. No one can take it away for us.

3. “[Life in] any world has nothing of its own; one has to leave all and pass on.” Our sensual pleasures and properties are left behind.
4. “[Life in] any world is incomplete, insatiate, the slave of craving.” One will try to conquer any prized territory no matter how much wealth one already has.

[42] A very good set of **STANZAS** in which Ven. Raṭṭhapāla expounds the four summaries. One **QUOTE** from the stanzas: “Better is wisdom here than any wealth.”

### **PRACTICE**

Apply each of the four summaries of the Dharma to your own life. For example, for summary 2, relate this to any chronic ailments you may have. For summary 3, you might relate it to your desire to achieve security by amassing wealth. Strengthen your resolve to let go of your craving in relation to these worldly attachments. Notice the role that faith plays in doing this.

## **83 Makhādeva Sutta King Makhādeva**

### **SUMMARY**

The Buddha tells Ven. Ānanda a short story about an ancient lineage of kings and how their virtuous tradition was broken due to the negligence of one man. He emphasizes how important it is to keep the lineage of Dharma practice alive, through following the Noble Eightfold Path, for it could easily disappear if people were to stop practicing.

### **NO NOTES**

### **PRACTICE**

Reflect on the impact your practice has on your community. Think of those world leaders who live in accord with the Dharma and the impact they have in the world, as compared with the impact those have who follow the “route of evil.”

## **84 Madhurā Sutta At Madhurā**

### **SUMMARY**

Ven. Mahā Kaccāna influences King Avantiputta to understand that the saying, “Brahmins are the highest caste, those of any other are inferior,” is actually “just a saying in the world.” He does this by explaining that anyone in the four castes (noble, brahmin, merchant or worker) would be treated differently if they did any of these four things: gained wealth, engaged in evil actions, abstained from evil actions, or went forth into homelessness. Thus these four castes are all the same: there is no difference between them at all.

## NO NOTES

## PRACTICE

How can you apply the message of this discourse to issues of racism or other social prejudices? Use this discourse as a support to reflect on your own attitudes toward racism and other prejudices you may have.

## 85 *Bodhirājakumāra Sutta* To Prince Bodhi

### SUMMARY

The Buddha gives Prince Bodhi a teaching based on his own quest toward enlightenment. He counters the claim that pleasure is to be gained through painful striving and names the five factors of striving.

### NOTES

In the opening of the discourse, Prince Bodhi lays out a white cloth as a blessing cloth. If the Buddha stepped on it, his wish would come true and if not, his wish would not come true. Notes 817 and 818 clarify that the Buddha imposed a rule prohibiting the bhikkhus from stepping on a white cloth (yet later modified the rule) because “people will come to honor the bhikkhus as a way of ensuring the fulfillment of their mundane wishes and will lose faith in the Sangha if their displays of honor do not bring the success they desire.”

The **five factors of striving** (this refers to the five qualities that support a person to achieve the goal of liberation):

1. faith in the Buddha’s enlightenment
2. good health to bear the strain of striving
3. honesty, sincerity and ability to show himself as he truly is to his teacher and companions
4. energy in abandoning the unwholesome and undertaking the wholesome
5. possessing wisdom of the path.

[59] How long will it take to realize the goal? **QUOTE:** After one finds a suitable teacher...“...six years...one year...seven months, six months...half a month...seven days and nights, six days and nights... one day and night. Let alone one day and night, prince...being instructed in the evening, he might arrive at distinction in the morning; being instructed in the morning, he might arrive...in the evening.”

### PRACTICE

Review the five qualities needed to pursue the goal of liberation. Evaluate yourself and determine which of these qualities needs attention, and take time to strengthen these qualities.

## 86 *Aṅgulimāla Sutta* On Aṅgulimāla ❖

## SUMMARY

The famous and inspiring discourse where the Buddha alters one man's destiny by saying, "I have stopped, Aṅgulimāla, you stop too." King Pasenadi says, "Venerable sir, we ourselves could not tame him with force and weapons, yet the Blessed One has tamed him without force or weapons." The Buddha leads Aṅgulimāla to attain arahantship.

## NO NOTES

## PRACTICE

1. Do you have certain beliefs about who can or cannot get enlightened? 2. Since practicing the Dharma, what has "stopped" within you?

## 87 *Piyajātika Sutta* Born from Those Who Are Dear

### SUMMARY

This is a short discourse that states the obvious by reminding us that one receives not only joy and happiness from those who are dear, but also pain and sorrow.

### NO NOTES

### PRACTICE

Reflect on the ways you have allowed your happiness to depend on the well-being of certain people. In what way can you maintain your love for those people and yet not have your happiness depend on them?

## 88 *Bāhitika Sutta* The Cloak

### SUMMARY

Ven. Ānanda answers King Pasenadi on whether the Buddha could behave in a way that could be censured. Ānanda names the kind of bodily, verbal and mental behavior that is unwholesome. The cloak in the title is that which the king offers Ānanda as a gift to be made into robes.

### NOTES

[10] The **five criteria of evil actions** (bodily, verbal and mental; the opposites are true for good actions):

1. unwholesome—the psychological quality of the action and its unhealthy effect upon the mind
2. blameworthy—the morally detrimental nature of the action
3. brings painful results—the capacity to produce these results calls attention to the undesirable karmic potential of the action
4. evil motivation for the action



5. long-range consequences of the action on oneself and others (these explanations are from Note 832).

#### **PRACTICE**

1. The five criteria mentioned in this discourse can help us to examine our own actions. Review the day today and reflect on one action that was wholesome, and one that was unwholesome. Apply the five criteria to help understand this teaching. 2. Because we often blame and judge ourselves for things we do, use these five criteria to evaluate whether the action was actually evil or bad.

**SUTTAS 89 – 94 THESE ARE STORIES SHOWING THE PERFECTION OF THE BUDDHA’S ENLIGHTENMENT. THERE ARE NO NOTES FOR THESE DISCOURSES.**

#### **89 *Dhammacetiya Sutta* Monuments to the Dharma**

##### **SUMMARY**

King Pasenadi offers ten reasons why he shows such deep veneration to the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha. According to the commentary, this was the last talk that King Pasenadi had with the Buddha before his kingdom was overthrown by his son. He apparently died later that night from despair and exhaustion.

#### **90 *Kaṇṇakatthala Sutta* At Kaṇṇakatthala**

##### **SUMMARY**

King Pasenadi visits with the Buddha and asks him questions about omniscience, caste distinction and the gods.

#### **91 *Brahmāyu Sutta* Brahmāyu**

##### **SUMMARY**

This is the story of a very old and famous brahmin who sends a student to the Buddha to verify that he has indeed the 32 marks of a Great Man. They are all listed here. In the end, the brahmin becomes his disciple.

#### **92 *Sela Sutta* To Sela**

##### **SUMMARY**

The brahmin Sela and his assembly of 300 students go to the Buddha to be convinced of his greatness, and receive full admission into the Sangha of bhikkhus.

### 93 *Assalāyana Sutta* To Assalāyana

#### SUMMARY

A young brahmin approaches the Buddha to argue the thesis that the brahmins are the highest caste. The Buddha shows in many ways how this could not be possible. For example, they are born from woman, not from the mouth of Brahmā; and how can one be sure that the line is pure—that the man or woman ancestor has never been with a non-brahmin?

### 94 *Ghoṭamukha Sutta* To Ghoṭamukha

#### SUMMARY

A discussion between a brahmin and Ven. Udena about the renunciate's life, details of which are largely repeated elsewhere.

### 95 *Caṅkī Sutta* With Caṅkī

#### SUMMARY

A very large retinue of brahmins visits the Buddha and, in a discussion with a young student named Kāpaṭhika, the Buddha shows the difference between preserving the truth (out of faith), discovering the truth (out of direct experience through practice), and the arrival at truth.

#### NOTES

[14, 15] There are **five bases for views** that may turn out in two different ways here and now—true or false:

1. faith
2. approval
3. oral tradition
4. reasoned cogitation
5. reflective acceptance.

Preserving the truth means being frank about the bases for one's views. Discovery of the truth means personally ascertaining the truth through practice. Arrival at the truth means bringing the practice to fruition through repeated cultivation.

[17-20] Before placing faith in a teacher, one investigates him to see that he is purified from states based on greed, hate and delusion that would make him claim knowledge he doesn't have. Then one places faith in him. At this point, the student is ready to discover and arrive at the truth with that teacher.

[21-23] **What is most helpful for the final arrival at truth?** [Ed: This list is in reverse order of the way it is presented in the discourse, because faith is the first step at the arrival of truth.]

*Faith (in a teacher)* is most helpful for visiting a teacher.  
*Visiting a teacher* is most helpful for paying respect .  
*Paying respect* is most helpful for giving ear.  
*Giving ear* is most helpful for hearing the Dharma.  
*Hearing the Dharma* is most helpful for memorizing.  
*Memorizing the teachings* is most helpful for examination.  
*Examination of the meaning* is most helpful for reflective acceptance of the teachings.  
*Reflective acceptance of the teachings* is most helpful for zeal.  
*Zeal* is most helpful for application of will.  
*Application of will* is most helpful for scrutiny.  
*Scrutiny* is most helpful for striving.  
*Striving* is most helpful for the final arrival at truth.

## **PRACTICE**

The Buddha continually encourages practitioners to see and know the truth through direct experience rather than through faith, oral tradition or reasoned cognition, etc. When you say “I know this, I see this,” is this said from direct experience or hearsay? It is important to know the difference and, in this way, to inspire faith in others so they will look into their own experience.

## **96 *Esukāri Sutta* To *Esukāri***

### **SUMMARY**

The Buddha and a brahmin discuss the brahmins’ claim to superiority over the other three castes. The Buddha shows how anyone from any caste is capable of either wholesome or unwholesome actions, which are the true criteria for determining superiority.

### **NOTES**

[5-7] The Buddha proclaims that when performing a service for someone, it does not matter what class the person is from. What matters is whether one becomes worse or better in the action. If one becomes worse, one should not perform the service. If one becomes better one should.

[9] Becoming better means increasing in faith, virtue, learning, generosity and wisdom.

[10] **The four kinds of wealth:** the wealth of a brahmin, of a noble, of a merchant, of a worker. One is not a better person if one is from an aristocratic family, has great beauty or great wealth. Rather than distinguishing between four kinds of wealth from the different classes, the Buddha says that **QUOTE:** “I declare...the noble supramundane Dharma as a person’s own wealth.” [12]

## **PRACTICE**

1. Use the teaching here to examine your livelihood. To evaluate whether you are becoming “better” in your work, look to see whether there is an increase in faith, virtue, learning, generosity and wisdom in your life as a whole. 2. Examine carefully the assumptions you are holding toward people based on class, race, wealth or beauty. Look to see if those characteristics are more important or less important than their faith, virtue, generosity or wisdom.

## **97 *Dhānañjāni Sutta* To Dhānañjāni**

### **SUMMARY**

Ven. Sāriputta admonishes the brahmin Dhānañjāni for excusing his negligence by claiming that he must carry out his duties for the sake of his parents, his wife and children, his slaves and workers, friends, relatives, guests, departed ancestors, the deities, the king, and/or for refreshing and nourishing his body. When he is close to death, Sāriputta guides him to rebirth in the Brahmā world (with the brahma-vihāras), but the Buddha later reprimands Sāriputta for not taking him to the final goal.

### **NOTES**

[16-24] In a key phrase, Sāriputta states, “...there are other kinds of work, profitable and in accordance with the Dharma, by means of which one can support one’s parents [one’s wife and children; slaves, servants and workers; friends and companions etc.] and at the same time both avoid doing evil and practice merit.”

[25] **QUOTE:** Another key phrase is, “...there are other kinds of work...by means of which one can refresh and nourish this body and at the same time both avoid doing evil and practice merit.”

### **PRACTICE**

Examine your own assumptions about ways and means you have to support yourself and your family. Do these become excuses for not placing the Dharma in the center of your life? Is your work right livelihood? Is your behavior in accordance with the Dharma?

## **98 *Vāseṭṭha Sutta* To Vāseṭṭha**

### **SUMMARY**

The Buddha resolves a dispute between two young brahmins about whether a true brahmin is distinguished by birth or action. This discourse contains a long series of stanzas showing how a true brahmin is the same as an arahant (one liberated from bondage of action and result) and that one’s actions, not one’s birth, are what determine liberation.

### **NOTES**

Here are two stanzas I like:

[12] **STANZA 57:**

One is not a brahmin by birth,  
Nor by birth a non-brahmin.  
By action is one a brahmin,  
By action is one a non-brahmin.

[13] **STANZA 61:**

Action makes the world go round,  
Action makes this generation turn.  
Living beings are bound by action,  
Like the chariot wheel by the pin.

## 99 *Subha Sutta* To Subha

### SUMMARY

The Buddha answers a young brahmin's questions, mostly showing some distinctions between his teachings and those of the brahmins.

### NOTES

[4] The young brahmin said that his clan believes that a householder is accomplishing the true way—the Dharma that is wholesome—and that one who has gone forth is not, and asked the Buddha to comment. The Buddha replied that he does not take sides. He does not praise the wrong way of practice by either the householder or one gone forth because neither is accomplishing the true way; he praises the right way of practice whether it be a householder or one gone forth, because one who has entered on *the right way of practice* is accomplishing the true way, the Dharma that is wholesome.

Note 915 points out how the mastery of a brahmavihāra becomes a path to rebirth in the Brahmā world. When a jhāna (pertaining to the fine-material sphere or the immaterial sphere (developed by the brahmavihāras) is attained and mastered, a karma pertaining to the sense-sphere cannot overpower that jhāna and gain opportunity to yield its results. In fact, the karma of the jhāna overpowers the sense-sphere karmas and produces its own results.

## 100 *Saṅgārava Sutta* To Saṅgārava

### SUMMARY

This is the first discourse in this compilation that may have parts lost. In a discussion with a brahmin student, the Buddha gives evidence of the basis from which he proclaims the Dharma. This is mostly a repetition of MN36 (his path to enlightenment).

### NO NOTES



PART THREE  
The Final Fifty Discourses  
*Uparipaññāsapāḷi*

## 101 *Devadaha Sutta* At Devadaha

### SUMMARY

The Buddha refutes the Nigaṇṭha (Jain) thesis of that liberation is to be attained by self-mortification and proposes a different view on how striving can be useful. (He explains through a lively story to the bhikkhus how the Jain view of striving is fruitless.) This is an important discourse on right effort in practice.

### NOTES

This discourse contains many significant points and may require a good deal of concentration to read. Essentially, this discourse is about **right effort**: whatever causes wholesome states of mind to increase. Right effort is based not on beliefs from the past that have formulated into views (the five views [11] are the same as in MN95.14), but rather on one's own direct experience. *[Ed: Ven. Thanissaro Bhikkhu adds this clarification: The point of this discourse, especially in section 27, is that living according to one's pleasure may sometimes cause unwholesome/unskillful states to increase. In such cases, right effort requires exerting oneself in what is painful. Sometimes (as in section 23), one simply has to look on with equanimity, and that's enough to get unwholesome states to decrease. Thus the rightness of the effort depends on the results.]*

[2] The Buddha begins by recounting the Jain view—that whatever a person feels, whether pleasure or pain or neither-pain-nor-pleasure, all is caused by what was done in the past. “So by annihilating with asceticism past actions and by doing no fresh actions, there will be no consequence in the future. With no consequence in the future, there is the destruction of action. With the destruction of action, there is the destruction of suffering. With the destruction of suffering, there is the destruction of feeling. With the destruction of feeling, all suffering will be exhausted.”

[3-12] Then the Buddha describes going to the Jains and asking them how, not really knowing from direct knowledge whether they existed or didn't exist in the past, can they know the truth about whether or not they performed evil acts? Can they know whether so much suffering has already been exhausted, or has still to be exhausted? He points out that they don't really know what it means to abandon unwholesome states so that wholesome states can arise, so they have no basis to uphold their view. If they had this direct knowledge, then they could declare their view. Hearing this, the Jains respond that their teacher has told them how it is (see [10] for what the teacher said). The Buddha suggests they be careful about where they put their faith.

[13-15] The Buddha points out the obvious. When there is intense exertion, one feels pain. When there is not this exertion, one does not feel pain. Thus it seems that pain comes from intense exertion in the here and now, and not from actions done in the past. He says that if, when there is no exertion, painful feelings are still present, then the Jains would have a basis to uphold their view.



[16-20] Then the Buddha poses a number of different questions all based on exertion and striving. The answer is “no” to each. Some examples are:

Can you postpone experiencing the fruit of an action that is to be experienced now, or experience it sooner?

Can the experienced result be changed from pleasant to painful or vice versa?

Can one change the intensity of the experienced result?

Can one cause a fruit to be experienced that is not meant to be?

[22] **Misunderstandings about the cause of pleasure and pain** (deduced from Jain assertions). Pleasure and pain is caused by:

1. what was done in the past
2. the creative act of a Supreme God (who must be evil to cause such pain)
3. circumstance and nature—chance (MN60.21: also destiny, implying that there are no causes and conditions for why things happen; that things happen by chance, that all beings and creatures have no mastery, power or energy to bring about change; MN60.24: “...one who holds the view ‘there is no causality’ has wrong view...” and wrong intention, and wrong speech.)
4. class
5. exertion here and now.

[23] *How are exertion and striving useful?* One follows the Middle Way. One is not overwhelmed by suffering and does not overwhelm oneself with suffering. One doesn’t give up the pleasure that arises with the Dharma but one is not infatuated with that pleasure. *[Ed: This last point is a worthwhile reflection.]*

One knows there are **three ways to overcome suffering**. There is the knowing that:

1. When I strive with determination, this particular source of suffering fades away in me because of this effort.
2. When I look on with equanimity, this particular source of suffering fades away in me while I develop equanimity. (Note 933 says overcoming craving releases the suffering because craving is the source of suffering.) The Buddha uses the example of a man who is intensely in love with a woman [24, 25].
3. [30-45] When striving is employed to attain the jhānas, to attain the three knowledges and to destroy the taints, then it is fruitful.

[27] The Buddha points out the need for a moderate use of austerities, yet once the defilements are overcome, one no longer exerts oneself because “the purpose for which [one] exerted [oneself] has been achieved.” Note 934 explains that this exertion is meant to achieve the overcoming of defilements, not the wearing away of old karma or purifying the soul as the Jains and other sects believed.

## PRACTICE

1. Reflect on how in your own meditation practice, effort is useful at times and not at others. Pay close attention to determine the middle way, so that you are applying the appropriate amount of effort in each individual case. This could be a momentary investigation, rather than a general conclusion about how you are practicing. Work with equanimity toward pain and pleasure. 2. Look at the Buddha's list of misunderstandings of pain and pleasure and compare them with your own views.

## 102 *Pañcattaya Sutta* The Five and Three

### SUMMARY

In this discourse, the Buddha refutes most of the speculative views about the past, the future and Nibbāna that were circulating at that time.

### NOTES

*[Ed: I found this to be one of the most difficult discourses to understand. The notes in the back of the book are very helpful.]*

[2] **Five speculative views about the future.** There is:

1. an existing self that is percipient and unimpaired after death (eternalist view) *[Ed: percipient means having the power to perceive.]*
2. an existing self that is non-percipient and unimpaired after death.
3. an existing self that is neither percipient nor non-percipient and unimpaired after death
4. the annihilation of an existing being at death (annihilationist view)
5. Nibbāna here and now.

The Buddha refutes the views that take self or consciousness to be permanent *[Ed: this is the Advaita Vedanta view]* as well as the view that the immaterial jhānas (infinite consciousness and the base of nothingness) are Nibbāna, which is a view that some of the saints were teaching at the time. Note 940 paraphrases the Buddha's words in [4]: "All those types of perceptions together with the views are conditioned, and because they are conditioned, they are gross. But there is Nibbāna, called the cessation of formations, that is, of the conditioned. Having known 'There is this,' that there is Nibbāna, seeing the escape from the conditioned, the Tathāgata has gone beyond the conditioned."

*[Ed: At the end of [10], there is reference to "residue of formations." In a discussion with Christopher Titmuss, he said that neither-perception-nor-non-perception meant that the perceptions were so subtle, one could not say there was perception at all, but one could not say there wasn't, so therefore it is said that there is a "residue of formations."]*

[11] The Buddha also points out that the different groups cling to their view, thinking they are correct and others are wrong. He points out the problem with clinging to views. He says these recluses are like merchants going to the market, saying "This will be mine; I will get that."

[12] Anyone who desires annihilation through fear and disgust of identity is actually is tied to that identity even after death—“like a dog bound by a leash tied to a firm post keeps on running and circling around the same post.”

[14] **Sixteen speculative views about the past:**

1. the self and the world are eternal,
2. are not eternal,
3. are both,
4. are neither;
5. the self and the world are finite,
6. are infinite,
7. are both,
8. are neither;
9. the self and the world are perceptive of unity,
10. of diversity;
11. of the limited,
12. of the immeasurable;
13. the self and the world experience exclusively pleasure,
14. pain,
15. both,
16. neither.

In [15], the Buddha states, because one has no direct knowledge of this, one is said to be clinging to views. Note 956 notes that “they must accept their doctrine on some ground other than knowledge, one involving belief or reasoning.” The conclusion can turn out to be either true or false.

[17-25] In this last section on Nibbāna, the Buddha points to how temporary and conditioned the jhānic states are, yet one can think one has arrived in Nibbāna due to the cessation of formations. One is still clinging to a view: a view about the past, or future, or clinging to a fetter of sensual pleasure, or to rapture of seclusion (1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> jhāna), or to unworldly pleasure (3<sup>rd</sup> jhāna), or to neither-painful-nor-pleasant feeling (4<sup>th</sup> jhāna).

This section shows how subtle the clinging to self can be. Even when one is resting in the 4<sup>th</sup> jhāna, there can be the clinging to “I am”—“I am without clinging.” Note 966 points out that this is an allusion to clinging to identity view.

The Buddha continually points to something that is beyond any form of clinging. **QUOTE:** [25] “...liberation through not clinging, by understanding as they actually are the origination, the disappearance, the gratification, the danger and the escape in the case of the six bases of contact.”

## **PRACTICE**

In your formal meditation practice, examine the ways the “I-thought” arises in relation to your experience. “I am doing well. I am getting nowhere. I like this.” Notice if there is any clinging to these thoughts and try to let the thoughts dissolve.

## 103 *Kinti Sutta* What Do You Think About Me?

### SUMMARY

This is a very practical discourse. The Buddha talks to the bhikkhus on the importance of maintaining the meaning and phrasing in the teachings. He also gives guidelines on whether to speak to people about their behavior when they have done something wrong.

### NOTES

[5] The Buddha points out his concern for the accuracy of meaning and phrasing in communicating the teachings and says it should be pointed out if there is some dispute.

[9-17] If we see that someone has done something wrong, there are different considerations to make to determine whether to speak to that person about it. The primary consideration is whether the person who is quite attached to a position or view is able to relinquish it, even if speaking to him or her causes trouble to oneself and hurt to the person. Most important is whether the person "...emerges from the unwholesome and is established in the wholesome."

**The circumstances in which someone should be spoken to** (putting aside "my" trouble for the benefit of the Dharma):

1. I shall not be troubled and the other person will not be hurt; the other person is not given to anger or attachment to his or her view.
2. I shall not be troubled, but the other person will be hurt; the other person is given to anger, but is not attached to his or her view.
3. I will be troubled, but the other person will not be hurt; the other person is not given to anger, but is attached to his or her view.
4. I will be troubled, the other person will be hurt; the other person is given to anger and is attached to his or her view, yet there is the possibility of movement.

[14] There is one instance when one should remain quiet with equanimity: I will be troubled, and the other person will be hurt; the other person is given to anger and is attached, and I cannot move that person from his or her view.

In case the group splits in dispute, the suggestion is made to go to the most reasonable one on each side and discuss with him or her that such dispute will not help in the attainment of liberation.

### PRACTICE

When you find yourself in a situation where people are acting in unwholesome ways, notice how attached they are to their view and proceed according to the guidelines in this discourse.

## 104 *Sāmagāma Sutta* At Sāmagāma

### SUMMARY

Ven. Ānanda talks with the Buddha about his concern with the division in the Nigaṇṭha (Jain) sangha since their teacher's death. He does not want the same thing to happen in the Sangha. So the Buddha lays down disciplinary procedures for the guidance of the Sangha to ensure its harmonious functioning after his demise. He ends by reminding Ānanda to practice the six qualities that create love and unity (as in MN48.6).

## NOTES

[6-11] **Six roots of disputes** (the first four pairs as in MN7.3—imperfections that defile the mind) are when one:

1. is angry and revengeful
2. is contemptuous and domineering
3. is envious and avaricious
4. is deceitful and fraudulent
5. has evil wishes and wrong views
6. adheres to one's own views, relinquishes them with difficulty.

If disciples see such roots of dispute in themselves, the Buddha advises them to practice in such a way that the roots do not erupt in the future.

[12] **Four kinds of litigation** (legal questions), concerning monastic rules. (See Note 982 for further explanation.)

[13-20] **Seven kinds of settlement of litigation.**

[21] **Six qualities that create love and unity** (as in MN48.6; see my notes also).

## PRACTICE

The next time you are in a group, look closely at whether your behavior contributes to harmony or conflict. Using the list of six roots of dispute, give some reflection to which areas need some attention in order to contribute to more group harmony.

## 105 *Sunakkhatta Sutta* To Sunakkhatta ❖

### SUMMARY

The Buddha discusses with Sunakkhatta the problem of someone overestimating his or her level of attainment. He is basically saying that if one really knows the cause of bondage (which is craving), then one would not do things that arouse one's mind toward any object of attachment. There are those who say they are intent only on Nibbāna but their actions are not congruent with their statement. This is a very good basic prescription from the Surgeon (the Buddha), which is essentially the heart of the teaching on how to heal the wound of suffering.

### NOTES

[8-17] Remember that the word “imperturbable” here refers to the 4<sup>th</sup> jhāna and the 1<sup>st</sup> two immaterial attainments (formless jhānas) and Nibbāna (see note 1000). Also notice the subtlety in the **SIMILES** for each stage of attainment, for example, [11] “Just as a yellow leaf that has fallen from its stalk is incapable of becoming green again...” this means that one who has shed the fetter of material things cannot go back, or [17] “Just as a palm tree with its top cut off is incapable of growing again, so too...when a person is completely intent on Nibbāna, his fetter of [the 4<sup>th</sup> formless jhāna] has been cut off....so that it is no longer subject to future arising.” This means that the palm tree is beautiful, tall and strong, but having its top cut off stops its growth instantly.

[18] If one is truly intent on Nibbāna, there are certain things one must do and not do. One must not pursue unsuitable forms with the eyes, unsuitable sounds with the ears, unsuitable odors with the nose, unsuitable flavors with the tongue, unsuitable tangibles with the body, or unsuitable mind-objects with the mind (e.g., with the six bases of contact), for if one does so, lust will invade one’s mind and one will suffer.

[19-26] The Buddha uses a **SIMILE** for healing our wound (and illustrating the problem with overestimating our spiritual attainment). If someone is wounded by an arrow smeared with poison and after the doctor takes it out, there is still a trace of the poison left behind, the doctor would tell the patient, “If you look after your wound it won’t harm you,” and then would give him specific things to do. If the patient does the opposite, he will suffer. If the patient does look after the wound, he will not suffer. The Surgeon (the Buddha) tells us that not pursuing those things unsuitable for one who is completely intent on Nibbāna will heal the wound.

[30] Having understood that attachment is the root of suffering, one would not direct one’s body or arouse one’s mind toward any object of attachment— (**SIMILE**: like giving a deadly poisonous snake your hand or thumb).

## **PRACTICE**

1. What is “the wound” that the Buddha is referring to in this discourse? Are you looking after your “wound”? 2. Reflect honestly on whether there are ways that you overestimate your spiritual attainments either to yourself or to others, and if so, what kinds of problems this gives rise to.

## **106 Āneñjasappāya Sutta The Way to the Imperturbable**

### **SUMMARY**

The Buddha explains the approaches to various levels of higher meditative states culminating in Nibbāna. He points out how one can get caught in clinging at any of these levels. The imperturbable refers to the 4<sup>th</sup> jhāna and the 1<sup>st</sup> two immaterial states.

### **NOTES**

Again and again, here and throughout the discourses, the Buddha points out that even though the jhānas and immaterial attainments are peaceful and sublime, they are not the final goal. Yet many practitioners get stuck in the clinging to these sublime experiences. He does point out though, that clinging to the 4<sup>th</sup> immaterial absorption is the best object of clinging because of the potential for rebirth. *[Ed: I can only assume, and it has been mentioned elsewhere, that there was quite a bit of emphasis at the time of the Buddha on taking these attainments as goals.]*

[10] **QUOTE:** “A bhikkhu...who is affected by clinging does not attain Nibbāna.”

[13] The jhānas and the four immaterial states now and in lives to come extend into the full spectrum of what could be called the identity. These states, because they are conditioned, are still considered the five aggregates affected by clinging.

*[Ed: In making a point about the Buddha’s omniscience, Christopher Titmuss mentioned that the Buddha was able to articulate everything that was conceivable in this conditioned realm, including these immaterial experiences of consciousness.]*

**QUOTE:** “This is the Deathless, namely, the liberation of the mind through not clinging.”

[15] **QUOTE:** “There are these roots of trees, these empty huts. Meditate, Ānanda, do not delay, or else you will regret it later. This is our instruction to you.”

## **PRACTICE**

In your meditation, use clinging as the object of attention and investigation in order to deepen your understanding of its nature. In this way it becomes less of a hidden destructive force in your mind, and the insight and wisdom into the clinging become a liberating force.

## **107 Gaṇakamoggallāna Sutta To Gaṇaka Moggallāna**

### **SUMMARY**

Gaṇaka Moggallāna asks the Buddha to describe the gradual training in this Dharma and Discipline. Then the Buddha gives a good simile on why some disciples reach the goal and some do not.

### **NOTES**

[4-10] The same list for the gradual training as in MN39 and MN53, only the latter is in a different order.

[9] This section gives a useful perspective of the five hindrances. Practicing mindfulness in all postures, one finds a secluded place and practices abandoning **the five hindrances**:

1. Desire—purify the mind from desire;
2. Ill will—be compassionate for the welfare of all living beings;
3. Sloth—have a fully aware mind;

4. Agitation—have a mind inwardly peaceful;
5. Doubt—abide with a mind that has gone beyond doubt, unperplexed about wholesome states.

One can then enter the four jhānas. This is the Buddha’s instruction for those who have not yet attained the goal, but also for arahants to have a pleasant abiding here and now.

[12] A good **SIMILE** (paraphrased): The brahmin Gaṇaka Moggallāna asks the Blessed One: “When your disciples are advised and instructed in this way, do all your disciples reach the goal of Nibbāna, or do some not?” The Buddha replies, “Some do and some don’t.” Then Gaṇaka says, “Since the path to Nibbāna exists and you are present as the guide, what is the reason why, when they are instructed by you, some do and some don’t.” The Buddha responds, “I will ask you a question in return. Suppose a man approaches and asks to be shown the road to Rajgir. And I point out the road. Having been advised, he takes the wrong road... What can I do if he does not heed my advice and goes the wrong way? I just point the way...”

Not everyone was enlightened in the Buddha’s presence. Note 1028: from Dhammapada 276—“You yourselves must strive; the Tathāgatas only point the way.”

#### **PRACTICE**

The Buddha lays out a clear training for us to follow. Do you sometimes imagine that if you met an enlightened master you could by-pass the training? Examine your view for yourself.

### **108 Gopakamoggallāna Sutta With Gopaka Moggallāna**

#### **SUMMARY**

Ven. Ānanda explains how the Sangha maintains its integrity and unity after the passing away of the Buddha. Essentially, he points out how there is no person who is their refuge, rather the Dharma is their refuge, as the Buddha instructed them. This is a touching account of the reverence that the Sangha felt for the Buddha.

#### **NOTES**

[5] Ānanda says that there is no one who has ever been comparable to the Buddha. He was the arouser of the unarisen path.

[7-8] No one was appointed as the Buddha’s heir, nor did the Sangha appoint anyone. Therefore it could seem as if the Sangha was left without a refuge.

[9] A brahmin asks, “But if you have no refuge, Master Ānanda, what is the cause for your concord?” Ānanda replies, “We are not without a refuge, brahmin. We have a refuge; we have the Dharma as our refuge.” Note 1034 (from DN16.6.1): “What I have taught and explained to you as Dharma and Discipline will, at my passing, be your teacher.”



[13] Anyone who has these ten qualities (the same list as MN48) that inspire confidence is honored and revered by the Sangha.

[25-27] The Blessed One did not praise all kinds of meditation. He did not praise a meditation that is obsessed with the five hindrances. He praises one that is free of them, so that one can easily enter the jhānic states.

## PRACTICE

Reflect on what it means to you to take the Dharma as your refuge. To what extent do you let the Dharma act as the measure of your opinions and to what extent do you let your opinions act as the measure of the Dharma?

## 109 *Mahāpuṇṇama Sutta* The Greater Discourse on the Full-moon Night ❖

### SUMMARY

In a large gathering of disciples, one who is a teacher of many students asks the Buddha questions in the hope that it will help to refine his students' understanding of not-self, primarily by exploring the emptiness of the five aggregates.

### NOTES

[5, 6] The **five aggregates** have their root in desire. Clinging is not separate from the aggregates, but it is not the same as them either.

[9] Each aggregate has a cause and condition for its manifestation.

material form—four elements

feeling, perception, and mental formations—contact

consciousness—name and form (nāma-rūpa)

A number of questions are asked and answered that can refine one's understanding of the five aggregates:

[10-11] *How does identity view come to be?* By taking the aggregates to be self. If one does not regard the aggregate to be self, or self possessed of the aggregate, or the aggregate in self, or self as in the aggregate, the identity view does not come to be. [Ed: Important reflection.]

[12] *What is the gratification of each aggregate?* Pleasure and joy.

*What is the danger?* Impermanence, suffering, subject to change.

*What is the escape?* Removal of the desire for it.

[13] *How does one know, how does one see, so that in regard to this body with its consciousness and all external signs (objects), there is no I-making, mine-making, and underlying tendency to conceit?* Whatever the material form—whether past, present, internal or external, gross or subtle, inferior or superior, far or near—one sees all material form as it actually is with proper wisdom thus: “This is not mine, this I am not, this is not my self.” (This phrase is repeated for each aggregate.) When one sees in this way, one becomes disenchanted with the aggregates, implying that one also becomes disenchanted with identity view.

## PRACTICE

See if you can identify moments in each day when you find yourself involved in I-making and mine-making. Identify which of the aggregates you are caught by and reflect on what it would mean to let go of I-making and mine-making.

### **110 *Cūḷapunnama Sutta* The Shorter Discourse on the Full-moon Night**

#### SUMMARY

This is a short and concise discourse on the difference between an untrue man and a true man (almost everything described here has been mentioned in another discourse).

#### NO NOTES

### **111 *Anupada Sutta* One by One As They Occurred**

#### SUMMARY

The Buddha describes Ven. Sāriputta's attainment to arahantship as it occurred through the four jhānas and four immaterial attainments. Of all the discourses in this text, this provides the most detailed account of the progression through the absorptions.

#### NOTES

This discourse specifically describes the factors present as one goes through the form and formless absorptions. It also mentions the importance of describing these factors one by one as they arise, as they are present and as they disappear. Each state is well defined, as is the knowing faculty. One knows they arose, they were present, they disappeared; one knows that these states, not having been, come into being and having been, they vanish. *[Ed: In each absorption, notice the emphasis on the knowing faculty.]*

[4] Regarding these states, one abides detached and free, with a mind rid of barriers, understanding that there is an escape beyond.

[20] Upon emerging from attainment of cessation of feeling and perception, however, one understands that there is no escape beyond this. *[Ed: Ven. Thanissaro Bhikkhu points out that in the first seven attainments, one may analyze their component factors while one is still in that state. With the last two, one can analyze them only after leaving that state.]*

#### PRACTICE

In your meditation practice, strengthen the knowing faculty so that you are able to describe clearly what is happening moment-to-moment.

## 112 *Chabbisodhana Sutta* The Sixfold Purity ❖

### SUMMARY

If someone claims to have attained final knowledge, the Buddha expounds on how that person should be questioned, and on what the nature of his or her answer should be. The discourse includes an in-depth description of the Buddha's liberated mind, thereby showing every possible way that clinging can arise and be extinguished.

### NOTES

#### [3] **The four kinds of expression:**

1. telling the seen as the seen
2. telling the heard as the heard
3. telling the sensed as the sensed
4. telling the cognized as the cognized.

"How does the venerable one know, how does he see, regarding these four kinds of expression, so that through not clinging his mind is liberated from the taints?" [4] The Blessed One answers, "...regarding the seen [the heard, the sensed, the cognized] I abide unattracted, unrepelled, independent, detached, free, dissociated, with a mind rid of barriers..."

[5, 6] *How does one see, how does one know, the **five aggregates**?* **QUOTE:** Knowing each to be "feeble, fading and comfortless; with the destruction, fading away, cessation, giving up, and relinquishing of attraction and clinging regarding [each of the aggregates; as well as] mental standpoints, adherences, and underlying tendencies regarding [each aggregate]." Knowing this, "...I have understood that my mind is liberated."

[7, 8] *How does one see, how does one know, the **six elements** (earth, water, fire, air, space, and consciousness)?* Seeing each as not-self.

[9-10] *How does one see, how does one know, the **six internal and external bases** (eyes and form, nose and odors, etc.)?* Through destruction, fading away... of desire, lust, delight, craving, attraction, and clinging of mental standpoints...regarding each base. [Ed: Notice the six kinds of clinging here.]

Note 396 points out that this is everything (sabbe dhammā).

[Ed: From Christopher Titmuss' own summary: "If I saw a material shape with the eye, I was not entranced by the general appearance nor by the detail. If I dwelt with this organ of sight unguarded, unhealthy mental states might flow in. If I cognized a mental state with consciousness, I was not entranced by the detail... Thus there was the joy of being unaffected."]

### PRACTICE

Notice the times in the day that your mind is unaffected by clinging. Notice the lack of agitation at those times. Can you sense the momentary freedom that is present when there is no clinging to anything?

## 113 *Sappurisa Sutta* The True Man

### SUMMARY

The Buddha distinguishes the character of an “untrue man” and a “true man.” He says no matter how powerful your family, how deep your understanding or your ability to teach, how disciplined or famous, or how deep your meditation has gone, there is no reason to exalt yourself or put others down. This is not what determines whether someone can destroy greed, hatred and delusion. That is determined only by one’s commitment to the Way. That person should be honored for this, for this is enough.

### NOTES

**QUOTE:** [21] “...a true man considers thus: ‘Non-identification even with the attainment of the first jhāna [or anything] has been declared by the Blessed One; for in whatever way one conceives, the fact is ever other than that.’” This quote is specific to the eight attainments.

*[Ed: This is one of my favorite quotes. The brackets in the quotes are mine, derived from the last sentence of [29]: “...[one] does not conceive in regard to anything...”]*

### PRACTICE

1. What would it mean for you to put your practice first? Consider what you are invested in and whether you can begin to shift your relationship to those things in order to put your practice first. 2. Reflect for a period of time on this statement of the Buddha: In whatever way you are conceiving, the fact is other than that. 3. To what extent do you act like an untrue person, using your attainments to put yourself up and other people down?

## 114 *Sevitabbāsevitabba Sutta* To Be Cultivated and Not To Be Cultivated

### SUMMARY

Ven. Sāriputta fills in the details of the Buddha’s outline on what should be cultivated and what should not. This discourse is quite specific and is a supplement to MN9 and MN41.

### NOTES

[3] **What should be cultivated and what should not.** *What should not be cultivated?* That which causes unwholesome states to increase and wholesome states to diminish. *What should be cultivated?* That which causes wholesome states to increase and unwholesome states to diminish. (Each of these is of two kinds—one is to be cultivated, the other not to be cultivated.):

1. bodily conduct [5]

2. verbal conduct [6]
3. mental conduct [7]
4. inclination of mind (To be cultivated: the mind detached from greed, ill will, and cruelty; this discourages obsessive action from arising.) [8]
5. acquisition of perception (To be cultivated: perception that is detached from greed, ill will and cruelty.) [9]
6. acquisition of view (Same as the third kind of mental conduct, as in MN41—there is fruit and result from good and bad actions.) [10]
7. acquisition of individuality (rebirth) [11]
8. forms cognizable by each of the five senses and mind. It is important to note that this instruction is given for mind-objects as well: "...such mind-objects cognizable by the mind as cause unwholesome states to increase and wholesome states to diminish...should not be cultivated. But such mind-objects cognizable by the mind as cause unwholesome states to diminish and wholesome states to increase...should be cultivated." This can usefully be taken up as a practice. [24-29]
9. robes, almsfood, resting places, villages, towns, cities, districts, persons [39-48].

*[Ed: See my notes MN41 for the details of the ten kinds of conduct (bodily, verbal and mental) to be cultivated or not.]*

## **PRACTICE**

Pay attention to what arises in your mind. Practice intently cultivating thoughts and mind states that allow for wholesome states to increase, and unwholesome states to diminish. Practice letting go of thoughts and mind states that cause unwholesome states to increase and wholesome states to diminish.

## **115 Bahudhātuka Sutta The Many Kinds of Elements**

### **SUMMARY**

The Buddha expounds in detail the elements, the six sense bases, dependent origination, and the kinds of situations that are possible and impossible in the world (for one who has right view.)

### **NOTES**

The Buddha names **41 kinds of elements**.

[4] 18 elements: eye, form, and eye-consciousness element; ear, sound, and ear-consciousness element; nose, odor, and nose-consciousness element; body, tangible, and body-consciousness element; mind, mind-object, and the mind-consciousness element.

[5] 6 elements: earth, water, fire, air, space, and the consciousness element.

[6] 6 elements: pleasure, pain, joy, grief, equanimity, and the ignorance element.

[7] 6 elements: sensual desire, renunciation, ill will, non-ill-will, cruelty, and the non-cruelty element.

[8] 3 elements: sense-sphere, fine-material, and the immaterial element.

[9] 2 elements: conditioned and the unconditioned element.

[12] **What is possible and not possible for anyone possessing right view?** It would be impossible to do these things:

1. treat any formation as permanent
2. treat any formation as pleasurable (Note 1085: A noble disciple below an arahant can apprehend a formation as pleasurable, but knows reflectively that such notions are mistaken.)
3. treat anything as self
4. commit any of the **five heinous crimes**: [13]
  - a) deprive one's mother of life
  - b) deprive one's father of life
  - c) kill a Buddha
  - d) kill an arahant
  - e) cause schism in the Sangha
5. acknowledge another teacher (other than the Buddha)
6. understand that two Buddhas could arise in one world system at the same time [14]
7. understand that a woman could become a Fully Enlightened One, or a God (!) [15] *[Ed: Perhaps the Buddha was referring to the fact that in the repressive, patriarchal culture in which he lived, no woman could become a Buddha. Ven. Thanissaro Bhikkhu adds that, perhaps through the Buddha's knowledge of the past, he had never seen a woman Buddha. Also, Buddhas have to go alone into the wilderness, which would have been unheard of for an educated woman in his time. I also want to point out that enlightenment is not gender-related; it is not about body or identity.]*
8. understand that an unwished for, an undesirable result came from good conduct. One with right view knows that a wished for, desirable result came from good conduct [16]
9. understand that someone engaging in evil actions could go to a happy destination after death [17]
10. understand that someone engaging in good conduct could go to an unhappy destination after death. [18]

(Note 1084 says that one with right view is one who possesses a view of the path at the minimal level of a stream-enterer.)

## **PRACTICE**

Compare your views with the list presented here on what is possible and impossible. Use this exercise as time for reflection on these important questions.

## **116 Isigili Sutta Isigili: The Gullet of the Seers**

### **SUMMARY**

This discourse is essentially a statement of homage to the pacceka-buddhas who formerly dwelt on the mountain of Isigili, near Rajgir.

**NO NOTES**

## **117 Mahācattārīsaka Sutta The Great Forty**

### **SUMMARY**

The Buddha defines the factors of the Noble Eightfold Path and explains their interrelationships. One interesting aspect of this discourse is that it clearly shows the Noble Eightfold Path as a way to practice not only for ordinary persons, but also for those who have already entered the stream.

### **NOTES**

The mundane path describes practice up to the point where it turns into the supramundane path, which is what takes one to stream-entry and beyond.

The Buddha begins the discourse by saying, “Unification of mind equipped with these seven factors is called noble right concentration with its supports and its requisites.” The Buddha then describes each other factor on the path, but does not refer back to the factor of concentration. He rather highlights the importance of right view.

[4-9] **Right view** comes first. One must know the difference between right view and wrong view.

*Mundane right view:* There is fruit and result of good and bad actions; there is this world and the other world; there are enlightened beings.

*Path (or supramundane) right view:* the faculty of wisdom and its power (Note 1103: Elsewhere noble right view would be the direct penetration of the noble truths by realizing Nibbāna with the path.)

[9] **QUOTE:** “One makes an effort to abandon wrong view and to enter upon right view: this is one’s **right effort**. Mindfully one abandons wrong view, mindfully one enters upon and abides in right view: this is one’s **right mindfulness**. Thus these three states run and circle around right view, that is, right view, right effort, and right mindfulness.”

In the sections that follow, at the end of each path factor, this emphasis on right view, right effort and right mindfulness is repeated.

[10-15] **Right intention:**

*Mundane:* intention of renunciation, non-ill will, non-cruelty (standard definition).

*Path:* thinking, intention, mental absorption (jhāna), mental fixity, directing of mind, verbal formation [toward absorption]. “One makes an effort to abandon wrong intention...” With right view, one makes an effort to abandon wrong intention with mindfulness. (Note 1107: Right intention is identified with applied thought (vitakka) responsible for absorption by fixing and directing the mind upon its object.)

[16-21] **Right speech:**

*Mundane*: abstinence from four kinds of wrong speech.

*Path*: Same as mundane, “One makes an effort to abandon wrong speech...”  
(Note 1109 indicates the difference between mundane and path is that the path factor cuts through the underlying tendencies toward these four kinds of speech.)



[22-27] **Right action:**

*Mundane:* abstinence from killing, from taking what is not given, from sexual misconduct [Ed: “Sensual” in the text. In many other definitions of right action, the third factor is abstinence from sexual intercourse, rather than sensual misconduct. For more clarification, I received this note from a Pali student, John Kelly in Australia: “The Pali phrase that Ven. Bhikkhu Bodhi translates here as ‘sensual misconduct’ is ‘kāmesu micchācāra,’ which literally means, ‘misconduct in sensual pleasures.’ Note that the word ‘kāma’ that is used here, while meaning sensual, has strong connotations of ‘sexual.’ And in all the places in the canon where this phrase is used and where the sutta goes on to describe in detail what this precept means, the description is about sexual misconduct (see MN41.8, for example). Ven. Bhikkhu Bodhi is entirely consistent in translating this particular Pali phrase as ‘sensual misconduct’ or ‘misconduct in sensual pleasures’ throughout the Majjhima wherever the Buddha is talking about morality for lay people. In places where the Buddha talks about morality for bhikkhus, then ‘abrahmacariya’ is used, which means ‘uncelibacy.’”]

*Path:* Same as mundane, “One makes an effort to abandon wrong action...”

[28-33] **Right livelihood:**

*Mundane:* abandons wrong livelihood, gains right livelihood.

*Path:* Same as mundane, “One makes an effort to abandon wrong livelihood...”

[34] There are two additional factors possessed by the arahant: **right knowledge**, whereby one knows one has destroyed all the defilements, and **right deliverance**, the direct experience of this.

[34, 35] When the wrong view of each path factor has been abolished, the states originating from that wrong view are also abolished. When one has right view, the states originating from that view come into being.

[36] “The Great Forty” are the twenty factors on the wholesome side (ten right factors and the states that originate from each) and the twenty factors on the unwholesome side (ten wrong factors and the states that originate from each).

**PRACTICE**

Take one particular action (for example, harsh speech or wrong livelihood) and apply each of the factors from the Noble Eightfold Path to bring about a wholesome change in that action. Understand how all the factors are interconnected.

**118 Ānāpānasati Sutta Mindfulness of Breathing ❖**

**SUMMARY**

A very important discourse explaining mindfulness of breathing and how it relates to the four foundations of mindfulness, to the seven enlightenment factors, and to true knowledge and deliverance.

## NOTES

[12, 13] The Buddha names the **eleven different practices** the Sangha is devoted to developing at the time (see MN77.15 for fuller explanations of each practice):

1. four foundations of mindfulness
2. four right kinds of striving, or the four great efforts
3. four bases for spiritual power
4. five spiritual faculties
5. five spiritual powers
6. seven enlightenment factors
7. Noble Eightfold Path *[Ed: See my notes for MN151]*
8. four brahmavihāras
9. meditation on foulness
10. meditation on impermanence
11. devotion to development of mindfulness of breathing.

### **Mindfulness of Breathing:**

[15] Here the Buddha states the progression: Mindfulness of breathing when developed and cultivated fulfills the four foundations of mindfulness. When these are developed, they fulfill the seven enlightenment factors. When these are developed, they fulfill true knowledge and deliverance.

[18] Use the breath to tranquilize body and mind.

[19] “I shall breathe in, I shall breathe out experiencing rapture... pleasure...the mental formations...tranquilizing the mental formations.” *[Ed: I have drawn on Thich Nhat Hahn’s (also known as ‘Thay’) commentary of the Ānāpānasati Sutta for help in understanding this discourse. [18] and [19] are the two passages Thay refers to when he talks of experiencing the breath with joy and happiness. Note 1118 says this refers to the first two jhānas, but Thay says in his commentary that this is not accurate. He says this passage refers to meditation generally.]*

[20] “I shall breathe in...out experiencing the mind...gladdening the mind...concentrating the mind...liberating the mind.” *[Ed: Thay uses the following example to compare joy (pīti) with happiness (sukha): Someone travelling in the desert, on seeing a stream of cool water, experiences joy and, on drinking the water, experiences happiness.]*

[21] “I shall breathe in...out contemplating impermanence... fading away (virāga: a fading way of desire, lust)...cessation...relinquishment.” *[Ed: Christopher Titmuss says cessation is the ending of the problem in life. From Thay: “Relinquishment is giving up everything which we see to be illusory and empty of substance.”]*

### **The Four Foundations**

[24] the foundation of body—*[Ed: I question why the translation for the first foundation refers to the whole body [of breath] rather than just body. ‘Body’ is the first foundation of mindfulness. Note 1122 says the whole body [of breath] refers to the air element. Thay is quite adamant that this is incorrect. He says the Buddha must be referring to the whole body in order to be congruent with the four foundations of mindfulness.]*

[25] the foundation of feeling—the pleasurable feelings born of tranquillity and concentration. [Ed: Again, notes say this refers to *jhānas*, but this seems limiting.]

[26] the foundation of mind—one experiences mind, gladdening the mind, concentrating the mind, liberating the mind...through mindfulness and clear comprehension (*sampajañña*). [Ed: From *Thay: We concentrate the mind in order to see. The concentration (samatha) is the stopping in order to see. The seeing is the understanding, or vipassana.*]

[27] the foundation of mind-objects—noticing the characteristics of impermanence and cessation, which leads to observing with equanimity (non-reactivity).

### **The Seven Enlightenment Factors**

[29-40] This section shows the relationship among the factors, as well as their progression (how one leads to the next):

Mindfulness brings about investigation with wisdom; which brings about “tireless” energy; which brings about “unworldly” rapture; which brings about tranquillity (and the pleasure associated with it); which brings about concentration; which brings about equanimity, or more accurately, one “closely looks on with equanimity at the mind thus concentrated.” [36]

Note 1126 points out that these factors can all exist together in one mind-moment.

### **PRACTICE**

1. While breathing in and out, see if you can experience joy and happiness in your breath that leads to gladdening the mind. 2. Clearly distinguish between the four foundations of mindfulness. 3. In your meditation practice, see if you can identify the seven different factors of enlightenment. These do not necessarily have to be done in one sitting, but can be done over time.

## **119 *Kāyagatāsati Sutta* Mindfulness of the Body ❖**

### **SUMMARY**

The Buddha explains how mindfulness of the body is developed and cultivated so that one can receive great benefits. The *jhānas* are also included as a way of developing mindfulness of the body.

### **NOTES**

[4-17] The first section is nearly the same as MN10 (*Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta*). The difference is in the emphasis on concentration, rather than insight.

In notes to the last discourse [MN118.24], reference to experiencing the foundation of the body is explained as meaning the whole body of breath—the air element. This discourse goes into developing mindfulness of the whole body.

The **six methods for developing mindfulness of the body** (same as in MN10 Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta): These are the Buddha's specific instructions for developing mindfulness of the body:

1. be mindful of breathing
2. be aware in the four postures
3. develop full awareness (sampajañña)
4. reflect on the body's impurity
5. reflect on its elements
6. contemplate in charnel grounds (the body's nature being impermanent and not different from that of a corpse).

Section [18-21] reviews **the four form jhānas** with lovely **SIMILES**. They are added in this discourse, most likely because the emphasis is on concentration. *[Ed: They appear in other discourses as well, such as DN2.]*

[22-31] This section uses many very good **SIMILES** to show how important it is to develop mindfulness of the body. If one does, this becomes the basis or support for the arising of true knowledge.

[26] **QUOTE**: "...when anyone has developed and cultivated mindfulness of the body, Māra cannot find an opportunity or a support in him."

[29] **QUOTE**: "...when anyone has developed and cultivated mindfulness of the body, then when he inclines his mind toward realizing any state that may be realized by direct knowledge, he attains the ability to witness any aspect therein, there being a suitable basis." *[Ed: A profound statement!]*

[32-43] The Buddha names ten benefits.

## **PRACTICE**

1. For one day, or longer if you like, direct attention to your body as your main support for mindfulness. Explore how the four elements, earth, water, fire and air, manifest in the body. 2. Reflect on the power of conscious attention; how, through mindfulness, we attain the ability to witness any aspect of ourselves.

## **120 Saṅkhārupapatti Sutta Reappearance by Aspiration**

### **SUMMARY**

In this short discourse, the Buddha says that if one has an aspiration along with faith, virtue, learning, generosity and wisdom, one can be reborn in accordance with that wish. The discourse demonstrates the vast cosmology of the heavenly realms (which the Buddha names). Yet, at the end, there is a twist. He points out that if one's aspiration is to **QUOTE**: "...here and now enter upon and abide in the deliverance of mind and deliverance by wisdom that are taintless with the destruction of the taints," one can also be free of reappearing anywhere at all. Here one reaches the path of arahantship.

### **NO NOTES**

## 121 *Cūḷasuññata Sutta* The Shorter Discourse on Voidness ❖

### SUMMARY

This is one of the more interesting and profound discourses. The Buddha explains to Ven. Ānanda what it means to abide in voidness, or “the genuine, undistorted, pure descent into voidness.”

### NOTES

[3] “As formerly, Ānanda, so now too I often abide in voidness” (notice the word “often”). [*Ed: The Pali word used here for voidness, suññatā, is translated more often as emptiness. You can substitute the word “empty” if you like instead of “void”.*]

The Buddha begins from the gross and moves to the subtle. Just as the palace where they are staying is void of animals, gold, the assembly of men and women, with only the bhikkhus remaining, in the same way when we stay in the forest, attending to the perception of forest, we realize that our perception is not involved with the village or with people, only with the forest. We enter into that perception of forest with confidence, steadiness, and decisiveness. We understand that whatever disturbances dependent on the perception of village are not here now. There is only this amount of disturbance: the singleness dependent on the perception of forest. [*Ed: The mind is still tranquil, but the perception of forest is still impinging on it, and to that extent is a disturbance.*] We understand that this field of perception is void of the perception of village (and of people); there is present only this non-voidness—( the disturbance dependent on the perception of forest). Thus we regard it as void (empty) of what is not there, but as to what is there, we understand, “This is present.”

[5] Then the Buddha goes to the earth element. (Notes 1140, 1141 say this is used as a *kaṣiṇa* to produce *jhāna* and develop insight.) He is aware of the disturbance present with this perception.

[6-9] Then he attends to the base of each of the immaterial states and to the disturbance that arises with that base (even in the 4<sup>th</sup> immaterial state there is disturbance)—“This is present.”

[10] Then he attends to the “signless concentration of mind” (devoid of the sign of permanence, pleasure, or self)—“There is present only this amount of disturbance, namely, that connected with the six bases that are dependent on this body and conditioned by life.”

[11] He enters into the “signless concentration of mind” once again and knowing even this is conditioned, volitionally produced and subject to cessation, his mind is freed of the taints. He attains arahantship.

[12] When the mind is fully liberated, what is left is disturbance connected with "...the six bases that are dependent on this body and conditioned by life. He understands, 'This field of perception is void of...[the three taints]...' There is present only this non-voidness, namely, that connected with the six bases that are dependent on this body and conditioned by life." Thus, he regards it as void of what is not there [in this case, the causes of suffering], but as to what remains, there [the conditioned senses, mind and body] he understands that which is present thus: 'This is present.'" This conditioning does not come to an end, only the clinging to sensual desire, being and ignorance. *[Ed: I find this a very profound reflection.]*

This descent into voidness is actually the process in which the Buddha descended through phenomena into voidness (*suññatā*).

The Buddha ends by pointing out that everyone in the past, present and future who will enter and abide in supreme, pure and unsurpassed *suññatā* will enter into the last *suññatā* mentioned here. *[Ed: Ven. Thanissaro Bhikkhu points out a passage, AN10:95, where the Buddha refuses to answer the question of whether everyone will eventually gain Awakening. His concern, as explained by Ven. Ānanda in that discourse, is that he opens the path by which those who want to gain Awakening will be able to do so. Whether they want to go that way or not is up to them. Also, in MN107.12, the Buddha expresses the same concern in a simile about finding the road to Rajgir.]*

## **PRACTICE**

1. Give time in the day for attending to what is present and what is absent in your moment-to-moment reality. Watch for ways that you read into the present, things that are not actually there, or the way you deny the presence of things that are there. 2. Practice firmly establishing your attention on what is actually in front of you. Sometimes this may be a mental formation; however, be fully present with it when it is there.

## **122 Mahāsuññata Sutta The Greater Discourse on Voidness ❖**

### **SUMMARY**

Seeing that the bhikkhus were growing fond of socializing, the Buddha stresses the importance of seclusion: to enter and abide in voidness internally and externally if one wants to obtain, without difficulty, the bliss of enlightenment.

### **NOTES**

[5] **QUOTE:** "I do not see even a single kind of form, Ānanda, from the change and alteration of which there would not arise sorrow...and despair in one who lusts for it and takes delight in it."

[6] Because the Buddha's mind is drawn to seclusion and delights in renunciation, he makes the point that even though he is often surrounded by large groups of people, he speaks to them in a way that is "...concerned with dismissing them."

[7-10] When the Buddha speaks of giving attention to abiding in voidness, this means giving attention with the wisdom that sees the not-self nature of the five aggregates affected by clinging, both internally (in oneself), and externally (in others). One should have full awareness as to whether one has entered into voidness or not. [11] Abiding thus, bring full awareness to:

1. the four postures so that no unwholesome states of greed and grief can arise
2. talking [12]
  - a) **What should not be talked about:** kings, robbers, ministers, armies, dangers, battles, food, drink, clothing, beds, garlands, perfumes, relatives, vehicles, villages, towns, cities, countries, women, heroes, streets, wells, the dead, trivialities, the origin of the world, the origin of the sea, whether things are so or are not so
  - b) **What should be talked about:** talk that favors the mind's release: on wanting little, contentment, seclusion, aloofness from society, arousing energy, virtue, concentration, wisdom, deliverance, knowledge and vision of deliverance; a disciple makes a resolve not to let the mind incline otherwise
3. thinking [13]—to have full awareness of greed or renunciation, ill will or non-ill will, and cruelty or non-cruelty (Note 1155 says these instructions are for the stream-enterer and the once-returned.)
4. One should constantly review, “Does any mental excitement concerning the five cords of sense pleasures ever arise in me on any occasion?” [15] One does this reflection in order to be aware of the presence and absence of lust. (Note 1155 says this is true for the non-returned also; it culminates in abandoning sensual desire.)
5. One should contemplate the arising and disappearance of the five aggregates to abandon the conceit “I am;” one has full awareness of when the conceit is abandoned in oneself [16, 17]. The wording is such that it can be both a temporary noticing and a permanent state. (Note 1156 says this is also for the non-returned, as it is the insight needed for arahantship.)

*[Ed: Even though the notes say these instructions are for the path stages, they are so wonderfully basic they can be practiced at any stage on the path. This is a useful list and seems to be much of what we give attention to on retreats.]*

[19] At the end of the discourse, the Buddha mentions that one should not go to a teacher just to listen to the discourses. One should go for talk that deals with the mind's release, direct knowledge, enlightenment, even if one is told to go away. He also goes on to say that one can go astray (a teacher, a pupil, one on the path) if one gives in to the gifts offered by visitors. And lastly, show respect to your teacher by wholeheartedly doing the practice and listening carefully to his or her teachings, because the teacher is wholeheartedly, out of compassion, giving the teachings for your welfare, happiness and liberation.

## **PRACTICE**

1. Pay attention to where your thoughts and speech incline. Reflect on what it would mean for thought and speech to favor the mind's release. 2. Reflect on why you go to a teacher. Are you engaged in that relationship in the most beneficial way for your awakening?

### **123 *Acchariya-abbhūta Sutta* Wonderful and Marvellous**

#### **SUMMARY**

At a gathering of bhikkhus, Ven. Ānanda recounts the wonderful events that preceded and attended the Buddha's birth.

#### **NOTES**

After Ānanda recounts the miracles around the Buddha's birth, the Buddha says not to forget one more "wonderful and marvelous" quality: "For the Tathāgata, feelings are known as they arise, as they are present, as they disappear. Thoughts are known as they arise, as they are present, as they disappear. Perceptions are known as they arise, as they are present, as they disappear. Remember this, too, Ānanda, a wonderful and marvelous quality of the Tathāgata." This calls us to remember the simplicity and immediacy in the practice.

#### **PRACTICE**

See if you can distinguish between the appearance of your feelings, thoughts and perceptions, and the knowing faculty itself—that aspect of consciousness which knows the arising, presence, and disappearance of these appearances.

### **124 *Bakkula Sutta* Bakkula**

#### **SUMMARY**

This discourse contains an interesting description of an elder disciple's austere practices in the last eighty years of his life. (Because he went into homelessness at the age of eighty, he would have been 160 at the time of this discourse.) It is apparently meant to be an example of what is possible for a bhikkhu, although it can also appear a bit extreme.

#### **NOTES**

It is interesting to note that in [20-25], Ven. Bakkula states that one of his practices was never to teach the Dharma to a woman, lay or monastic, "even as much as a four-line stanza."

### **125 *Dantabhūmi Sutta* The Grade of the Tamed ❖**



## SUMMARY

In this discourse, the Buddha explains to the novice Aciravata how difficult it is for someone who is devoured by sense pleasures to realize what must be known through renunciation. In this case, Prince Jayasena is used as the example. He goes on to describe the course of training as he has in other discourses. He uses the “king’s elephant” for the simile of one who has been tamed, or who has mastered the Way.

## NOTES

This discourse is quite an enjoyable account of the path.

[7, 8] A very useful **REFLECTION**: The Buddha says it is impossible that someone who is living in the midst of sensual pleasures and who is being consumed by the fever of sensual pleasures “could know, see or realize that which must be known through renunciation, [seen... attained...realized] through renunciation.” *[Ed: This reflection is useful, especially to me as a teacher: that not everyone can realize the Dharma, even if he or she comes to retreats; renunciation is a key to awakening.]*

[9] A good **STORY** follows. One person climbs to the top of a mountain; his friend stays at the bottom. The one at the top sees incredible beauty but when he tells his friend, he is not believed until the friend goes to the top of the mountain to see for himself.

[10] The Buddha says—the mass of ignorance is a much greater obstruction to one’s view than this mountain (paraphrased quote).

[12] Another good **STORY** about the king’s elephant shows how to tame the forest elephant: The trainer uses gifts and gentle words in its ears so the newly trained elephant can “stand its ground” in battle and endure all blows.

[15-23] The list of gradual training is the same as that in MN39 with one change: After the five hindrances, it includes the instruction to contemplate the four foundations to subdue one’s habits, memories and intentions; and distress, fatigue and fever, all based on the household life.

[22] Hindrances are described as “imperfections of the mind that weaken wisdom.”

[24] This instruction is mentioned for the first time: While abiding contemplating the four foundations, do not think thoughts connected with the body, feelings, mind and mind-objects. This shows a clear distinction between contemplation and thinking. The purpose of this instruction is to bring the meditator to the second jhana. [25]

## PRACTICE

1. Make up a phrase that you can repeat to yourself to help you reflect on the wisdom of renunciation. For example, “May I have the strength to let go of things that bring pain to my body.” Or, “May I have the wisdom to know what brings me true happiness, and may I follow those things.” 2. Cultivate patience in sharing Dharma with friends who have not seen these truths for themselves. Remind yourself that this path is a training and requires taking the steps to bring about transformation. Think of ways to share the Dharma that will inspire others to take these steps themselves.

## **126 *Bhūmija Sutta* Bhūmija**

### **SUMMARY**

Ven. Bhūmija answers a question for Prince Jayasena and gets affirmation from the Buddha about the correctness of his answer. He points out how one’s aspiration or wish has little to do with receiving the fruit of one’s actions or of one’s practice of the holy life. What matters is applying the correct method, which in this case is the Noble Eightfold Path. There are four useful similes.

### **NOTES**

The correct method matters more than one’s aspirations.

#### **[10-18] SIMILES:**

1. If one grinds gravel to get oil, it doesn’t matter whether one wishes for oil or doesn’t, one won’t get it. If one uses sesame flour, however, one will obtain oil, for this is the proper method.
2. If one pulls a recently calved cow by her horn, one won’t get milk. If one pulls her udder, one will.
3. If one churns water to get butter, one won’t. If one churns curd, one will.
4. If one uses an upper fire-stick and rubs a wet sappy piece of wood with it, one won’t get fire. If one rubs a dry sapless piece of wood with it, one will, for this is the right method for procuring the result.

### **PRACTICE**

To practice the teaching in this discourse, you must examine carefully the Noble Eightfold Path and evaluate how well you live in accordance with this path. This is a noble undertaking in itself.

## **127 *Anuruddha Sutta* Anuruddha**

### **SUMMARY**

In this discourse, Ven. Anuruddha clarifies the difference between immeasurable deliverance of mind (the brahmavihāras) and exalted deliverance of mind (which arises from a kasiṇa meditation). He names the respective rebirths that can be attained from each. (The translator’s notes help to clarify.)

## NO NOTES

### 128 *Upakkilesa Sutta* Imperfections

#### SUMMARY

This discourse has two parts. In the first, there is more information about living in concord, arising from the dispute at Kosambī (as in MN48). It includes a famous series of stanzas about living with non-hatred. In the second, the Buddha discusses the various impediments to meditative progress.

#### NOTES

[6] A beautiful poem of nine **STANZAS** (six verses of which are also found in the Dhammapada, verses 3, 5, 6, 328, 329, and 330) about living harmoniously together and well worth reflecting upon. This is one section of the poem of which I am particularly fond:

“If one can find a worthy friend,  
A virtuous, steadfast companion,  
Then overcome all threats of danger  
And walk with him content and mindful.

But if one finds no worthy friend,  
No virtuous, steadfast companion,  
Then as a king leaves his conquered realm,  
Walk like a tusker in the woods alone.

Better it is to walk alone,  
There is no companionship with fools.  
Walk alone and do no evil,  
At ease like a tusker in the woods.”

[8-14] This section is nearly identical to MN31.3-10.

[15-32] In the second part of this discourse, the Buddha talks about the obstacles to deepening concentration, obstacles which cause a desired state to disappear. Resolve is needed to ensure that these obstacles do not arise again. (Note 1189 says this section refers to developing the divine eye—perception of light and vision of forms.)

**The obstacles, or imperfections of mind are:**

1. doubt
2. inattention
3. sloth and torpor
4. fear
5. elation (toward the experience)
6. inertia
7. excess of energy (gripping too tightly to the object)
8. deficiency of energy

9. longing
10. perception of diversity (intentionally changing objects of attention to deepen experience can instead lead to confusion)
11. excessive meditation upon forms. (Note 1193 explains that this results from trying to stay with one form whether agreeable or disagreeable.)

## PRACTICE

In your formal meditation, once you feel some stability, pay close attention to what mind state arises that causes that stability to disappear.

## 129 *Bālappaṇḍita Sutta* Fools and Wise Men

### SUMMARY

This discourse is a dramatic telling of the sufferings of hell and the animal realms into which a fool is reborn through his evil deeds, and the ecstatic pleasures of heaven that a wise person reaps through good deeds.

### NOTES

The descriptions of hell are gruesome, the ones of heaven are divine.

[2-6] **Three marks of a fool:** one who thinks bad thoughts, speaks bad words and does bad deeds. [*Ed: One who essentially transgresses the five precepts.*] A fool feels pain and grief for three reasons:

1. others will think ill of him
2. torture will be inflicted (the tortures used by the king at the time are named)
3. he will feel remorse for what he has done.

**SIMILE:** “Just as the shadow of a great mountain peak in the evening covers, overspreads, and envelops the earth, so too, when a fool is on his chair or on his bed...then the evil actions he did in the past...cover him...and envelop him.” [5]

[24] The well-known blind turtle **SIMILE**.

[25] The Buddha says if someone who has engaged in evil deeds is reborn in the human realm, it will be into a low birth. If a wise person is reborn in the human realm, it will be into a high birth (wealthy with beauty, grace, etc.).

[27-31] **Three marks of a wise person:** One who thinks good thoughts, speaks good words and does good things. A wise person will feel pleasure and joy for three reasons:

1. others will think well of him
2. he will avoid torture
3. he will feel at peace about his actions.

## PRACTICE

The next time you feel remorse about something, notice that the cause for that remorse was an action you could have avoided if you had acted differently. Be careful not to be harsh toward yourself for your behavior, but rather use it as an opportunity to gain insight into the cause of your suffering so there is less likelihood that you will repeat it in the future.

### **130 *Devadūta Sutta* The Divine Messengers**

#### **SUMMARY**

This discourse, also about the sufferings of hell, is told through the eyes of King Yama, the Lord of Death. The King continues on in even more gruesome detail from the last discourse.

#### **NOTES**

King Yama is the Lord of Death. He is said to be a righteous king.

[2 and 29] The Buddha says he knows about rebirth according to actions (karmic results), not from hearsay, but from his direct knowledge.

[3-9] King Yama questions and cross-questions a being brought to him in hell, and asks him if he did not see the five divine messengers—a helpless young infant, a sick person, an old person, a person tortured after committing an evil deed, and a dead person.

[4] King Yama: Your unwholesome actions were not performed by your mother, or your father, but by you, so you will have to experience the fruits, the karmic result, yourself.

[5-9] “Have you never seen in the world a man—or a woman—at eighty or ninety or a hundred years, aged, as crooked as a roof bracket, doubled up, supported by a walking stick, youth gone, teeth broken, grey-haired, scanty-haired, bald, wrinkled, with limbs all blotchy?” Did you not think this would happen to you? (He goes through each of the five messengers.) If one does reflect, one could reflect that, “I, too am subject to each of these things, therefore I had better do good by body, speech and mind.”

#### **PRACTICE**

When you see any of the five mentioned divine messengers, do you react heedlessly, or with the thought: “This could happen to me. I, too, am subject to this. Therefore, I will do good.”

### **131 *Bhaddekaratta Sutta* A Single Excellent Night ❖**

### **132 *Ānandabhaddekaratta Sutta* Ānanda and a Single Excellent Night**

### **133 *Mahākaccānabhaddekaratta Sutta* Mahā Kaccāna and a Single Excellent Night**

## 134 *Lomasakaṅgiyabhaddekaratta Sutta* Lomasakaṅgiya and a Single Excellent Night

(N.B.: In the Second Edition of the Majjhima Nikāya, the phrase “A Single Excellent Night,” wherever it appears, has been changed from “One Fortunate Attachment,” which was used in the first edition [1995].) [Ed: Ven. Thanissaro Bhikkhu adds an interesting reflection: *In the Pali Canon, which was composed in a culture that used a lunar calendar, the word “night” was used to mean a 24-hour period of day-and-night, just as we, with our solar calendar, call the same period a “day.”*]

### SUMMARY

The above four discourses are a summary and exposition on a verse about how one revives the past, puts hope in the future and gets embroiled in the present, and how not to do this. The Buddha emphasizes the need for present effort in seeing things as they are.

MN131: The Buddha explains the verse by way of the five aggregates.

MN132: Ānanda expounds a summary and exposition of the last discourse to the bhikkhus, and the Buddha commends him.

MN133: The Buddha gives the teaching in brief. After he leaves for his dwelling, Mahā Kaccāna analyzes the verse by way of the twelve sense bases.

MN134: The Buddha gives the teaching to Ven. Lomasakaṅgiya.

### NOTES

MN131 is an important discourse to reflect on, and the repetition in the other discourses is helpful. The verse is practical and has a timeless element. (In the first edition, the One Fortunate Attachment is cultivating insight.)

The **VERSE** (repeated in each of the four discourses):

Let not a person revive the past  
Or on the future build his hopes;  
For the past has been left behind  
And the future has not been reached.  
Instead with insight let him see  
Each presently arisen state;  
Let him know that and be sure of it,  
Invincibly, unshakably.  
Today the effort must be made  
Tomorrow Death may come, who knows?  
No bargain with Mortality  
Can keep him and his hordes away,  
But one who dwells thus ardently,  
Relentlessly, by day, by night –  
It is he, the Peaceful Sage has said,  
Who has a single excellent night.”

*[or, one fortunate attachment.]*

*How does one revive the past?* “Thinking, ‘I had such material form in the past,’ (or feeling, perception, mental formations, consciousness), one finds delight in that.” [MN131.4]

Or, “Thinking, ‘My eye was thus in the past, and visual forms were thus,’ one’s consciousness becomes bound up with desire and lust for that...one delights in that. When one delights in that, one revives the past.” [Ed: Ven. Mahā Kaccāna continues for the other sense doors.] “My mind was thus in the past, and mind-objects were thus,’ consciousness becomes bound up with desire and lust for that...” [MN133.13] [Ed: An example of this would be thinking I had a “good” meditation and desiring that kind of meditation in the future.]

*How does one not revive the past?* “Thinking, ‘I had such material form in the past,’ one does not find delight in that.” [MN131.5]. “Thinking, ‘My eye was thus in the past and forms were thus,’ one’s consciousness does not become bound up with desire and lust for that ...one does not delight in that.” [MN133.14]

Note 1215 makes an important point. It is “not the mere recollection of the past through memory that causes bondage, but the reliving of past experience with thoughts of craving.” The bondage happens when one finds delight by bringing to bear upon the past either craving or a view associated with craving. Remember, the craving can be for something to remain, as when we find something attractive, or for something to go away, as when we find something repulsive. Therefore, memory itself is not the problem, but the craving and delight in those thoughts of the past.

*How does one build up hope in the future?* I desire that this will happen in the future. I may have [I want] this material form in the future [MN131.6]; or My body and tangibles may be thus... [I want my body to be thus] and taking delight in it, I set my heart on obtaining that [in a form of action]. [MN133.15]

*How does one not build up hope in the future?* Consciousness does not become bound up with desire [for that object], does not find delight in it. [MN131.7, MN133.16]

*How are we bound up in the present?* One is bound up with desire and lust for what is present and one delights in it; one gets bound up, or lost, because one takes the five aggregates as self [MN131.8, MN133.17].

*How are we not bound up in the present?* One is not bound up with desire and lust for what is present and one does not delight in it; one does not get bound up, or lost, because one does not take the five aggregates as self [MN131.9, MN133.18].

## **PRACTICE**

1. Pay close attention, both in your formal sittings and in your daily activities, to how you revive the past, put hope in the future, and get bound up with present moment experience. Choose one at a time to practice. See if you can track the arising thoughts, and the delight and desire for the object, as well as the continuation of the thoughts that leads to an action. Remember that craving and delight can be related to aversion and negativity, too. 2. See if you can notice if an action arises from clinging or from non-clinging.

## 135 *Cūḷakammavibhaṅga Sutta* The Shorter Exposition of Action

### SUMMARY

The Buddha explains how karma accounts for one's fortune or misfortune. He names the results of specific actions.

### NOTES

[4] **QUOTE:** "Students, beings are owners of their actions, heirs of their actions; they originate from their actions, are bound to their actions, have their actions as their refuge. It is action that distinguishes beings as inferior or superior."

If one causes an evil act, one will either be reborn in an unhappy destination or in the human realm. If one causes a wholesome act, one will either be reborn in heaven or in the human realm.

[5-18] If one is reborn in the human realm, the following is a **list of some actions and their results**.

1. killing—short life; non-killing—long life
2. injuring beings—sickly; not-injuring beings—healthy
3. being angry or hateful—ugly; being peaceful—beautiful
4. being envious of another's gain, honor, or respect—uninfluential; being non-envious—influential
5. lacking generosity—poor; being generous—wealthy
6. being obstinate, arrogant or disrespectful—low-born; being open-minded, meek or respectful—high-born
7. lacking energy for inquiry with the wise—stupid; inquiring with the wise—wise

*[Ed: Ven. Bhikkhu Bodhi seems to select his words carefully in the notes of this discourse. Note 1224: "If karma of killing directly determines the mode of rebirth..." this will happen. And Note 1225: "Abstaining from killing may be directly responsible for the [consequent rebirth.]" It is likely that he is making room for the complexity of the workings of karma, as explained in MN136.]*

## 136 *Mahākammavibhaṅga Sutta* The Greater Exposition of Action

### SUMMARY

The Buddha reveals subtler complexities on the workings of karma that overturn simplistic dogmas and sweeping generalizations.

### NOTES

This discourse says that one's next rebirth is not necessarily shaped by a particular action in this life. With the multitude of actions performed in one life, plus their constant interactions with actions performed in previous lives, (and previously and subsequently in this life), the result of an action may be delayed for more than one lifetime.



[6] When one performs an intentional act by way of body, speech or mind whose result is to be felt as pleasant, painful, or neither-pain-nor-pleasure, the respective results will be felt as pleasant, painful or neither-pain-nor-pleasure.

[17] “He will experience the result of that [action] *either here or now*, or in this next rebirth or in some subsequent existence.” *[Ed: Italics are mine. Here is a reminder of the effect of an action having its result in the here and now by being reborn in a favorable or unfavorable destination in the here and now.]*

## PRACTICE

Reflect on how some actions bear immediate fruit, while others take much longer to bear fruit.

## 137 *Saḷāyatanaṅga Sutta* The Exposition of the Sixfold Base ❖

### SUMMARY

This is a broad discourse that focuses primarily on the 18 kinds of mental exploration and the 36 positions of beings. Both sets relate to the exploration of joy, grief and equanimity at the six sense bases. The second, the 36 positions of being, also includes the point of view of both the householder—one who is intent on saṃsāra, and the renunciate—one who is intent on liberation.

### NOTES

There are some very good topics for reflection throughout this discourse. **This is what should be understood:**

- 6 internal bases—eye, ear, nose, tongue, body, and mind
- 6 external bases—form, sound, odors, flavors, tangibles, and mind-objects
- 6 classes of consciousness
- 6 classes of contact (refer to MN9 for these last two)
- 18 kinds of mental exploration
- 36 positions of being
- 3 foundations of mindfulness (not the standard foundations)

[8] **18 kinds of mental exploration:** One explores an object of one of the six sense doors that is the cause of joy, grief or equanimity. There are six kinds of exploration with joy, six kinds with grief, and six with equanimity. (This is repeated in MN140.)

[9] **36 positions of being:** “Positions” refers to positions for beings intent on saṃsāra and beings intent on ending saṃsāra. There are 18 positions for the householder (connected by sensual pleasures) and 18 based on renunciation (connected by insight). Attending to an object at each of the six sense doors, one explores joy, grief and equanimity.

1. Joy based on the householder’s life: Joy arises upon cognizing an object at any one of the six sense bases that is wished for, desirable, associated with the world. One does the same if the object arises as a memory. [10]

2. Joy based on renunciation: Joy arises when, upon knowing impermanence, change, fading away, and cessation of forms at all six doors, one knows it as it actually is with proper wisdom, that forms, both formerly and now, are all impermanent, suffering and subject to change. [11]
3. Grief based on the householder's life: Grief arises upon cognizing an object at any one of the six sense doors that was wished for but wasn't acquired, has passed, changed or ceased, past (as a memory) or present. [12]
4. Grief based on renunciation: Grief arises through knowing impermanence and longing for the supreme liberations. [13]
5. Equanimity based on the householder's life: Equanimity arises based on unknowing; with each of the six objects, one is blind to the danger. [14] **QUOTE** from Note 1241: The equanimity "does not transcend the form because it is stuck, fastened to the object like flies to a ball of sugar."
6. Equanimity based on renunciation: Equanimity arises based on insight; there is no lusting after or aversion (no reactivity) to any of the six objects. When one knows impermanence, this transcends the object. [15] *[Ed: The equanimity isn't stuck to the object but is free, independent from the form. Interesting metaphor.]*

[16-20] For the renunciate, the Buddha gives **further direction**:

1. Abandon and surmount the joy of the householder by relying on the six kinds of joy based on renunciation.
2. Abandon and surmount the grief and equanimity of the householder by relying on, respectively, the grief and equanimity of renunciation.
3. Abandon and surmount the grief based on renunciation by relying on the six kinds of joy based on renunciation.
4. Abandon the joy based on renunciation by relying on the six kinds of equanimity based on renunciation.
5. There is equanimity that is diversified. This is based on sense experiences. There is equanimity that is unified. This is based on immaterial attainments. By relying on unified equanimity, abandon and surmount diversified equanimity.
6. By relying on non-identification, abandon and surmount unified equanimity. *[Ed: One still experiences the unified equanimity but does not identify with it as an attainment.]*

[22-24] **Three foundations of mindfulness** for a Noble One to cultivate:

1. Even though disciples turn away from hearing the Dharma, the Tathāgata is unmoved, mindful and fully aware.
2. Whether they turn away or listen, either way...the Tathāgata remains free from satisfaction or dissatisfaction. He dwells in equanimity and is mindful.
3. When they are eager to hear the Dharma, he is satisfied, yet dwells unmoved, mindful and fully aware.

[26] Guided by a Tathāgata, a person to be tamed goes in eight directions: The eight liberations (vimokkha) (the same as in MN77.22, see notes in this manual). This is the mind's full, but temporary release from opposing states and delight in the object. (See Note 764 for further explanation.)

## PRACTICE

1. Differentiate for yourself between the joy, grief and equanimity that arise due to sense pleasures, and the joy, grief and equanimity that are described in the discourse as arising due to insight. See if you can experience the felt-sense of each. 2. Notice that grief based on the desire for liberation is not a bad thing. If approached wisely, it may spur one on to intensified practice.

## 138 *Uddesavibhaṅga Sutta* The Exposition of a Summary ❖

### SUMMARY

In this discourse, Ven. Mahā Kaccāna answers questions about what it means for consciousness to be scattered and distracted externally, what it means for the mind to be stuck, what it means for consciousness to be agitated due to clinging, and how to end these difficulties. This is a useful discourse.

### NOTES

*[Ed: I found these to be useful teaching notes.]*

[3] **QUOTE:** “If his consciousness is not distracted and scattered externally nor stuck internally, and if by not clinging he does not become agitated, then for him there is no origination of suffering...”

[10] **What is meant by consciousness that is “distracted and scattered externally”?** When one sees a form with the eye, if consciousness follows after that form and is tied by gratification of that form, then consciousness is distracted. (The same with the other sense doors.) *[Ed: I find interesting that mind and mind-objects are also considered “external distraction,” so if one is tied to gratification with mind-objects then one is distracted “externally.”]*

[11] *How not to be distracted?* Do not follow after the form and be shackled by gratification.

[12-19] **What is meant by the mind's being “stuck”?** The venerable is clearly pointing to attachment to the rapture, pleasure, equanimity and neither-pleasant-nor-unpleasant feeling in the four jhānas.

[16] *How not to be stuck?* The consciousness does not follow after rapture and pleasure born of seclusion, and is not fettered by gratification in that rapture.

*[Ed: How is equanimity different from the neutral feeling when viewed with wisdom? Equanimity would not be considered a feeling, rather it would be considered a mental factor characterized by a lack of reactivity. Neutral feelings may arise in response to this, as well as tranquillity, which is also a by-product of equanimity but different. However, the Visuddhimagga says that equanimity and neutral feeling can be synonymous but are not always so.]*

[20] ***What is meant when there is agitation due to clinging?*** Here the mind is preoccupied with the change of one of the five aggregates. Then other agitated mental states arise from this preoccupation and the mind obsesses. Because one's mind is obsessed, one becomes anxious, distressed, and concerned due to this clinging.

[21] ***How not to be agitated due to clinging?*** The agitation disappears when one is not preoccupied with the change in the five aggregates and there is no clinging.

Note 1253 points out that different versions of the discourse differ as to whether the Buddha said 'agitation through clinging' or 'agitation through non-clinging.' The note's point is actually to clarify what would be meant if the original meaning was non-clinging, e.g., if one lets go, then one may feel agitation from having no refuge in the non-clinging. Either way, a good lesson can be drawn from the passage.

Note 1255 mentions that the agitation [is fed] by not having any permanent essence that can provide a refuge from the suffering that comes about through the change of that condition. There is no refuge when there is change in a pleasant feeling. Pleasant things can provide security through our reliance on their continuity. When this continuity changes and disappears, we will search for a refuge to protect us from the pain of the loss and not know where to look.

## **PRACTICE**

Choose one of the five aggregates, for example the body, and pay close attention to its changing quality throughout the day. See if you can notice agitation arise due to clinging to its impermanent nature. Taking feelings in the body as an object can be helpful, because we notice when we don't want the good feelings to pass, or how we want the unpleasant ones to pass more quickly.

## **139 *Araṇavibhaṅga Sutta* The Exposition of Non-Conflict**

### **SUMMARY**

The Buddha gives a detailed discourse on what things do and do not lead to conflict.

### **NOTES**

**What leads to non-conflict?** (Three factors are related to speech; two to sense pleasures.)

1. Do not pursue sense pleasures or self-mortification. Avoid extremes. Take the middle way.

2. Do not praise or blame anyone personally for the way they practice the Dharma. Instead, teach only the Dharma. One teaches the Dharma by referring to the pursuit of or the disengagement with it and by saying whether this itself causes suffering or not. One does not refer to the persons who are engaged or not engaged. In other words, keep it impersonal.
3. Know how to define pleasure (as to whether it is sense pleasure or jhānic pleasure), and pursue pleasure in oneself. Do not pursue sense pleasures, rather fear them. Pursue only the pleasure that leads to bliss of renunciation, the bliss of seclusion, and the bliss of enlightenment [9]. Develop the pleasure of the jhānas (do not fear it).
4. When covert or overt sharp speech is untrue, incorrect and unbeneficial, do not use it. But when it is beneficial, the Buddha says to use it. [*Ed: A useful reflection.*]
5. Do not speak hurriedly. Then one's body does not grow tired nor one's mind excited; one's voice or throat is not strained, and one's speech is distinct and easy to understand.

[14] **QUOTE:** "...train yourself thus: 'We shall know the state with conflict and we shall know the state without conflict, and knowing these, we shall enter upon the way without conflict.'"

#### **PRACTICE**

1. Pay attention to your speech in general. Do you speak hurriedly? Notice if your speech is beneficial or not, especially when your speech is strong. 2. Notice your attitude toward others who are practicing the Dharma. Are there ways that you may praise or blame them personally for their understanding? Notice how in every case conflict arises due to clinging.

### **140 *Dhātuvibhaṅga Sutta* The Exposition of the Elements ❖**

#### **SUMMARY**

This is a profound and touching account of the Buddha's meeting with Pukkusāti (a former king), who had gone forth but had never met the Buddha. The Buddha could tell he was ripe for awakening, so he gave him a private teaching without Pukkusāti's knowing he was the Buddha. Primarily, the discourse is about four foundations: wisdom, truth, relinquishment and peace. It also includes a great deal on feeling (*vedanā*). The last section is about mental conceiving. When Pukkusāti went out to look for a proper robe and bowl for his ordination, he was killed by a cow and reborn in the Avihā heaven as a non-returner.

#### **NOTES**

This is a good discourse to sit with and reflect upon. There is a lot here that needs time to season. Also, it is worthwhile to note that this is what the Buddha decided to teach a bhikkhu ripe for awakening. The important teaching is on the four foundations. The Buddha describes **what makes a "person"**:

six elements,  
six bases of contact,  
eighteen kinds of mental exploration (see MN137)  
possession of the four foundations.

*[Ed: Ven. Thanissaro Bhikkhu notes that the Buddha always refused to answer the question of what a person is. Therefore, an alternative translation for “a person is six elements, etc.,” would be that a person has six elements, etc. This seems more accurate.]*

**QUOTE:** [30] “The tides of conceiving do not sweep over one who stands upon these [foundations], and when the tides of conceiving no longer sweep over [one], [one] is called a sage at peace.”

[11-28] **The four foundations:**

1. [13-25] **Wisdom**—the knowledge of the destruction of all suffering. This is wisdom possessed by an arahant. “One should not neglect wisdom...”  
*How should one not neglect wisdom?*

- a) He teaches the six elements (four physical elements plus the space and consciousness elements, as in MN28 and MN62) and to see anattā in each.
- b) [19] With consciousness (the knowing faculty), one knows the origin and cessation of the feeling that arises through contact. In dependence on contact, a feeling arises. One knows the feeling as pleasant, unpleasant, or neither. With the cessation of that same contact, the feeling ceases.

**SIMILE:** “...just as from the contact and friction of two fire-sticks, heat is generated and fire is produced, and with the separation and disjunction of these two fire-sticks, the corresponding heat ceases and subsides...”

- c) [20] **Equanimity**, purified, bright, malleable, wieldy, and radiant. (Note 1275: This equanimity is that of the 4<sup>th</sup> jhāna and is a result of not clinging to feelings.) **SIMILE:** When a goldsmith takes some gold and refines it in the furnace so it is malleable and radiant, [she] then can make any kind of ornament out of it that [she] wishes. [21, 22] In the same way, one can direct one’s equanimity to the four immaterial states and realize that one could remain there for a long time. But this would be conditioned. If, disenchanted with even refined conditioned states, one does not form any condition or have any intention tending toward either being or non-being, then one is free and will personally attain Nibbāna. **QUOTE:** “He understands thus: ‘Birth is destroyed, the holy life has been lived, what had to be done has been done, there is no more coming to any state of being.’”
- d) [23] An **arahant** still experiences feeling. How does she or he experience feeling? By understanding “It is impermanent, there is no holding to it.” Detached, she or he knows feeling as terminating with the body, terminating with life. (Note 1281 says, “[An arahant] continues to experience feeling only as long as the body with its life faculty continues, but not beyond that.”)

**QUOTE and SIMILE [24]:** “On the dissolution of the body, with the ending of life, all that is felt, not being delighted in, will become cool right here. Bhikkhu, just as an oil-lamp burns in dependence on oil and a wick, and when the oil and wick are used up, if it does not get any more fuel, it is extinguished from lack of fuel...” The fuel here is the craving for sense pleasures (pleasurable feeling), and/or for being and non-being.

*[Ed: My interpretation of this section uses the translator’s Note 1273: Taking the equanimity that remains when one is not caught up and reacting to feeling, one directs that equanimity to the formless jhānas. When one understands that these are conditioned, one does not form any condition nor any intention toward being or non-being, and there is no clinging. When there is no clinging, there is no agitation. When there is no agitation, one can personally attain Nibbāna. So, in this interpretation, the release from clinging and agitation goes through the formless jhānas.*

*[19] says, “There remains only consciousness.” In the note, the word ‘remains’ is interpreted to mean, ‘as yet to be spoken about.’ This does not follow the progression into equanimity, when the Buddha says at the end of [20], “then there remains only equanimity.” I have an alternative interpretation of this section: After seeing the emptiness of elements, consciousness remains. With consciousness, one sees the arising and ceasing of feeling. One sees that the feeling arises dependent on contact, and ceases when the contact ceases. When this is seen, there is no clinging. “Then there remains only equanimity, purified and bright, malleable, wieldy and radiant.” Read in this way, this passage can be used to reflect on how this sequence appears in our own moment-to-moment experience, and becomes a powerful teaching for us.]*

2. [26] **Truth QUOTE:** “[One’s] deliverance, being founded upon truth, is unshakeable. For that is false, bhikkhu, which has a deceptive nature, and that is true which has an undeceptive nature—Nibbāna. Therefore, a bhikkhu possessing [this truth] possesses the supreme foundation of Truth...namely, Nibbāna, which has an undeceptive nature.”
3. [27] **Relinquishment**—of all attachments
4. [28] **Peace**—the supreme noble peace, namely pacification of lust (covetousness and desire), hate (anger and ill will) and delusion (ignorance)

[31] “I am” is conceiving. **QUOTE:** “By overcoming all conceivings, bhikkhu, one is called a sage at peace. And the sage at peace is not born, does not age, does not die; he is not shaken and is not agitated. For there is nothing present in him by which he might be born.”

## **PRACTICE**

Reflect on how the four foundations of wisdom, truth, relinquishment, and peace are manifesting in your life. Understand how this relates to the truth of non-clinging.

## 141 *Saccavibhaṅga Sutta* The Exposition of the Truths

### SUMMARY

Ven. Sāriputta gives a fairly detailed summary of the Four Noble Truths. There is a more detailed analysis in the *Mahāsatipaṭṭhāna Sutta* in the *Dīgha Nikāya* (DN22.18).

### NOTES

This is the standard brief summary of the Four Noble Truths. Sāriputta explains, point by point, each aspect of the Four Noble Truths.

[2] **QUOTE:** “The Tathāgata, accomplished and fully enlightened, set rolling the matchless Wheel of the Dharma, which cannot be stopped by any recluse or brahmin or god or Māra or Brahmā or anyone in the world...”

What is the **noble truth of suffering**? Birth is suffering; ageing is suffering; death is suffering; sorrow, lamentation, pain, grief, and despair are suffering; not to obtain what one wants is suffering; in short, the five aggregates affected by clinging are suffering.

What is **birth**? The birth of beings into the various orders of beings, their coming to birth, precipitation [in a womb], generation, the manifestation of the aggregates, obtaining the bases for contact.

What is **ageing**? The ageing of beings in the various orders of beings, their old age, brokenness of teeth, greyness of hair, wrinkling of skin, decline of life, weakness of faculties.

What is **death**? The passing of beings out of the various orders of beings, their passing away, dissolution, disappearance, dying, completion of time, dissolution of aggregates, laying down on of the body.

What is **sorrow**? The sorrow, sorrowing, sorrowfulness, inner sorrow, inner sorriness, of one who has encountered some misfortune or is affected by some painful state.

What is **lamentation**? The wail and lament, wailing and lamenting, bewailing and lamentation of one who has encountered some misfortune or is affected by some painful state.

What is **pain**? Bodily pain, bodily discomfort, painful, uncomfortable feeling born of bodily contact.

What is **grief**? Mental pain, mental discomfort, painful uncomfortable feeling born of mental contact.

What is **despair**? The trouble and despair, the tribulation and separation, of one who has encountered some misfortune or is affected by some painful state.

What are the **five aggregates affected by clinging** that, in short, are suffering? They are: the material form aggregate affected by clinging, the feeling aggregate affected by clinging, the perception aggregate affected by clinging, the formations aggregate affected by clinging, and the consciousness aggregate affected by clinging.



What is **the noble truth of the origin of suffering**? It is craving, which brings renewal of being, is accompanied by delight and lust, and delights in this and that; that is, craving for sensual pleasures, craving for being, and craving for non-being.

What is **the noble truth of the cessation of suffering**? It is the remainderless fading away and ceasing, the giving up, relinquishing, letting go and rejecting of that same craving.

What is **the noble truth of the way leading to the cessation of suffering**? It is just this Noble Eightfold Path, that is, right view, right intention, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness and right concentration.

What is **right view**? Knowledge of suffering, knowledge of the origin of suffering, knowledge of the cessation of suffering, and knowledge of the way leading to the cessation of suffering.

What is **right intention**? Intention of renunciation, intention of non-ill will, intention of non-cruelty.

What is **right speech**? Abstaining from false speech, from malicious speech, from harsh speech, and from idle chatter.

What is **right action**? Abstaining from killing living beings, from taking that what is not given, and from misconduct in sensual pleasures.

What is **right livelihood**? Here a noble disciple, having abandoned wrong livelihood, earns his living by right livelihood.

What is **right effort**? Here a bhikkhu awakens zeal for the non-arising of unarisen unwholesome states, and he makes effort, arouses energy, exerts his mind, and strives. He awakens zeal for the abandoning of arisen unwholesome states...awakens zeal for arising of unarisen wholesome states...awakens zeal for the continuance, non-disappearance, strengthening, increase, and fulfillment by development of arisen wholesome states, and he makes effort, arouses energy, exerts his mind, and strives. *[Ed: Ven. Thanissaro Bhikkhu points out that an alternative translation for "zeal" (chanda) here—one that Ven. Bhikkhu Bodhi uses in his translation of the Samyutta Nikāya—is "desire." Note that zeal for the practice is a wholesome desire.]*

What is **right mindfulness**? Here a bhikkhu abides contemplating the body as a body, feelings as feelings, mind as mind, mind-objects as mind-objects, ardent, fully aware, and mindful, having put away covetousness and grief for the world.

What is **right concentration**? The four jhānas. (See my notes for MN39.15-18.)

## 142 *Dakkhiṇāvibhaṅga Sutta* The Exposition of Offerings

### SUMMARY

The Buddha lists fourteen kinds of personal offerings that will bear fruit, and comments on the extent to which they might be fruitful. He also describes seven kinds of offerings one can make to the Sangha.

NO NOTES

### 143 *Anāthapiṇḍikovāda Sutta* Advice to Anāthapiṇḍika

#### SUMMARY

The householder Anāthapiṇḍika is on his deathbed and calls for Ven. Sāriputta, in whom he has full confidence. The venerable gives him a sermon on non-clinging in order to release him from his pain.

#### NOTES

Sāriputta tells the householder to train thus: not to cling to the six senses, the six objects of the senses, the six kinds of consciousness, the six kinds of contact, the six kinds of feeling, the six elements, the five aggregates, the bases of the four immaterial attainments; nor to the world, or to the world beyond.

[13] “I will not cling to this world, and my consciousness will not be dependent on this world. I will not cling to the world beyond and my consciousness will not be dependent on the world beyond.’ Thus you should train.”

[14] “I will not cling to what is seen, heard, sensed, cognized, encountered, sought after, and examined by the mind, and my consciousness will not be dependent on that.’ Thus you should train.”

*[Ed: Each section ends with, “...and my consciousness will not be dependent on \_\_\_\_\_.” This points to consciousness being free, not stuck, tied down, attached to nor dependent on any object.]*

[15] Before he dies, Anāthapiṇḍika advises Sāriputta to give such Dharma teachings to lay people clothed in white, for there are those with little dust in their eyes “wasting away through not hearing [such talk on] the Dharma.” This encouragement was necessary because the Buddha thought that such talk on complete detachment would not be appropriate for householders who have responsibilities.

### 144 *Channovāda Sutta* Advice to Channa

#### SUMMARY

This discourse is a short story about a bhikkhu, Ven. Channa, who is gravely ill and decides to commit suicide. Ven. Sāriputta and Ven. Mahā Cunda, the two monks who are with him just before he dies, believe that he is not an arahant and so give him a teaching on non-clinging. The Buddha later says that Channa was in fact an arahant and that, although he committed suicide, he incurred no karma.

#### NOTES

The interesting aspect of this discourse is that Channa committed suicide, and although there is some dispute in the commentaries about whether he was an arahant at the time of suicide, the Buddha declared the suicide blameless, which means no karma was incurred.

### **145 *Puṇṇovāda Sutta* Advice to Puṇṇa**

#### **SUMMARY**

This is a brief discourse and teaching by the Buddha to Puṇṇa, who decides to live among the fierce people of a remote territory. The Buddha tests his attitude toward those who may harm him, and Puṇṇa demonstrates the strength of his understanding.

#### **NOTES**

Each time the Buddha questions Puṇṇa as to what he would do if he were harmed in a more and more brutal way, Puṇṇa expresses gratitude that he did not get treated even more badly. Even when he considers having his life taken with a sharp knife, he says he will think thus: “There have been disciples of the Blessed One who, being humiliated and disgusted by the body and by life, sought to have their lives deprived by the knife. But I have had my life deprived by the knife without seeking for it.” The Buddha replies, “Good, Puṇṇa! Possessing such self-control and peacefulness, you will be able to dwell in [that place].”

*[Ed: This discourse displays the mastery one can have over one’s mind. Nevertheless, I am concerned that from stories such as this, someone could easily misinterpret the meaning and get the impression that Buddhist practice is life-denying.]*

#### **PRACTICE**

1. The next time you are in a troubling situation, notice whether you can bring enough mindfulness and wisdom to the experience to prevent the proliferation of thoughts of anger and ill will, and the consequent acting out in unskillful behavior. Consider how this is a skillful inclination of the mind that can lead to greater freedom and contentment. 2. Reflect on the difference between preventing thought and preventing feelings. Is preventing feeling skillful?

### **146 *Nandakovāda Sutta* Advice from Nandaka**

#### **SUMMARY**

Ven. Nandaka gives the bhikkhunis a discourse on impermanence. This is a standard discourse on this topic, with emphasis on the impermanence of feelings.

## NOTES

Reading about the monk, Nandaka, giving teachings to the nuns gives us a sweet sense of this historical time of the Buddha.

[9-12] This section emphasizes the impermanence of feeling: Each feeling arises in dependence upon its corresponding condition (eye-contact, ear-contact, etc.), and with the cessation of its corresponding condition, the feeling ceases. There are some very good **SIMILES** in this section.

[13] Nandaka teaches the seven enlightenment factors.

## 147 *Cūḷarāhulovāda Sutta* The Shorter Discourse of Advice to Rāhula

### SUMMARY

After the Buddha realizes that the states that ripen in deliverance have ripened in Ven. Rāhula, he decides to lead him on further to the destruction of the taints. This discourse is the teaching he gave to Rāhula. It is also a discourse on how impermanence relates to the six sense doors and the five aggregates.

### NOTES

[2] The Buddha sees that Rāhula has achieved the states that ripen in deliverance. Note 1324 explains these as **15 states that ripen**:

1. the five spiritual faculties—faith, energy, mindfulness, concentration and wisdom;
2. the five penetrative insights—into impermanence, suffering, not-self, abandoning and fading away;
3. the five things taught to Meghiya—noble friendship, virtue, beneficial discussion, energy, and wisdom (see also AN9:3 and Ud 4.1/36.)

This is what the teaching in this discourse implies:

The aggregate of material form includes the five senses (eye and form, ear and sounds, etc.). The other four aggregates (which are all mental aggregates) arise in relation to material form with contact as a condition. In other words, feeling, perception, mental formations, and consciousness arise with eye-contact, ear contact, etc., as a condition. Seeing that all this is impermanent and suffering, one cannot regard it as mine, I, or myself, and one becomes disenchanted, dispassionate. Through dispassion, one's mind is liberated. When one's mind is liberated, there comes the knowledge—it is liberated.

### PRACTICE

The advice from the Buddha again and again is to see that conditions arise and cease. In seeing the impermanent nature of conditions, one becomes disenchanted. Disenchantment (or detachment even) isn't practiced. What is practiced is investigating in the nature of conditions so that insight arises into the ungratifying nature of things. Seeing this, disenchantment (or detachment) comes of itself as a by-product of insight. Look and see for yourself whether this is true.

## 148 *Chachakka Sutta* The Six Sets of Six ❖

### SUMMARY

A profound and penetrating discourse on the contemplation of all the factors of sense experience as not-self.

### NOTES

[3-9] **The six sets of six** (This follows a standard formulation of dependent origination. This section contains a useful clarification of each of these categories):

Six internal bases: eye, ear, nose, tongue, body and mind-base

Six external bases: form, sound, odor, flavor, tangible, and mind-object-base

Six classes of consciousness: eye, ear, nose, tongue, body and mind-consciousness

Six classes of contact: Dependent on the internal and external bases consciousness arises. The meeting of the three is contact.

Six classes of feeling: With contact as a condition, there is feeling.

Six classes of craving: With feeling as a condition, there is craving.

[10] This is the format used for each of the sets of six: “If anyone says, ‘The eye is self,’ that is not tenable. The rise and fall of the eye are discerned, and since its rise and fall are discerned, it would follow: ‘My self rises and falls.’ That is why it is not tenable for anyone to say, ‘The eye is self.’ Thus the eye is not-self.” Note 1331 clarifies this passage: “The argument derives the principle of not-self from the verifiable premise of impermanence. The structure of the argument may be briefly set out thus: Whatever is self must be permanent; X is directly perceived to be impermanent, e.g., marked by rise and fall; therefore X is not-self.” [*Ed: Note that even craving is not-self, so the arising of craving does not denote the presence of a self.*]

[16-21] **The origin of identity**: “One regards the eye thus: ‘This is mine, this I am, this is my self.’ One regards forms thus...” (and so on through eye-consciousness, eye-contact, feeling, craving, and then through each of the other senses and mind). This is the origin.

[22-27] **The cessation of identity** is to regard each of the sets of six as: “This is not mine, this I am not, this is not my self.”

[28] **The underlying tendencies** (*anusaya*) “...dependent on the eye and forms, eye-consciousness arises; the meeting of the three is contact; with contact as condition there arises [a feeling] felt as [three kinds of feeling]. When one is touched by a pleasant feeling, if one delights in it...remains holding to it, then the underlying tendency to lust lies within one...” (the arising of holding shows the presence of the underlying tendency). With painful feeling, if one falls into sorrow, grief or becomes distraught, then the underlying tendency to aversion lies within one. With neutral feeling, if one does not understand as it actually is the origin, the disappearance, the gratification, the danger, and the escape in regard to that feeling, then the underlying tendency to ignorance lies within one.

*[Ed: When there is enough mindfulness, the lust, aversion or ignorance may not arise, yet the underlying tendencies are still there. This is why wisdom is so important. The Buddha clearly states here that the underlying tendency must be abolished.]*

[28] **QUOTE:** “Bhikkhus, that one shall here and now make an end of suffering without abandoning the underlying tendency to lust for pleasant feeling, without abolishing the tendency to aversion toward painful feeling, without extirpating [exterminating] the underlying tendency to ignorance in regard to [neutral] feeling, without abandoning ignorance and arousing true knowledge—this is impossible.”

[34] **Abandoning the underlying tendencies:** When one does not delight in and hold to the pleasurable; when one does not fall into sorrow, grief or become distraught toward the painful; and if one is touched by a neutral feeling and understands it as it actually is, then the underlying tendency does not lie within one.

[34] **QUOTE:** “Bhikkhus, that one shall here and now make an end of suffering by abandoning the underlying tendency to lust for pleasant feeling, by abolishing the underlying tendency to aversion toward painful feeling, by extirpating the underlying tendency to ignorance in regard to [neutral] feeling, by abandoning ignorance and arousing true knowledge—this is possible.” Training in this way will lead to disenchantment and dispassion (with all sets of six). This leads to liberation.

## **PRACTICE**

1. Read the six sets of six [3-9] over again, either quietly or out loud as a support to help you understand dependent origination. 2. Are there tendencies that you have had in the past that are clearly no longer present, tendencies that you can honestly say are finished? Allow this reflection to inspire faith in the possibility that all underlying tendencies that are now causing suffering can come to an end.

## **149 Mahāsaḷāyatana Sutta The Great Sixfold Base**

### **SUMMARY**

This brief discourse builds on the last one. It is a complete, clear, and direct discourse explaining the cause of suffering and its end. If one has wrong view about the six sense bases (not seeing things as they actually are with wisdom, which implies not seeing the three characteristics), then this leads to more suffering and the continuation of being. If one has right view, this leads to liberation.

## NOTES

[3] When one does not know and see the eye, forms, eye-consciousness, eye-contact, feeling as it actually is, then one is inflamed by lust for these things. (The other four sense bases and mind are referred to in [4-8].) When one abides inflamed by lust, infatuated, contemplating gratification, then the five aggregates affected by clinging are built up for oneself in the future, and one's craving, which brings renewal of being, is accompanied by delight and lust, and delight in this and that increases. One's bodily and mental troubles, torments and fevers increase, and one experiences bodily and mental suffering.

[9] When one knows and sees the eye as it actually is, then one is not inflamed by lust for these things. When one abides uninflamed by lust, uninfatuated, contemplating danger, then the five aggregates affected by clinging are diminished for oneself in the future; and one's craving, which brings renewal of being, is accompanied by delight and lust, and delight in this and that is abandoned, one's bodily and mental fevers are abandoned, and one experiences bodily and mental pleasure. (The other four sense bases and mind are referred to in [12-26].)

[10-11] The 37 requisites for enlightenment [*Ed: See my notes for MN151 for the use of this term.*] come to fulfillment in him by development. Serenity and insight occur in him. He fully understands by direct knowledge those things that should be fully understood by direct knowledge: the five aggregates affected by clinging. He abandons by direct knowledge those things that should be abandoned by direct knowledge: ignorance and craving for being. He develops those things that should be developed by direct knowledge: serenity and insight. He realizes by direct knowledge those things that should be realized by direct knowledge: true knowledge and deliverance.

## PRACTICE

Reflect on the phrase: "When one knows and sees the eye as it actually is..." What does this mean to you? This discourse is a clear instruction to have insight into each of the six sets of six (from the previous discourse). What do you actually know and see when you look into the five senses and mind in this way? How does seeing in this way lead to the end of suffering?

## 150 *Nagaravindeyya Sutta* To the Nagaravindans

### SUMMARY

A very short discourse where the Buddha tells a group of brahmin householders that they should venerate only those recluses who show a higher righteous conduct than themselves—those who are either rid of lust, hate and delusion, or are practicing for their removal. These recluses are likely practicing in jungle thickets where there are no forms, sounds, odors, flavors or tangibles to delight in. This is the evidence as to why they should be venerated.

**NO NOTES**

## **151 *Piṇḍapātapārisuddhi Sutta* The Purification of Almsfood**

### **SUMMARY**

The Buddha gives Ven. Sāriputta a teaching about how to purify oneself when on almsround. This contains another training list.

### **NOTES**

**A Review for Almsround.** When a bhikkhu has returned from wandering for alms, he should review in this way: (First, one should notice if the unwholesome states are present in one's mind, and second whether they are truly abandoned.)

1. Was there any lust, hate or delusion in my mind regarding the six sense doors? If there was, make effort to abandon the unwholesome mind states. If there wasn't, abide happily, training day and night in wholesome states. [3-8]
2. Are the five cords of sensual pleasure abandoned in me? If there are any remnants, make effort to abandon them. [9]
3. Are the five hindrances abandoned in me? [10]
4. Are the five aggregates affected by clinging fully understood by me? [11]

Note 1350 points out that the following section [12-18] refers to the **37 requisites for enlightenment**. The bhikkhu reviews whether each is developed. If not, he is encouraged to make an effort to develop them.

1. the four foundations of mindfulness [12]
2. four right kinds of striving [13]
3. four bases for spiritual power (zeal, energy, purity of mind and investigation) [14]
4. five faculties (faith, energy, mindfulness, concentration and wisdom) [15]
5. five powers (same as the five faculties) [16]
6. seven enlightenment factors [17]
7. Noble Eightfold Path [18]
8. Are serenity and insight developed in me? [19]
9. Are true knowledge and deliverance realized by me? [20]



At any stage, if a purifying factor is not developed, one makes an effort to develop it. If it is developed, one abides happily, training day and night in wholesome states. (Note 1351: The arahant has no need for further training, yet continues to cultivate serenity and insight in order to enter into the bliss of the jhānas, the fruition attainment of arahantship, and the cessation of perception and feeling.)

Note 1345 clarifies “true knowledge” as being the knowledge of the path of the arahant and “deliverance” as being the fruition attainment of the arahant. Because the beginning of the discourse states that Sāriputta was already an arahant, it seems unlikely that this was an instruction for him. Rather, it was an elaboration on what he already knew.

## **152 *Indriyabhāvanā Sutta* The Development of the Faculties ❖**

### **SUMMARY**

This is a useful discourse on the supreme development of the five sense faculties. Essentially, the Buddha describes how to control the mind’s reactivity to agreeable, disagreeable and indifferent formations so that one can be established in equanimity. The discourse contains many very good similes.

### **NOTES**

The Buddha is talking about **three levels of skill in the practice**:

1. The supreme development of the faculties [4-9]
2. A disciple in higher training [10]
3. A noble one with developed faculties [11-16]

Note 1352: “The expression ‘the development of the faculties’ properly signifies the development of the mind in responding to the objects experienced through the sense faculties.” In other words, one learns to control the mind so as not to grasp at the attractive or repulsive attributes of things. In the development, it is possible for insight to arise spontaneously in the course of sense perception.

[4-9] **How is there the supreme development of the faculties in the Noble One’s Discipline?** When one sees a form [sound, odor, flavor, tangible, mind-object ] with the eye [ear, nose, tongue, body, mind]), there arises in one what is agreeable, what is disagreeable, and what is both agreeable-and-disagreeable. One understands that this has arisen...that this is conditioned and dependently arisen. What is peaceful and sublime is equanimity. The agreeable, disagreeable, and the agreeable-and-disagreeable that arose cease and equanimity is established. This is called the supreme development of the faculties regarding forms [etc.] cognizable by the eye [etc.].

*[Ed: “Both agreeable and disagreeable” is the characteristic of an indifferent form. I find it interesting that it is not written as “neither agreeable nor disagreeable.” I think this is because contact with the form doesn’t agitate the mind and could therefore be considered pleasant or agreeable. Note 1353 identifies “both agreeable and disagreeable” with states of mind associated with an equanimous feeling, albeit dull indifference.]*

**SIMILES:** Notice how each of the similes is perfectly congruent with the sense base to which it is referring. By reflecting on each simile, it is possible to get a sense of what the Buddha is pointing to, (e.g., drops on the hot plate evaporating like thoughts). Each simile provides a good visualization theme for impermanence:

[4] Eye and forms: When one sees a form with the eyes, “Just as man with good sight, having opened his eyes might shut them, or having shut his eyes might open them,” so too concerning anything at all, the agreeable, disagreeable [and both] that arose, cease just as quickly, just as rapidly, just as easily, and equanimity is established.

[5] Ear and sounds: When one hears a sound with the ear, “Just as a strong man might easily snap his fingers,” so too concerning anything at all, the agreeable, disagreeable [and both] that arose, cease just as quickly, rapidly, easily, and equanimity is established.

[6] Nose and odors: When one smells an odor with the nose, “Just as raindrops on a slightly sloping lotus leaf roll off and do not remain there,” so too concerning anything at all, the agreeable, disagreeable [and both] that arose, cease just as quickly, rapidly, easily, and equanimity is established.

[7] Tongue and flavors: When one tastes a flavor with the tongue, “Just as a strong man might easily spit out a ball of spittle collected on the tip of his tongue,” so too concerning anything at all, the agreeable, disagreeable [and both] that arose, cease just as quickly, rapidly, easily, and equanimity is established.

[8] Body and tangibles: When one touches a tangible with the body, “Just as a strong man might extend his flexed arm, or flex his extended arm,” so too concerning anything at all, the agreeable, disagreeable [and both] that arose cease just as quickly, rapidly, easily, and equanimity is established.

[9] Mind and mind-objects: When one recognizes a mind-object with the mind, “Just as if a man were to let two or three drops of water fall onto an iron plate heated for a whole day, the falling of the drops might be slow but they would quickly vaporize and vanish.” So too concerning anything at all, the agreeable, disagreeable [and both] that arose, cease just as quickly, rapidly, easily, and equanimity is established.

[10] **How is one a disciple in higher training, one who has entered upon the way?** When one sees a form with the eye...hears a sound with the ear, etc. there arises in one what is agreeable, disagreeable, and what is both agreeable and disagreeable; one is ashamed, humiliated and disgusted by the agreeable, the disagreeable, and the agreeable and disagreeable that arose. Note 1357 points out that one feels this way because one experiences these as impediments to one’s progress and thus become disgusted by them.

[11-16] **How is one a noble one with developed faculties?** A noble one refers to an arahant. Note 1359 explains that an arahant has eradicated the defilements and their underlying tendencies. Although the three kinds of feeling still arise through contact, they arise without any subtle traces of liking, disliking or dull indifference.

The Buddha suggests **five methods to help one overcome clinging to forms**. Note 1360 expands on each:

1. To abide perceiving the unrepulsive in the repulsive. One pervades a repulsive being with loving-kindness, or a repulsive object (animate or inanimate) as a mere assemblage of impersonal elements.
2. To abide perceiving the repulsive in the unrepulsive. One sees a sensually attractive person with the idea of foulness of the body, or an attractive object (animate or inanimate) as impermanent. (These first two methods are the same as in MN20.3.)
3. To abide perceiving the unrepulsive in the repulsive and the unrepulsive.
4. To abide perceiving the repulsive in the unrepulsive and the repulsive. (Three and four refer to indifferent objects (agreeable-and-disagreeable), and for these one applies the first and second methods without discrimination.)
5. To abide avoiding both the repulsive and the unrepulsive. One avoids joy and sorrow in response to the six sense objects, thus enabling one to abide in equanimity, mindful and fully aware. (This is also taught in AN5:144/iii.169-70.)

## **PRACTICE**

One by one, take each of the similes and visualize the image the Buddha is portraying. Then, by directing your attention to the eye (or ear, or mind, etc.), see if you can directly experience the impermanent nature of each object that arises. Notice how this requires the absence of any kind of clinging.

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

**SHARDA ROGELL** began practicing meditation in 1976. After training with Jack Kornfield in 1985, she began teaching vipassana meditation in the Theravadin tradition, where she brings a strong emphasis to awakening heartfulness. She has also been influenced by the non-dual teachings of Dzogchen in the Tibetan tradition, as well as by Advaita Vedanta, stemming from her time in India, where she met H. W. L Poonja. She also taught with Christopher Titmuss for fifteen years. Sharda is a member of the teacher council at Spirit Rock Meditation Center in Woodacre, California, near her home, and is a student of A. H. Almaas in the Ridhwan School. She teaches worldwide.

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