

Samyutta Nikāya An Anthology Part I

by

John D. Ireland

Buddhist Publication Society
Kandy • Sri Lanka

The Wheel Publication No. 107

Copyright © 1981 Buddhist Publication Society

First edition: 1981

BPS Online Edition © (2008)

Digital Transcription Source: BPS Transcription Project

For free distribution. This work may be republished, reformatted, reprinted and redistributed in any medium. However, any such republication and redistribution is to be made available to the public on a free and unrestricted basis, and translations and other derivative works are to be clearly marked as such.

In this edition the titles of the suttas have been adopted from *The Connected Discourses of the Buddha*, translated by Bhikkhu Bodhi, except where Ireland used different terms like “arising” instead of “origination,” etc.

Contents

Introduction.....	4
Part One: The Verse Section (Sagāthā Vagga).....	1
SN 1:10: Forest.....	1
SN 1:11: Nandana.....	1
SN 1:12: Delight.....	2
SN 1:59: Good Companion.....	2
SN 1:63: Craving.....	2
SN 2:6: Kāmada.....	3
SN 3:4: Dear.....	4
SN 3:25: The Simile of the Mountain.....	5
SN 4:21: A Number.....	5
SN 5:8: Sīsūpacālā.....	6
SN 5:10: Vajirā.....	6
SN 6:14: Aruṇavati.....	7
SN 7:12: Udaya.....	8
SN 11:11: Vows.....	8
SN 11:19: The Worship of the Teacher (or Sakka’s Worship).....	9
Part Two: The Section on Causation (Nidāna Vagga).....	10
SN 12:1: Dependent Arising.....	10
SN 12:2: Analysis of Dependant Arising.....	11
SN 12:20: Conditions.....	12
SN 12:23 Proximate Cause (extract).....	13
SN 12:34: Cases of Knowledge 2.....	14
SN 12:61: Uninstructed.....	14
SN 12:65: The City (extract).....	15
SN 13:1: The Fingernail.....	16
SN 14:1: Inferior disposition.....	16
SN 14:16: With Verses.....	16
SN 15:9: The Stick.....	17
SN 15:14–19: Mother, father, brother, sister, son, daughter.....	17
SN 16:11 The Robe (extract).....	17
SN 17:1: Dreadful.....	17
SN 20:1: The Roof Peak.....	17
SN 20:3: Families.....	18
SN 20:7: The Drum Peg.....	18
SN 21:2: Upatissa.....	18
Part Three: The Section on the Aggregates (Khandha Vagga).....	20
SN 22:5: Concentration.....	20
SN 22:15: What is Impermanent.....	20
SN 22:18: Impermanent with cause.....	20
SN 22:23: Full Understanding.....	21
SN 22:26: Gratification.....	21
SN 22:33: Not Yours.....	22
SN 22:58: The Fully Enlightened One.....	22
SN 22:71: Rādha.....	23
SN 22:76: Arahants.....	23

SN 22:79: Being devoured.....	25
SN 22:94: Flowers.....	26
SN 22:95: A Lump of Froth.....	27
SN 22:100: The Leash.....	29
SN 22:101: The Adze-Handle.....	30
SN 22:102: Perception of Impermanence.....	30
SN 23:2: A Being.....	30
SN 27:10: Aggregates.....	31
Part Four: The Section on the Sixfold base (Saḷāyatana Vagga).....	32
SN 35:23: The All.....	32
SN 35:53: Abandoning Ignorance.....	32
SN 35:60: The Full Understanding of All Grasping.....	32
SN 35:71: The Six Bases of Contact.....	33
SN 35:84: Subject to Disintegration.....	33
SN 35:88: Puṇṇa.....	34
SN 35:135: The Opportunity.....	35
SN 35:188: The Ocean.....	36
SN 35:197: The Simile of the Vipers.....	36
SN 35:200: The Simile of the Great Log.....	38
SN 35:205: The Simile of the Lute.....	39
SN 36:4: The Bottomless Abyss.....	39
SN 38:1: A Question on Nibbāna.....	40
Part Five: The Great Section (Maha Vagga).....	41
SN 45:2: Half the Holy Life.....	41
SN 45:4: The Brahmin.....	41
SN 45:8: Analysis.....	42
SN 46:3: Virtue.....	43
SN 47:18: Brahma.....	44
SN 47:35: Mindful.....	45
SN 47:37: Desire.....	45
SN 48:9: Analysis.....	46
SN 52:9: All, or Ambapāli's Grove.....	46
SN 55:1: Wheel-Turning King.....	47
SN 55:16: Friends and Colleagues.....	48
SN 55:51: With Verses.....	48
SN 56:13: Aggregates.....	49
SN 56:35: A Hundred Spears.....	49
SN 56:38: The Sun.....	50

Introduction

The Saṃyutta Nikāya is one of the five great divisions of the Sutta Piṭaka of the Pāli canon, the Tipiṭaka or “Three Baskets” of doctrine, constituting the Buddha-word for Theravāda Buddhism. The meaning of “Saṃyutta Nikāya” is “The Collection of Grouped Discourses” and it is so called because its material is arranged into groups (*saṃyuttas*) according to subject, of which there are fifty-six. These again are placed into five *vaggas*, sections or chapters, corresponding to the five divisions of this anthology. In the Pāli Text Society’s complete edition (under the title *Kindred Sayings*) the whole work is contained in five volumes, covering over 1,650 pages, so it will be realized that this anthology is a very small selection indeed of the complete Saṃyutta Nikāya.

The present anthology differs from others that have appeared in that it is not arranged in any special order, merely following the order of the text itself, and that it is confined to just one part of the Pāli Tipiṭaka. As regards the choice of material, an attempt was made to make it as representative as possible of the whole collection, but personal preference could not be ignored. Choice tended to fall upon the more striking discourses, the avoidance of passages that were too repetitive and the inclusion of those that contained similes and parables, so profoundly illuminating and easily remembered.

John D. Ireland

Namo tassa bhagavato arahato sammāsambuddhassa

Part One: The Verse Section (Sagāthā Vagga)

SN 1:10: Forest

Thus have I heard. At one time the Lord was staying near Sāvattthī at the Jeta Grove in Anāthapiṇḍika’s monastery. Now when night was passing a certain devatā, lighting up the whole Jeta Grove with her surpassing beauty, approached the Lord. Having drawn near and prostrated herself she stood to one side.¹

Standing there the devatā said:

Those living in the forest,
Peaceful and calm, of pure life,
Eating but one meal a day:
How is it they appear so radiant?

The Lord replied:

They sorrow not for what is past,
They have no longing for the future,
The present is sufficient for them:
Hence it is they appear so radiant.
By having longing for the future,
By sorrowing over what is past,
By this fools are withered up
As a cut down tender reed.

SN 1:11: Nandana

“Once, Bhikkhus, a certain devatā of the Heaven of the Thirty-Three,² while wandering in the Nandana Grove surrounded by a group of celestial nymphs and possessing and enjoying the fivefold heavenly sense pleasures, recited at that time this verse:

They know no bliss who see not Nandana,
Abode of celestial beings, the glorious thirty-three!

“To these words another devatā retorted with this verse:

¹ A *devatā* (or *deva*) is an inhabitant of one of the several heavens. The word means “a shining one” and is related to the English words: deity, divinity, etc. The body of a devatā is purer and more subtle than a human being’s and radiates light. The period before dawn is the usual time for these beings to visit the Buddha, one of whose titles, it should be remembered, is *sattthā devamanussānaṃ*, the teacher of gods and men.

² The heaven of the Thirty-three Gods (*tāvatiṃsa*) belongs to the Sensuous Sphere (*kāmaāvacara*) and is ruled over by Sakka (Skt: Indra), their leader. These heavens of the Sensuous Sphere are the reward for good deeds done on earth (see no. 14). Although a celestial being’s life span is much longer than a human being’s, they are still subject to death and rebirth.

Fool, you know not the Arahants' saying:³
'Impermanent are all conditioned things,
Of a nature to arise and then decay.
Having arisen they soon cease;
To be relieved of them is bliss.'⁴

SN 1:12: Delight⁵

[Devatā:]

Possessing children one finds pleasure in them,
A herdsman is pleased with his cattle;
Man's possessions bring pleasure to him,
Without possessions he finds no pleasure.

[The Lord:]

Possessing children one grieves for them,
A herdsman grieves for his cattle;
Man's possessions bring grief to him,
Without possessions he has no grief.

SN 1:59: Good Companion

[Devatā:]

What is man's [good] companion?
What is it that instructs him?
And what enjoying is a mortal
From all suffering released?

[The Lord:]

Faith is man's (good) companion,
It is wisdom that instructs him,
And Nibbāna enjoying, a mortal
From all suffering is released.

SN 1:63: Craving

[Devatā:]

By what is the world led?
By what is it defiled?
And what is that one thing?
Controlled by which all follow?

[The Lord:]

³ Arahants are saints. Here it refers to the Buddhas, the Enlightened Ones or Awakened Ones.

⁴ This is a famous verse which was repeated by Sakka, the Lord of Devas, on the occasion of the Buddha's Passing-away (*parinibbāna*). See *The Wheel* No. 67/69, *Last Days of the Buddha*, p. 77.

⁵ The introduction to the verses here and in the next two texts is identical with Text No. 1.

The world is led by craving,
By craving it is defiled,
And craving is that one thing
Controlled by which all follow.”⁶

SN 2:6: Kāmada

... Standing at one side Kāmada Devaputta⁷ said to the Lord:

“It is difficult to do, Lord, very difficult to do!”

“Yet what is difficult to do they do –
Disciples⁸ virtuous with collected minds.
For those who enter in the homeless state
There is contentment bringing bliss.”

“It is difficult to attain, Lord, this contentment!”

“Yet what is difficult to attain they attain,
Those devoted to stilling the mind.
For them both day and night
The mind delights in meditation.”

“It is difficult, Lord, to concentrate the mind!”

“Yet on what is difficult to concentrate they concentrate,
Those devoted to controlling the senses.
Breaking through Death’s net, those
Noble Ones⁹ walk freely, Kāmada.”

“It is difficult, Lord, to go on an uneven path!”

“Yet along this uneven path they walk,
Those Nobles Ones, Kāmada.
On the uneven the ignoble fall headlong,
But the way is even for the Noble,
For over the uneven they walk evenly.”

SN 3:4: Dear

Thus have I heard. At one time the Lord was staying near Sāvattthī at the Jeta Grove in Anāthapiṇḍika’s monastery. Then the king Pasenadi of Kosala approached the Lord. Having drawn near and prostrated himself he sat down to one side. As he was sitting there, king Pasenadi said to the Lord:

⁶ In the discourse preceding this text in the Pāli original (not included here), the word “mind” (*citta*) is substituted for “craving.”

⁷ *Devaputta* means a son of a deva or a young (or new) celestial being. According to the commentary, Kāmada was a bhikkhu in the previous life. He was remorseful for not striving hard enough as a human being and the Buddha is gently chiding him for it.

⁸ “Disciple” stands for the Pāli term *sekha*, “a learner,” “one in Higher Training,” denoting those who have attained to the first three of the four stages of sanctitude, beginning with stream-entry (*sotāpatti*). He who has attained the fourth stage, the saint (*arahat*) is called *asekha*, “one beyond (the need for) training.”

⁹ The Noble Ones (*ariyā*) are the Buddhas, their Arahant disciples and the learners (*sekha*).

“When, Sir, I had retired and was alone this was the reflection that arose in my mind: Who loves himself? Who does not love himself? And then, Sir, I thought: Those who practice wrong conduct by body, speech and thought, they do not love themselves. Even though they should say, ‘We love ourselves,’ yet they do not love themselves. What is the reason? They do to themselves what a hater would do to someone he hates. Therefore they do not love themselves.

“But those who practice good conduct by body, speech and thought, they love themselves. Even though they should say, ‘We do not love ourselves,’ yet they do love themselves. What is the reason? They do to themselves what a friend would do to a friend. Therefore they love themselves.”

“So it is, O King, so it is ...¹⁰”

He who holds his own self dear,
With evil let him not be linked.
An evil-doer’s [short-lived] joy
Is not a bargain that is good.
Assaulted by the “Ender,¹¹” death,
And losing his humanity,¹²
What use for him is property
And what can he then take away?
What is it that will follow him
Like his own shadow never parting?

Both the good and evil deeds
Which a mortal here performs,
These are his property indeed
That he will take away with him.
His deeds will follow after him
Like his own shadow never parting.
Hence noble deeds should be performed,
A storing for the future life.
Good deeds will in the world beyond
Bestow on beings goodly help.”

SN 3:25: The Simile of the Mountain

[Addressed to King Pasenadi of Kosalā]

“What do you think, O King? Suppose a loyal and reliable man were to come from the east and, approaching you, should say: ‘Your majesty, you should know I have come from the east and there saw a great mountain as tall as the sky, moving forward and crushing all living creatures in its path. Do whatever you deem right, sire.’

“And then a second man were to come from the west ... a third from the north ... a fourth from the south and, approaching you, should say: ‘Your majesty, you should know I have come from the south and there saw a great mountain as tall as the sky, moving forward and

¹⁰ The Buddha repeats King Pasenadi’s reasonings and adds the verses. The whole then becomes a saying of the Buddha.

¹¹ “The Ender” (*antakara*, “end-maker”) is Māra or death personified.

¹² In Buddhism a human birth is regarded as the result of former good acts; it is difficult to obtain because few beings have predominantly good kamma and is valuable because it is from here that one may best work for enlightenment.

crushing all living creatures in its path. Do whatever you deem right, sire.’

“And in such a situation, O King, when a great danger of terrible destruction to human life has arisen and when considering that a human birth is so difficult to obtain,¹³ what is it you could do?”

“In such a situation, Sir, a great danger of terrible destruction to human life having arisen and a human birth being so difficult to obtain, what else could be done but to practice Dhamma,¹⁴ to live calmly, to do good and to make merit.”

“I tell you, O King, I put it to you: old age and death will come upon you. Since old age and death are coming what is it you can do?”

“Since old age and death are coming upon me what else can be done but to practice Dhamma, to live calmly, to do good and to make merit?”

SN 4:21: A Number

Thus have I heard. At one time the Lord was staying among the Sakyas at Silāvati and a large number of Bhikkhus were dwelling close by, diligent and energetic, devoting themselves [to the practice of meditation].

Now Māra, the evil one,¹⁵ assuming the appearance of a brāhmaṇa, with a great pile of matted hair on his head and wearing a leopard-skin cloak, an old man, bent like a roof-beam, breathing heavily and grasping an udumbara-wood staff approached those Bhikkhus and said:

“You ascetics are still boys! Young and black-haired, in the flush of youth! You are in the prime of life and have not yet amused yourselves with [worldly sensual] pleasures. Enjoy [natural] human pleasures, goods sirs! Do not abandon what is visible here and now and run after distant things.”

“We have not abandoned what is visible here and now, brāhmaṇa, nor are we running after distant things. We have abandoned what is distant and run towards what is visible here and now. The Lord has said [worldly] pleasures are distant [of uncertain result], produce much suffering and despair and are a continual disappointment. But this Dhamma is visible here and now, immediate [in result], inviting one to come and see, guiding one onward and capable of being experienced by the wise.¹⁶”

When they had so spoken, Māra, the evil one, departed shaking his head, lolling out his tongue, frowning and leaning on his staff. Then those Bhikkhus approached the Lord ... [and told him all that had occurred and thereupon the Lord said:]

“That was no brāhmaṇa, Bhikkhus, that was Māra, the evil one, come to cloud your clarity of vision.”

¹³ See Note 12.

¹⁴ Here the word “Dhamma” means “truth” or “righteousness.”

¹⁵ Māra, the evil one, is the personification of those things which deflect one from the purpose of gaining Enlightenment. He can either be taken literally or interpreted symbolically. Nevertheless he is a very real obstacle to many when they reach a certain stage in their progress on the path.

¹⁶ This is the standard definition of the Dhamma as doctrine. It is difficult to reproduce Māra’s argument and the reply in translation. There is a play on the meaning of the words *kālika* (temporal), translated as “distant,” and *akālika*, immediate, timeless, or transcendent. Māra is trying to make the monks believe that they are wasting their time, that Nibbāna is something distant and vague, or nonexistent, and not worth bothering about. He is trying to confuse them with his words and also his appearance, for an elderly brāhmaṇa should be one to command respect and be an authority on religious matters.

Then the Lord, having realized the meaning of it, spoke at that time this verse:

Who suffering and its source has seen
How could such a being look to pleasures?
Knowing attachment¹⁷ as a bondage in the world
A being should train himself for its removal.

SN 5:8: Sīsupacālā

In the Sakya-clan was born
A Buddha, an Unequaled one,
Conquering all, defeating Māra
In every place unvanquished he.

Completely free and unattached,
One with vision, seeing all,
Come to exhaustion of all *kamma*,¹⁸
By destruction of attachment¹⁹ freed.

That Lord is my teacher,
Of his teaching I approve.

SN 5:10: Vajirā

At Sāvattthī. Now the Bhikkhunī²⁰ Vajirā, having robed herself and taken her bowl and upper robe, entered Sāvattthī before noon to collect food. Having wandered through Sāvattthī and returned after her meal, she entered the Andha Grove and sat down at the foot of a certain tree to rest during the heat of midday. Then Māra, the evil one, approached the Bhikkhunī Vajirā and, desiring to cause fear and consternation, to make her hair stand on end and cause her to fall away from concentration of mind, addressed her with this verse:

“By whom was this being made?
Where is the maker of the being?
From where does a being arise?
Where does a being cease?”

Then the Bhikkhunī Vajirā thought, “Who is this human or non-human being who speaks this verse?” And then she thought, “It is Māra, the evil one, desiring to cause me fear and consternation, to make my hair stand on end and cause me to fall away from concentration of mind.” So the Bhikkhunī Vajirā, realizing that it was Māra, the evil one, replied to him in verse:

“A being! Why seize upon this word?
A wrong view Māra surely has?
A mere heap of conditions this,
Where no “being” can be found.

¹⁷ *Upadhi*, the basis for rebirth and suffering in the future.

¹⁸ Actions, good and bad, leading to a future result.

¹⁹ *Upadhi* — see Note 17.

²⁰ *Bhikkhunī* is the designation for nuns in the Buddhist Order.

As when, with all its parts assembled,
'Chariot' is the word then used,
So when the aggregates²¹ exist
One speaks of 'being' by convention.

"It is just suffering that arises,
Suffering that stays and disappears.
Nothing but suffering arises,
Suffering ceases and nothing else."²²

And Māra, the evil one, thinking, "The Bhikkhunī Vajirā recognizes me," vanished away,
grieved and dejected.²³

SN 6:14: Aruṇavati

Make an effort and renounce!
Be devoted to the Buddha's teaching!
Shake off Death's²⁴ army as an elephant
Tosses aside a hut of reeds.

Whoever in this Dhamma-discipline
Should with diligence abide,
Will, the round of births forsaking,
Make an end of suffering here.

SN 7:12: Udaya

Again and again they sow the seed,
Again and again the sky-king rains,
Again and again do farmers plow the field,
Again and again the land produces grain.

Again and again do beggars come and beg,
Again and again the liberal donors give,
Again and again just by the donors' giving,
Again and again they come to the heavenly state.

Again and again they milk the herds,
Again and again the calf goes to its mother,
Again and again one wearies and one toils,
Again and again the stupid come to birth.

Again and again one is born and dies,
Again and again one is carried to the cemetery,
But by gaining the path for not-again-becoming,²⁵
Not again and again is a man of wisdom born.

²¹ For the aggregates (*khandhā*) see Part Three.

²² These famous and often quoted verses demonstrate the Buddhist doctrine of *anattā*, not-self or impersonality. They avoid the extreme view of nihilism, it is important to note, of which Buddhism is sometimes wrongly accused: it is not a "being" which ceases, but merely suffering—a subtle difference!

²³ Māra is defeated when he is recognized for what he is.

²⁴ Or Māra in his aspect of Lord of the (spiritually) Dead.

²⁵ Non renewal of existence or no rebirth.

SN 11:11: Vows

Formerly, Bhikkhus, when Sakka, Lord of the devas, was a human being, he undertook to practice unremittingly seven rules of conduct, by reason of which he attained his position of honor. What seven?

As long as I live may I support my mother and father;

As long as I live may I respect the elders of my family;

As long as I live may I speak kindly and gently;

As long as I live may I not speak maliciously;

As long as I live may I dwell in my house with my mind free from the taint of selfishness, generous, open-handed, pleased to relinquish [possessions], accessible to entreaties, enjoying giving and sharing with others;

As long as I live may I speak truthfully;

As long as I live may I control my anger and if anger arises in me may I quickly dispel it.

SN 11:19: The Worship of the Teacher (or Sakka's Worship)

He who is perfectly Enlightened
Here in this world with all its gods,
The teacher honored above all—
Him I revere, O Mātali.²⁶

He in whom thoughts of greed and hate
And ignorance are out away—
All taints²⁷ destroyed, the Arahant—
Him I adore, O Mātali.

Those with greed and hate dispelled,
Those overcoming ignorance,
Disciples,²⁸ not gathering attachments,
But training with all diligence—
Those I revere, O Mātali.

²⁶ Mātali is Sakka's companion and charioteer.

²⁷ There are four taints or *āsavā*, literally, outflows or leakages or dissipations of energy: sensual desire, desire for continuation of existence (becoming), (wrong) views, and unknowing or ignorance.

²⁸ See Note 8.

Part Two: The Section on Causation (Nidāna Vagga)

SN 12:1: Dependent Arising

The Lord said: “Bhikkhus, I will teach you Dependent Arising,²⁹ listen and attend carefully and I will speak.”

“Yes, Sir,” those Bhikkhus replied to the Lord.

The Lord said: “Now what, Bhikkhus, is Dependent Arising? With ignorance as condition, Bhikkhus, volitional activities come to be; with volitional activities as condition, consciousness comes to be; with consciousness as condition, mind-and-body come to be; with mind-and-body as condition, the sixfold sense-field comes to be; with the sixfold sense-field as condition, contact comes to be; with contact as condition, feeling comes to be; with feeling as condition, craving comes to be; with craving as condition, grasping comes to be; with grasping as condition, becoming comes to be; with becoming as condition, birth comes to be; with birth as condition, aging and death, sorrow, lamentation, pain, grief and despair come to be. That is how there is an origin to this whole mass of suffering. And this, Bhikkhus, is called Dependent Arising.

“But from the complete disappearance and cessation of ignorance, volitional activities cease; from the cessation of volitional activities, consciousness ceases; from the cessation of consciousness, mind-and-body ceases; from the cessation of mind-and-body, the sixfold sense-field ceases; from the cessation of the sixfold sense-field contact ceases; from the cessation of contact feeling ceases; from the cessation of feeling, craving ceases; from the cessation of craving, grasping ceases; from the cessation of grasping, becoming ceases; from the cessation of becoming, birth ceases; from the cessation of birth, aging-and-death, sorrow, lamentation, pain, grief and despair cease.³⁰ That is how there is a ceasing of this whole mass of suffering.”

²⁹ The doctrine of *paticca samuppāda*, dependent arising, dependent origination, conditioned genesis or co-production, as it is variously rendered in translation, is the central and most profound teaching of Buddhism, and unique to it. It is the key to understanding the Buddha’s teaching and one might say that one’s depth of understanding of the *paticca samuppāda* is equivalent to one’s depth of understanding of Buddhism. By obtaining at least an intellectual grasp of its principles everything else should automatically fall into place and to have a full understanding of it implies one would be fully Enlightened. Broadly speaking it is the doctrine of the conditionality of all the phenomena of existence, physical, mental and moral. It shows how everything in the universe arises, is supported and passes away dependent upon a variety of conditioning factors, which themselves are likewise dependent upon other factors. Nothing can exist independently, unrelated to and unaffected by the other phenomena in its environment.

³⁰ Buddhism, being practical uses this principle specifically to show the origin of suffering and its cessation by the removal of its causative and supportive conditions. For this purpose twelve conditioning factors are enumerated beginning with ignorance and defined in text 17. Traditionally the twelve factors are regarded as spread over the three periods of time or past, present and future lives, and fall into groups as being active or causative and passive or resultant. There are two past active factors, ignorance and volitional activities (factors 1 and 2), giving rise to their results in this life, consciousness, mind-and body, the sixfold sense-field, contact and feeling (factors 3-7). Craving, grasping, and becoming (factors 8 to 10) are the present causative factors with their results in a future life, represented by birth and aging-and-death, etc. (factors 11 and 12). See *Dependent Origination*, by Piyadassi Thera (*The Wheel* No. 15 a/b).

SN 12:2: Analysis of Dependant Arising

“Now what, Bhikkhus, is aging-and-death?”

“That which, for these and those beings, in this and that group of beings, is aging, becoming old, decayed-ness, graying of the hair, wrinkling of the skin, drawing to an end of the life-span, failing of the sense-faculties: this is called aging.

“That which, for these and those beings, in this and that group of beings, is passing away, breaking up, disappearance, mortality and dying, making an end, the separation of the aggregates, the casting away of the body: this is called death. This is aging and this is death and these, Bhikkhus, are called aging-and-death.

“And what, Bhikkhus, is birth?”

“That which, for these and those beings, in this and that group of beings, is birth, being born, conception, reproduction, the appearing of the aggregates, the acquiring of the [sense] bases: this, Bhikkhus, is called birth.

“And what, Bhikkhus, is becoming?”

“There are these three becomings: sensuous [-realm] becoming, form [-realm] becoming and formless [-realm] becoming. This, Bhikkhus, is called becoming.³¹

“And what, Bhikkhus, is grasping?”

“There are these four grasping: grasping at sense objects, grasping at [wrong] views, grasping at rituals and observances³² and grasping at a soul-theory.³³ This, Bhikkhus, is called grasping.

“And what, Bhikkhus, is craving?”

“There are these six groups of craving: craving for visible objects, sounds, scents, tastes, tangible objects, and objects of mind. This, Bhikkhus is called craving.

“And what, Bhikkhus, is feeling?”

“There are these six groups of feeling born of eye-contact and mind-contact, ear-contact, nose-contact, tongue-contact, bodily-contact and mind-contact. This, Bhikkhus, is called feeling.

“And what, Bhikkhus, is contact?”

“There are these six groups of contact: eye-contact, ear-contact, nose-contact, tongue-contact, bodily-contact and mind-contact. This, Bhikkhus, is called contact.

“And what, Bhikkhus, is the sixfold sense-field?³⁴

³¹ The word “becoming” is used for the Pāli *bhava*, rather than “being” or “existence.” The latter words are too static to bring out the meaning which is essentially dynamic. Perhaps “evolving” might be better. It is the unfolding of the effects of past actions (*kamma*) and the production of new actions. In Buddhism the universe is classified into three realms: (a) the sensuous realm comprising the hells, the animal, ghost, and human worlds and six heavenly or deva worlds; (b) the form realm, a subtler kind of existence enjoyed by the Brahma-gods; and (c) the formless realm, the beings of which do not have material bodies.

³² *Silabbata*, an outward show of ritualism and religious observances, such as ritual bathing, fasting, etc., thinking they will bring purity and release of themselves.

³³ *Attavāda*: belief in an eternal and unchanging ego-entity, either included in or independent of mind and body.

³⁴ *Āyatana*, sphere of sense, basis for sensation. There are twelve *āyatanas* altogether: the five sense organs, their respective objects, and the mind, which is regarded as a sense-organ, its object being ideas

“Eye-base, ear-base, nose-base, tongue-base, tactile-base and mind-base. This, Bhikkhus, is called the sixfold sense-field.

“And what, Bhikkhus, is mind-and-body?

“Feeling, perception, volition, contact and attention: this is called mind. The four great elements³⁵ and the material form assumed by the four great elements: this is called mind-and-body.

“And what, Bhikkhus, is consciousness?

“There are these six groups of consciousness: eye-consciousness, ear-consciousness, nose-consciousness, tongue-consciousness, body-consciousness and mind-consciousness. This, Bhikkhus, is called consciousness.

“And what, Bhikkhus, are volitional activities?

“There are these three volitional activities: a volitional activity of the body, a volitional activity of speech, a volitional activity of mind. These, Bhikkhus, are called volitional activities.³⁶

“And what, Bhikkhus, is ignorance?

“Whatever is absence of knowledge³⁷ into suffering, the origin of suffering, the cessation of suffering and the way leading to cessation of suffering. This, Bhikkhus, is called ignorance.”

SN 12:20: Conditions

“I will teach you dependent arising, Bhikkhus, and phenomena (*dhamma*) that are dependently arisen ...

“Now what, Bhikkhus, is Dependent Arising?

“With birth as condition, aging-and-death comes to be. Whether Tathāgatas³⁸ appear or do not appear, this nature of things continues, this relatedness of phenomena, this regularity of phenomena, this law of conditionality. A Tathāgata fully awakens and penetrates to it. Having fully awakened and penetrated to it, he announces it, teaches it, makes it known, presents it, discloses it, analyzes it, and explains it. ‘See’ he says, ‘with birth as condition, aging-and-death comes to be. With becoming as condition, birth comes to be.’ Whether Tathāgatas appear or do

or thoughts.

³⁵ The four great elements or qualities of matter are:

- i. the earth-element, solidity, extension in space;
- ii. the water-element, cohesion, building matter into mass;
- iii. the fire-element, temperature either hot or cold, maturing;
- iv. the air-element, motion, vibration.

³⁶ “Volitional activity” is an interpretative rather than a literal translation of the word *saṅkhāra*, an important technical term in Buddhist literature. The word means: formation, construction, determinant; either in the active sense of forming or putting together, or passively as what has been formed, put together or compounded. In this context the first meaning in the sense of active, kammic volitions, is intended.

³⁷ Knowledge (*ñāṇa*) is the understanding arising from training in meditation. It refers specifically to the knowledge gained on entering one of the stages of sanctity: stream-entry, once-returning, never-returning and *arahatta* or final emancipation.

³⁸ “Tathāgata” is a title of the Buddha. It means, “One who has thus (*tathā*) come (*āgata*) or gone (*gata*)” to Enlightenment, as former Buddhas have done, or, “One who has arrived at (*āgata*) the Truth (*tatha*).” In the Pāli scriptures the word is mostly used by the Buddha when referring to himself.

not appear ...

“...‘See,’ he says, ‘With ignorance as condition, volitional activities come to be.’

“So, Bhikkhus, that which herein is a reality and not an unreality and not otherwise, this law of conditionality—this, Bhikkhus, is called Dependent Arising.

“Now what, Bhikkhus, are dependently arisen phenomena?

“Aging-and-death, Bhikkhus, is impermanent, conditioned, dependently arisen; of a nature to decay, to pass away, to be destroyed and to cease.

“Birth ... becoming ... grasping ... ignorance, Bhikkhus, is impermanent, conditioned, dependently arisen; of a nature to decay, to pass away, to be destroyed and to cease. These, Bhikkhus, are called dependently arisen phenomena.

“When a noble disciple has well seen this dependent arising and those dependently arisen phenomena according to actuality with perfect wisdom, it does not occur to him that he should run back to the past, saying ‘Did I exist in the past?’ ‘Did I not exist in the past?’ ‘What was I in the past?’ ‘What was I like in the past?’ ‘Having been what, what did I become in the past?’

“Nor that he should run ahead to the future, saying, ‘Shall I exist in the future?’ ‘Shall I not exist in the future,’ ‘What shall I be in the future?’ ‘What shall I be like in the future?’ ‘Being what, what shall I become in the future?’

“Nor that he should now in the present have doubts within himself, saying, ‘Am I?’ ‘Am I not?’ ‘What am I?’ ‘What am I like?’ ‘This being [that is, myself], where did it come from, where will it go to?’

“What is the reason? It is because the noble disciple has well seen this dependent arising and these dependently arisen phenomena according to actuality with perfect wisdom.

SN 12:23 Proximate Cause (extract)

“Bhikkhus, when it is raining heavily on a mountain-top the water, flowing down the slope, fills the mountain grottos, clefts and gullies, these being filled the small hollows are filled, these being filled the lakes are filled, these being filled the streams are filled, these being filled the large rivers are filled, these being filled the great sea, the ocean, is filled.

“Similarly, Bhikkhus, ignorance is the condition³⁹ for volitional activities, volitional activities are the condition for consciousness, consciousness is the condition for mind-and-body, mind-and-body is the condition for the sixfold sense-field, the sixfold sense-field is the condition for contact, contact is the condition for feeling, feeling is the condition for craving, craving is the condition for grasping, grasping is the condition for becoming, becoming is the condition for birth, birth is the condition for suffering, suffering is the condition for faith, faith is the condition for gladness, gladness is the condition for joy,⁴⁰ joy is the condition for tranquility, tranquility is the condition for bliss, bliss is the condition for concentration,⁴¹ concentration is the condition for knowledge and clear-seeing according to actuality, knowledge and clear-seeing according to actuality is the condition for disenchantment,⁴² disenchantment is the condition for detachment, detachment is the condition for liberation and liberation is the

³⁹ *Uparisā*: support, cause, means, reason, condition, motive.

⁴⁰ *Pīti*: joy, rapture, ecstasy, thrilling pleasure. It is an important factor that arises in meditation practice.

⁴¹ *Samādhi*: concentration, unification or one-pointedness of mind.

⁴² *Nibbidā*: the state of ceasing to be infatuated with conditioned existence

condition for knowledge of exhaustion.”⁴³

SN 12:34: Cases of Knowledge 2

“Bhikkhus, I will teach you the seventy-seven sources of knowledge ... Now, what, Bhikkhus, are the seventy-seven?

“The knowledge that aging-and-death is conditioned by birth; the knowledge that there being no birth there is no aging-and-death; the knowledge that in the past aging-and-death was conditioned by birth; the knowledge that had there been no birth there would have been no aging-and-death; the knowledge that in the future aging-and-death will be conditioned by birth; the knowledge that if there is no birth there will be no aging-and-death; the knowledge that whatever there is of knowledge concerning the relatedness of phenomena, this is also of a nature to decay, to pass away, to be destroyed and to cease.”⁴⁴

SN 12:61: Uninstructed

“An uninstructed ordinary person, Bhikkhus, might well be dispassionate towards this body, made of the four great elements, might well detach himself and be released from it. For what reason? It is seen how this body grows and decays, is taken up and laid aside. Therefore an uninstructed ordinary person might well be dispassionate toward it, might well detach himself and be released from it. But this, Bhikkhus, which is called mind, is called thought, is called consciousness—towards this an uninstructed ordinary person is not able to be dispassionate, is not able to be detached and released. What is the reason? For a long time this has been that with which he identifies himself, to which he has been attached and has held on to, thinking, ‘This is mine,’ ‘I am this,’ ‘This is myself.’ Therefore an uninstructed ordinary person is not able to be dispassionate towards it, to be detached and released from it.

“It would be better, Bhikkhus, if an uninstructed ordinary person regarded this body, made of the four great elements, as himself rather than the mind. For what reason? This body is seen to continue for a year, for two years, five years, ten years, twenty years, fifty years, a hundred years and even more. But of that which is called mind, is called thought, is called consciousness, one moment arises as another ceases continually both day and night. Just as a monkey wandering in a big forest seizes a branch and letting go of it seizes another: similarly, Bhikkhus, of that which is called mind, is called thought, is called consciousness, one moment arises as another ceases continually both day and night.

“Now as to this, Bhikkhus, the instructed noble disciple gives well reasoned attention to the dependent arising thus: this being, that is; from the arising of this, that arises, this not being, that is not; from the ceasing of this, that ceases.

“That is to say, with ignorance as condition, volitional activities come to be; with volitional activities as condition, consciousness comes to be ... That is how there is an origin of this whole mass of suffering. But from the complete disappearance and cessation of ignorance, volitional activities cease ... That is how there is the ceasing of this whole mass of suffering.

⁴³ Knowledge of exhaustion (*khaye-nāya*) is the knowledge of final liberation of the Arahant or Perfected One, expressed in the words: “Exhausted (finished) is birth, lived is the holy life, done is what had to be done, there is no more of this or that state” (cf. text no. 21).

⁴⁴ By applying the seven categories to each of the other ten stages of the formula of dependent arising the sources of knowledge total seventy-seven.

“So seeing, Bhikkhus, the instructed noble disciple is dispassionate towards body, feeling, perception, mental activities and consciousness.⁴⁵ Being dispassionate he detaches himself, being detached he is released and in release is the knowledge of being released and he knows: Finished is birth, lived is the holy life, done is what had to be done, there is no more of this or that state.

SN 12:65: The City (extract)

“Bhikkhus, it is just as if a person wandering through the jungle, the great forest, should see an ancient path, an ancient road, traveled along by men of former times. And as if he should go along it and going along it should see an ancient town, an ancient royal city, inhabited by men of former times, having parks, groves, ponds and walls—a delightful place. And then that person should inform the King or the King’s chief minister, saying, ‘My lord you should know that when wandering through the jungle, the great forest, I saw an ancient path, an ancient road, traveled along by men of former times. I went along it and saw an ancient town, an ancient royal city inhabited by men of former times, having parks, groves, ponds and walls—a delightful place. Sire, rebuild that city.’ And then the king or the king’s chief minister were to rebuild that city, so that in time it became rich, prosperous and well populated, expanded and developed.

“So also, Bhikkhus, have I seen an ancient path, an ancient road, traveled along by fully Enlightened Ones of former times. And what, Bhikkhus, is that ancient path, that ancient road, traveled along by fully Enlightened Ones of former times? It is just this Noble Eightfold Path, that is to say, right view, right thought, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness, and right concentration.

“This is that ancient path, that ancient road, traveled along by fully Enlightened Ones of former times, and going along it I came to know aging-and-death, I came to know the origin of aging-and-death, I came to know the cessation of aging-and-death, I came to know the way leading to cessation of aging-and-death. Going along it I came to know birth ... becoming ... grasping ... craving ... I came to know volitional activities, I came to know the origin of volitional activities, I came to know the cessation of volitional activities, I came to know the line of conduct leading to cessation of volitional activities.

“Having understood it [through personal experience] I have taught it to the Bhikkhus, the Bhikkhunīs, the male and female lay-followers, so that this holy life has become rich, prosperous and wide-spread, known to many, widely known and announced by devas and men.

SN 13:1: The Fingernail

Thus have I heard. At one time the Lord was staying near Sāvattthī, at the Jeta Grove in Anāthapiṇḍika’s monastery. Then the Lord, taking up a little dust on the tip of his nail, said “What do you think, Bhikkhus, which is greater? This little dust on the tip of my nail or the great earth?”

“This great earth is surely greater, sir. Compared with it the little dust on the tip of the Lord’s nail is insignificant, it does not amount to a hundredth part, a thousandth part, a

⁴⁵ These are the five aggregates (*khandhā*) constituting the whole of phenomenal existence (see Part Three).

hundred thousandth part, set beside the great earth.”

“Even so, Bhikkhus, for a noble disciple who has [right] view, for a person possessing realization, this is the greater suffering: that which is completely finished and exhausted. Insignificant is what is left over set beside the former heap of suffering that is completely finished and exhausted, it does not amount to a hundredth part, a thousandth part, a hundred thousandth part—[being born again merely] seven times at the most.

“So great a gain, Bhikkhus, is realization of the Dhamma, so great a gain is to it to obtain Dhamma-vision.”⁴⁶

SN 14:1: Inferior disposition

“It is through having like qualities, Bhikkhus, that beings associate and meet together. Beings of inferior disposition associate and meet with beings of inferior disposition. Beings of virtuous disposition associate and meet with beings of virtuous disposition. It was so in the past, it will be so in the future and it is so now.”

SN 14:16: With Verses

Craving born of keeping company
Is by non-association severed.
As one embarking on a plank
Would be in the ocean drowned,
Even so a good man sinks
By going with a lazy person.
Therefore should he be shunned,
A lazy one, of little energy.
With noble persons, those secluded,
Giving themselves to meditation,
Ever strenuous, energetic, wise,—
With these he should consort.

SN 15:9: The Stick

“Just as a stick thrown up into the air sometimes falls on its butt, sometimes on its side, and sometimes on its tip: similarly, Bhikkhus, do beings obstructed by ignorance and fettered by craving migrate and go the round of births. At one time going from this world to another world and at another time coming from another world to this world. What is the reason?

“Unimaginable, Bhikkhus, is a beginning to the round of births [and deaths]. For beings obstructed by ignorance and fettered by craving migrating and going the round of births a starting point is not evident. Thus for a long time, Bhikkhus have you experienced suffering, pain and destruction and the cemeteries have grown. Long enough for you to have become dispassionate towards all conditioned things, long enough for you to have become detached and released from them.”

⁴⁶ This discourse refers to the attainment of stream-entry, the first stage of sanctity, where a disciple is unable to fall away and is assured of deliverance. A stream-enterer is born into a state of conditioned existence only seven more times at outside before realizing final liberation.

SN 15:14–19: Mother, father, brother, sister, son, daughter

“Unimaginable, Bhikkhus, is a beginning to the round of births. For beings obstructed by ignorance and fettered by craving migrating and going the round of births a starting point is not evident. It is not easy, Bhikkhus, to find a being who has not formerly been one’s mother ... been one’s father ... one’s brother ... sister ... son ... daughter during this long, long time.”

SN 16:11 The Robe (extract)

“Therefore, Kassapa, you should train yourself thus: ‘Keen shame and dread [of wrongdoing] should be present among elders, new Bhikkhus and those of middle-standing.’

“... Whatever Dhamma-teaching I should hear, bearing upon what is skillful and good, I will listen to all of it with interest and attention and with concentrated mind give ear to it.’

“... Mindfulness of the body, giving ease and comfort, should not be forsaken by me.’

“Thus should you train yourself, Kassapa.”

SN 17:1: Dreadful

“Disastrous, Bhikkhus, are gain, honor and fame, a bitter, severe danger to the attainment of unsurpassed security from bondage. Therefore, Bhikkhus, you should train yourselves thus:

“‘When gain, honor and fame have arisen we will renounce them and will not let them establish a hold over our hearts.’”

SN 20:1: The Roof Peak

“Just as the beams of a house with a peaked-roof all go to the peak, meet at the peak, are joined at the peak: similarly, Bhikkhus, whatever unskilled, bad states there are, are all rooted in ignorance, meet in ignorance, are conjoined with ignorance. Therefore, Bhikkhus, you should train yourselves thus: ‘We will live diligently.’”

SN 20:3: Families

“Just as whatever families having many women and few men are easily plundered by robbers and thieves, similarly, Bhikkhus, a Bhikkhu who has not developed and often practiced liberation of the heart by love (*mettā*)⁴⁷ is easily attacked by non-human beings.

“Just as whatever families having few women and many men are difficult to plunder by robbers and thieves, similarly, Bhikkhus, a Bhikkhu who has developed and often practiced liberation of the heart by love is not easily attacked by non-human beings. Therefore, Bhikkhus,

⁴⁷ *Mettā-bhāvanā*, the meditation on love or friendliness directed impartially towards all living beings, is an important practice in Buddhism. It should be developed whatever other meditation practices are employed and in conjunction with them. The development of this love, as well as the development of faith by contemplating the qualities of the Buddha, etc., is essential in the spiritual life in as much as it gives an outlet to the emotions, directing them away from purely worldly values.

I say, you should train yourselves thus:

“We will develop the liberation of the heart by love; will often practice it, make a habit of it, an objective of it; will establish it and make a thorough effort to become well acquainted with it.”

SN 20:7: The Drum Peg

“Formerly, Bhikkhus, the Dasārahas had a summoning-drum. As the drum began to split the Dasārahas inserted one peg and then another peg until in time the summoning-drum’s old drumhead had disappeared and only a framework of pegs remained.

“Even so, Bhikkhus, will the Bhikkhus become in the future. And those discourses spoken by the Tathāgata, profound in meaning, transcendental, dealing with voidness, to these they will not listen when they are recited, they will not lend an ear, they will not set the heart upon final knowledge⁴⁸ and will not consider that those things should be learned and mastered. But those discourses made by poets, poetry, mere beautiful words and phrases, spoken by outsiders and disciples, to these they will listen ... they will consider that these things should be learned and mastered.

“Therefore, Bhikkhus, I say, you should train yourselves thus:

“Those discourses spoken by the Tathāgata profound in meaning, transcendental, dealing with voidness, to these we will listen when they are recited, we will lend an ear, we will set the heart upon final knowledge and we will consider that these things should be learned and mastered.”

SN 21:2: Upatissa

The Venerable Sāriputta said: “When, friends, I had gone into seclusion [for meditation] this thought arose in my mind, ‘Is there anything in the world, a change and alteration in which would cause sorrow, lamentation, suffering, grief and despair to arise in me?’ And then, friends, I thought, ‘No. there is nothing ...’”

Thereupon the Venerable Ānanda said: “But a change and alteration in the Teacher, friend Sāriputta, would not that cause sorrow, lamentation, suffering, grief and despair to arise?”

“Even a change and alteration in the Teacher, friend Ānanda, would not cause sorrow ... to arise in me. Nevertheless I would think in this manner: ‘May the Teacher, so influential, of so great supernormal potency and power, not depart. If the Lord were to stay for a long time it would surely be for the welfare and happiness of many people, out of compassion for the world, for the good, welfare and happiness of devas and men.’”

“Certainly for a long time ‘I-ness’, ‘mine-ness’ and the underlying tendency to conceit have been thoroughly eradicated from the venerable Sāriputta, in as much as even a change and alteration in the Teacher would not cause sorrow, lamentation, suffering, grief and despair to arise in the Venerable Sāriputta.”

⁴⁸ *Aññā*: the final knowledge of full liberation of the Arahant.

Part Three: The Section on the Aggregates (Khandha Vagga)

SN 22:5: Concentration

Thus have I heard. At one time the Lord was staying near Sāvattthī ... and there he addressed the Bhikkhus as follows:

“Develop concentration, Bhikkhus; a Bhikkhu who is concentrated understands according to actuality. And what does he understand according to actuality? The origin and extinction of the body, the origin and extinction of feeling, the origin and extinction of perception, the origin and extinction of mental activities, the origin and extinction of consciousness.”⁴⁹

SN 22:15: What is Impermanent

“The body, Bhikkhus, is impermanent. What is impermanent, that is suffering. What is suffering, that is not-self.⁵⁰ What is not-self [should be considered as] ‘This is not mine,’ ‘I am not this,’ ‘This is not myself’: in this manner it should be seen according to actuality with perfect wisdom.

“Feeling is impermanent ... Perception ... Mental activities ... Consciousness is impermanent. What is impermanent, that is suffering. What is suffering, that is not-self. What is not-self, should be considered, ‘This is not mine,’ ‘I am not this,’ ‘This is not myself’: in this manner it should be seen according to actuality with perfect wisdom.”

SN 22:18: Impermanent with cause

“The body, Bhikkhus, is impermanent. That which is the cause, that which is the condition, for the appearing of the body, that is also impermanent. How could the body, produced by what is impermanent, ever be permanent?

“Feeling is impermanent ... Perception ... Mental activities ... Consciousness is impermanent. That which is the cause, that which is the condition, for the appearing of consciousness, that is also impermanent. How could consciousness, produced by what is

⁴⁹ These are the five aggregates (*khandhā*) or groups constituting the whole of physical and mental existence. The Buddha’s analysis of the so-called “person” or “being”:

- i. Rūpa, body, form, is the four primary elements (dhātu): solidity, cohesion, heat and motion, and the corporeal phenomena derived from them.
- ii. Vedanā, feeling, is divided into three types: pleasant, painful and neutral.
- iii. Saññā, perception of sights, sounds, odors, tastes, tangible and mental impressions.
- iv. Saṅkhārā, mental activities, include a number of mental concomitants (cetasikā), fifty-two according to the Abhidhamma, of which the chief is cetanā: will or volition. It is the same term as is used in the formula of dependent arising, but here the active as well as the passive meaning is intended (see Note 36).
- v. Viññāṇa, consciousness, cognition, is again divided up according to the senses, as visual-consciousness, auditory-consciousness, etc.

⁵⁰ Impermanence, suffering and not-self (*anicca, dukkha, anattā*) are the three marks or characteristics of all conditioned existence.

impermanent, ever be permanent?

“So seeing, Bhikkhus, the instructed noble disciple is dispassionate towards the body, dispassionate towards feeling, dispassionate towards perception, dispassionate towards mental activities, dispassionate towards consciousness. Being dispassionate he detaches himself, being detached he is released and in release is the knowledge of being released and he knows: finished is birth, lived is the holy life, done is what had to be done, there is no more of this or that state.”

SN 22:23: Full Understanding

“Bhikkhus, I will teach you the things which should be fully understood and what is full understanding ...

“Now what, Bhikkhus, are the things which should be fully understood? The body is a thing which should be fully understood. Feeling ... Perception ... Mental activities ... Consciousness is a thing which should be fully understood.

“And what, Bhikkhus, is full understanding? The extinction of greed, aversion and delusion.⁵¹”

SN 22:26: Gratification

“Before my Enlightenment, Bhikkhus, when I was not completely enlightened, when I was a Bodhisatta,⁵² I thought: What is the satisfaction and misery in regard to the body, and the release from it? What is the satisfaction and misery in regard to feeling ... perception ... mental activities ... consciousness, and the release from them?

“And then, Bhikkhus, this occurred to me: Whatever happiness and pleasure arises dependent upon the body: this is the satisfaction of the body. Whatever there is of impermanence, suffering and changeability in the body: this is the misery of the body. Whatever there is of being rid of desire and attachment, the abandoning of desire and attachment in regard to the body: this is the release from the body.

“Whatever happiness and pleasure arises dependent upon feeling ... perception ... mental activities ... consciousness: this is the satisfaction of consciousness. Whatever there is of impermanence, suffering and changeability in consciousness: this is the misery of consciousness. Whatever there is of being rid of desire and attachment, the abandoning of desire and attachment in regard to consciousness: this is the release from consciousness.

“As long, Bhikkhus, as I did not know satisfaction as satisfaction, misery as misery, and release from the five aggregates of grasping⁵³ as release from them according to actuality, so long did I not acknowledge that, in the world with its devas, māras, and brahmas⁵⁴ with its recluses and brāhmaṇas and mankind with its princes and [ordinary] men, I was not

⁵¹ The extinction of greed, etc. is, properly speaking, the result of having fully understood or “diagnosed” (*pariññāta*) the body, etc., as being impermanent and so forth.

⁵² *Bodhisatta* means “Enlightenment-being” or a “being bent upon Enlightenment” and is a term used to describe a person, in this case the man Gotama, before his attainment of full Enlightenment or Buddhahood. It came to be an important term in the later literature of Mahāyāna Buddhism.

⁵³ The aggregates as forming the objects of grasping or being grasped at as “a self” or “belonging to a self.”

⁵⁴ These are three kinds of heavenly beings.

completely enlightened with unequalled and perfect enlightenment.

“But when, Bhikkhus, I knew satisfaction as satisfaction, misery as misery, and release from the five aggregates of grasping as release from them according to actuality—I then acknowledged that ... I was completely enlightened with unequalled and perfect Enlightenment.

“And the knowledge and vision arose in me: Unshakable is my liberation of the heart, this is the final birth, there is now no further becoming.”

SN 22:33: Not Yours

At one time the Lord was staying near Sāvattthī ... and said: “What is not yours, Bhikkhus, renounce it. Renouncing it will be to your good, to your happiness. And what, Bhikkhus, is not yours? The body, Bhikkhus, is not yours ... Feeling ... Perception ... Mental activities ... Consciousness, Bhikkhus, is not yours, renounce it. Renouncing it will be to your good, to your happiness.

“It is as if a person were to carry away, burn or do as he pleased with the grass, twigs, branches and foliage in this Jeta Grove. Would it occur to you to say, ‘The person is carrying us away, is burning us, is doing as he pleases with us?’”

“Certainly not, Sir.”

“For what reason?”

“Because, Lord, this is not ourselves nor what belongs to ourselves.”

“So also, Bhikkhus, the body is not yours, renounce it. Renouncing it will be to your good, to your happiness. Feeling is not yours ... Perception is not yours ... Mental activities are not yours ... Consciousness is not yours, renounce it. Renouncing it will be to your good, to your happiness.”

SN 22:58: The Fully Enlightened One

“A Tathāgata, Bhikkhus, being a Perfected One is fully enlightened. Because of dispassion for the body, detachment from the body, cessation of [craving for] the body, he is called ‘liberated without grasping,’ ‘fully enlightened.’ And a Bhikkhu liberated by wisdom, because of dispassion for the body, detachment from the body, cessation of the body, is called ‘liberated without grasping,’ ‘liberated by wisdom.’

“A Tathāgata, being a Perfected One is fully enlightened. Because of dispassion for feeling ... perception ... mental activities ... consciousness ... He is called ‘liberated without grasping,’ ‘fully enlightened.’ And a Bhikkhu liberated by wisdom, because of dispassion for feeling ... consciousness ... is called ‘liberated without grasping,’ ‘liberated by wisdom.’ Now, Bhikkhus, what is the distinction, what is the divergence, what is the difference between a Tathāgata, a Perfected One, a Fully Enlightened One, and a Bhikkhu liberated by wisdom?”

“For us, Sir, such things originate from the Lord, we have the Lord as our guide, the Lord as our resort. It would indeed be good, Sir, if the Lord were to explain the meaning of this utterance. Having heard the Lord the Bhikkhus would then remember it.”

“Then listen, Bhikkhus, attend carefully and I will speak.”

“Yes, Sir,” those Bhikkhus replied to the Lord.

The Lord said, “A Tathāgata, Bhikkhus, a Perfected One, a fully Enlightened One, makes manifest an unmanifest path, he recognizes an unrecognized path, he proclaims an unproclaimed path, he is the knower of the path, the discoverer of the path, is skilled in the path. And now, Bhikkhus, his disciples coming afterwards live following the path.”⁵⁵

SN 22:71: Rādha

Now the Venerable Rādha approached the Lord. Having approached and prostrated himself he sat down to one side. As he was sitting there, the venerable Rādha said to the Lord:

“How can we know, Sir, how can we see, that in this consciousness-endowed body and externally among all outer objects there is no I-ness, no mine-ness, no underlying tendency to conceit?”

“Whatever body ... feeling ... perception ... mental activities ... consciousness, Rādha, past, future or present, internal or external, gross or subtle, inferior or superior, far or near, is looked upon as, ‘This is not mine,’ ‘I am not this,’ ‘This is not myself’—in this manner it is seen according to actuality with perfect wisdom. Thus knowing, thus seeing, in this consciousness-endowed body and externally among all outer objects there is no I-ness, no mine-ness, no underlying tendency to conceit.”

Then the venerable Rādha, living alone, secluded, diligent, ardent and resolute, soon realized here and now, through his own direct knowledge, that unequalled quest of the holy life, for which sons of good family rightly go forth from home to the homeless state, and entering into it abide in it. And he knew: finished is birth, lived is the holy life, done is what had to be done, there is no more of this or that state.

And the venerable Rādha became one of the Perfect Ones.

SN 22:76: Arahants

Happy are the Perfect Ones:
No craving is found in them.
Rooted out is the ‘I’-conceit,
The net of delusion burst through.

Attained to freedom from craving,
For them the heart is pure.
In the world unsullied are they,
Become holy and free of taints.⁵⁶

Having full knowledge of the five groups
They possess seven Dhamma-domains,⁵⁷
True men worthy of praise are they,
Own sons of the Enlightened One.

⁵⁵ Compare this with no. 22 of the previous section.

⁵⁶ There are four *āsavā* or taints: sensual desire, becoming, views and ignorance.

⁵⁷ “The seven domains of the Dhamma” are: faith, shame and dread of wrongdoing, truthfulness, strenuous effort, mindfulness and wisdom.

Owning the seven jewels,⁵⁸
Trained in the three training,⁵⁹
They wander about great heroes,
With fear and dread both gone.

Endowed with the ten factors,⁶⁰
Great beings calm of mind,
These in the world are chief,
In them no craving's found,

Arisen the knowledge of training's completion,
This body is their last,
And what the holy life's essence is—
For that they rely not on another.

Undisturbed by the triple conceit,⁶¹
Freed from further becoming,
Attained the stage of self-mastery,
They are in the world victorious.

Above, across, below—for them
No pleasure there is found.
They delight in the Lion's roar:
"The Buddhas in the world are unsurpassed."

SN 22:79: Being devoured

"Those recluses or brāhmanas, Bhikkhus, who remember a number of former lives, they all remember one or another of these five aggregates of grasping. 'In the past I had this sort of body': thus remembering, it is just body he remembers. 'In the past I had this sort of feeling': thus remembering, it is just feeling he remembers. 'In the past I had this sort of perception': thus remembering, it is just perception he remembers. 'In the past I had this sort of mental activity': thus remembering, it is just mental activity he remembers. 'In the past I had this sort

⁵⁸ The "seven jewels" are the seven factors pertaining to Enlightenment (*satta-bojjhanga*): mindfulness, investigation, energy, joy, tranquility, concentration, and equanimity (see no. 67).

⁵⁹ The "three trainings" (*sikkhā*) are the training in morality, concentration, and wisdom.

⁶⁰ The "ten factors" are the ten powers of a Buddha (*tathāgata-balāni*) which differentiate him from other beings and even from his own enlightened disciples. He knows according to actuality:

- i. causes and conditions and their results;
- ii. past, future and present deeds and their results;
- iii. the practices leading to good and bad destinies (of beings after death);
- iv. the world (of the aggregates, etc.) in all its diversity;
- v. the various (good and bad) dispositions of beings;
- vi. the state of the faculties (indriya, of faith, energy, etc.) of other beings;
- vii. the attainments in meditation;
- viii. his many former births and remembers the various experiences he had in them;

Furthermore:

- ix. He sees beings arising and passing away according to their deeds;
- x. through the destruction of the taints (*āsavā*) he dwells in freedom of mind (*cetavimutti*) and freedom through wisdom (*paññā-vimutti*).

All are enumerated fully in Majjhima Nikāya, sutta 12.

⁶¹ The "triple conceit" consists of the thoughts 'I am better,' 'I am inferior,' 'I am equal' (the feeling of superiority, inferiority, and the insistence to be equal).

of consciousness': thus remembering, it is just consciousness he remembers.

"And why, Bhikkhus, do you say 'body'? 'It is afflicted' (*ruppati*), Bhikkhus, therefore it is called 'body' (*rūpa*). Afflicted by what? Afflicted by cold and heat, hunger and thirst, afflicted by coming into contact with gnats, mosquitoes, wind, sun and snakes. 'It is afflicted,' Bhikkhus, therefore it is called 'body.'

"And why, Bhikkhus, do you say 'feeling'? 'It is felt' (*vediyati*), Bhikkhus, therefore it is called 'feeling' (*vedanā*). What is felt? Pleasure is felt, pain is felt, neutral feeling is felt. 'It is felt,' Bhikkhus, therefore it is called 'feeling.'

"And why, Bhikkhus, do you say 'perception'? 'It is perceived' (*sañjanati*), Bhikkhus, therefore it is called 'perception' (*saññā*). What is perceived? Blue is perceived, yellow is perceived, red is perceived, white is perceived. 'It is perceived,' Bhikkhus, therefore it is called 'perception.'

"And why, Bhikkhus, do you say 'mental activities'? They activate that which is formed and conditioned (*saṅkhatam abhisankharonti*), Bhikkhus, therefore they are called 'mental activities' (*saṅkhāra*).⁶² What is the formed and conditioned that they activate? They activate body in its corporeal nature, feeling in its nature of feeling, perception in its perceptual nature, mental activities in their activating [directing] nature, consciousness in its cognitive nature. They activate that which is formed and conditioned, Bhikkhus, therefore they are called 'mental activities.'

"And why, Bhikkhus, do you say 'consciousness'? 'It cognizes' (*vijānāti*), Bhikkhus, therefore it is called 'consciousness' (*viññāṇa*). What does it cognize? It cognizes sour and bitter, acid and sweet, alkaline and non-alkaline, salty and non-salty. 'It cognizes,' Bhikkhus, therefore it is called 'consciousness.'

"As to this, Bhikkhus, the instructed noble disciple reflects thus: 'I am being consumed by the body now. Just as in the past I was consumed by the body. And if in the future I should have an expectation of pleasure from the body, so in the future would I be consumed by the body just as I am now in the present.'⁶³ Thus reflecting he has no yearning for a past body, he has no expectation of pleasure from a future body and towards the present body he cultivates dispassion, detachment, cessation.

"What do you think, Bhikkhus, is the body permanent or impermanent?"

"Impermanent, Sir."

"What is impermanent, is that dissatisfying or satisfying?"

"Dissatisfying, Sir."

"What is impermanent, dissatisfying, of a nature to change, is it suitable to regard as, 'This is mine,' 'I am this,' 'This is myself'?"

"No, Sir."

"Is feeling ... perception ... mental activities ... consciousness permanent or impermanent?"

"Impermanent, Sir."

⁶² Alternatively, "They activate within a conditioned complex ..." This is a very difficult phrase.

According to the commentary, *cetanā* (volition) is prominent here in the meaning of *sankhārā* (activities) in its function of coordinating, organizing and directing. *Cetanā* thus integrates the five aggregates together into an evanescent whole and directs and coordinates their various functions.

⁶³ "Consumed" means "suffering discomfort." "As a person clad in a filthy robe suffers discomfort and says, 'The robe eats me' so does body and the other aggregates cause one discomfort" (Commentary).

“What is impermanent, dissatisfying, of a nature to change, is it suitable to regard as, ‘This is mine.’ ‘I am this,’ ‘This is myself?’”

“No, Sir.”

“Therefore, Bhikkhus, I say, whatsoever body ... feeling ... perception ... mental activities ... consciousness, past, future or present, internal or external, gross or subtle, inferior or superior, far or near, should be looked upon as, ‘This is not mine,’ ‘I am not this,’ ‘This is not myself.’ In this manner it should be seen according to actuality with perfect wisdom.”

SN 22:94: Flowers

“I do not dispute with the world, Bhikkhus. The world disputes with me. A proclaimer of Dhamma does not dispute with anyone in the world. What is not believed by the wise in the world, of that I say ‘It is not so.’ What is believed by the wise in the world, of that I say ‘It is so.’

“And what is it, Bhikkhus, that is not believed by the wise in the world and of which I say ‘It is not so’? That the body ... feeling ... perception ... mental activities ... consciousness is permanent, stable, eternal, not liable to change, is not believed by the wise in the world and I also say it is not so.

“And what is it, Bhikkhus, that is believed by the wise in the world and of which I say ‘It is so’? That the body ... feeling ... perception ... mental activities ... consciousness is impermanent, unsatisfactory, liable to change, is believed by the wise in the world and I also say it is so.

“There is, Bhikkhus, in the world a world-condition which the Tathāgata has fully awakened to, has fully realized. Having fully awakened to it and fully realized it he declares it, teaches it, makes it known, establishes it, discloses it, analyzes it, makes it clear. And what, Bhikkhus, in the world is the world-condition which the Tathāgata has fully awakened to, has fully realized? The body, Bhikkhus, ... feeling ... perception ... mental activities ... consciousness, Bhikkhus, in the world is that world-condition the Tathāgata has fully awakened to, has fully realized ...

“And whosoever, Bhikkhus, when it is being declared, taught, made known, established, disclosed, analyzed, made clear by the Tathāgata thus, does not understand, does not see, him, a foolish worldly person, blind, without vision, not understanding, not seeing, I can do nothing for.

“Just as a water-lily or a blue lotus or a white lotus, born in water, growing in water, having arisen above the water stands unwetted by the water, similarly, Bhikkhus, the Tathāgata, brought up in the world and conquering the world,⁶⁴ lives unsullied by the world.”⁶⁵

SN 22:95: A Lump of Froth

“At one time the Lord was staying at Ayojjhāya on the bank of the river Ganges. There the Lord addressed the Bhikkhus as follows: ‘Suppose, Bhikkhus, a large lump of froth was floating on this river Ganges and a clear-sighted man were to see it, observe it and properly examine it. Seeing it, observing it, properly examining it, it would appear to him to be empty (*ritta*), unsubstantial (*tuccha*), without essence (*asāra*). What essence, Bhikkhus, could there be in

⁶⁴ He conquers the world, i.e., the five aggregates, by penetrating with his perfect wisdom their true nature as impermanent and so forth.

⁶⁵ Unsullied by craving and attachment to the world.

a lump of froth?

“In the same way, Bhikkhus, whatsoever body, past, future or present, internal or external, gross or subtle, inferior or superior, far or near, that a Bhikkhu sees, observes and properly examines ... it would appear to him to be empty, unsubstantial, without essence. What essence, Bhikkhus, could there be in body?

“Suppose, Bhikkhus, in autumn when it is raining in large drops a bubble arises and disappears on the water, and a clear-sighted man were to see it, observe it and properly examine it. Seeing it, observing it, properly examining it, it would appear to him to be empty, unsubstantial, without essence. What essence, Bhikkhus, could there be in a water-bubble?

“In the same way, Bhikkhus, whatsoever feeling, past, future or present ... that a Bhikkhus sees, observes and properly examines ... it would appear to him to be empty, unsubstantial, without essence. What essence, Bhikkhus, could there be in feeling?

“Suppose, Bhikkhus, in the last month of the hot season at midday a mirage appeared and a clear-sighted man were to see it, observe it and properly examine it. Seeing it, observing it, properly examining it, it would appear to him to be empty, unsubstantial, without essence. What essence, Bhikkhus, could there be in a mirage?

“In the same way, Bhikkhus, whatsoever perception ... that a Bhikkhu sees, observes and properly examines ... it would appear to him to be empty, unsubstantial, without essence. What essence, Bhikkhus, could there be in perception?

“Suppose, Bhikkhus, a man, needing sound timber, going about seeking, looking for sound timber, and, taking a sharp axe, should enter a forest and there see a large plantain tree, straight-trunked, young, of great height. And he were to cut it down at the root. Having cut it down at the root he were to chop off the top and remove the outer skin. On removing the outer skin he would find no soft wood, not to speak of sound timber. Then a clear-sighted man were to see it, observe it and properly examine it. Seeing it, observing it, properly examining it, it would appear to him to be empty, unsubstantial, without essence. What essence, Bhikkhus, could there be in a plantain tree?

“In the same way, Bhikkhus, whatsoever mental activities ... a Bhikkhu sees, observes and properly examines ... they would appear to him to be empty, unsubstantial, without essence. What essence, Bhikkhus, could there be in mental activities?

“Suppose, Bhikkhus, a magician or a magician’s assistant should produce an illusion on the high road and a clear-sighted man were to see it, observe it and properly examine it. Seeing it, observing it, properly examining it, it would appear to him to be empty, unsubstantial, without essence. What essence, Bhikkhus, could there be in a magical illusion?

“In the same way, Bhikkhus, whatsoever consciousness ... a Bhikkhu sees, observes and properly examines ... it would appear to him to be empty, unsubstantial, without essence. What essence, Bhikkhus, could there be in consciousness?

“So seeing, the instructed noble disciple is dispassionate towards the body, towards feeling, perception, mental activities and consciousness. Being dispassionate he detaches himself, being detached he is released and in release is the knowledge of being released and he knows: ‘Finished is birth, lived is the holy life, done is what had to be done, there is no more of this or that state.’”

So spoke the Lord and when he had so spoken the Happy One, the Teacher, added further:

“The body’s like a lump of froth,
Feeling’s like a water-bubble,
As a mirage is perception,
As a plantain tree are activities,
A magical illusion consciousness:
So the Kinsman of the Ādicca⁶⁶ did illustrate.

“In whatever way it is observed
And properly examined,
Empty it is and unsubstantial,
To him who sees it wisely.

“This body at the outset,
Was taught by him of wisdom wide,
When abandoned of three things
Is cast aside, rejected:
Life, warmth and consciousness,
When body is bereft of these,
Then thrown away it lies
Insentient, mere food for others.

“Such is the fate of it,
A prattling illusion,
A murderer, it is called;
No essence here is found.

“Thus should the aggregates be looked upon
By a Bhikkhu of strong energy,
Continually both day and night,
Clearly aware and mindful.

“Let him leave behind all fetters,
Make a refuge for himself and,
As though his head were all afire,
Act aspiring for the deathless state.”

SN 22:100: The Leash

“Unimaginable, Bhikkhus, is a beginning to the round of births [and deaths]. For beings obstructed by ignorance and fettered by craving, migrating and going the round of births, a starting point is not evident.

“Just as a dog, Bhikkhus, tied with a leash to a strong stake or post; if he moves, he moves towards that stake or post; if he stands still, he stands close to that stake or post; if he sits down, he sits close to that stake or post; if he lies down, he lies close to that stake or post.

“Similarly, Bhikkhus, the uninstructed ordinary person looks upon the body as, ‘This is mine,’ ‘I am this,’ ‘This is myself,’ ... He looks upon feeling ... perception ... mental activities ... consciousness as, ‘This is mine,’ ‘I am this,’ ‘This is myself.’ If he moves, he moves towards these five aggregates of grasping; if he stands still, he stands close to these five aggregates of grasping; if he sits down, he sits close to these five aggregates of grasping; if he lies down, he lies close to these five aggregates of grasping.

⁶⁶ *Ādiccabandhu*, “Kinsman of the Sun,” is another epithet of the Buddha and refers to his royal descent, but see also no. 78.

“Hence, Bhikkhus, I say one should constantly reflect upon one’s own mind thus: ‘For a long time this mind has been corrupted by greed, aversion and delusion.’ Through a corrupt mind, Bhikkhus, beings are corrupted; from purity of mind beings become pure. Have you seen, Bhikkhus, an elaborate painting?”

“Yes, Sir.”

“Now that elaborate painting, Bhikkhus, was devised by mind. Therefore mind is even more intricate than that elaborate painting. Hence, Bhikkhus, I say one should constantly reflect upon one’s own mind thus: ‘For a long time this mind has been corrupted by greed, aversion and delusion.’ Through a corrupt mind, Bhikkhus, beings are corrupted; from purity of mind beings become pure.

“I perceive no other single group, Bhikkhus, so diverse as the creatures of the animal world. These creatures of the animal world are diversified by mind.⁶⁷ Therefore mind is even more diverse than the creatures of the animal world.

“Hence, Bhikkhus, I say a Bhikkhu should constantly reflect upon his own mind thus: ‘For a long time this mind has been corrupted by greed, aversion and delusion.’ Through a corrupt mind, Bhikkhus, beings are corrupted; from purity of mind beings become pure.

“Just as a dyer or a painter, with dye or lac or turmeric or indigo or madder, and a well-smoothed wooden panel or wall or piece of cloth, can reproduce the form (*rūpa*) of a woman or a man complete in every detail—similarly, Bhikkhus, the uninstructed ordinary person brings body (*rūpa*) into existence too ... brings feeling ... perception ... mental activities ... brings consciousness into existence too.⁶⁸”

SN 22:101: The Adze-Handle

“Just as a carpenter or a carpenter’s assistant sees on his adze-handle the marks made by his fingers and thumb, but does not thereby have the knowledge. ‘So much of the adze-handle was worn away by me today, so much yesterday, so much at another time,’ but merely has the knowledge that it is being worn away by its wearing away.

“In the same way, Bhikkhus, a Bhikkhu living devoted to the practice of mind-development (*bhāvanā*) does not have the knowledge, ‘So much of the taints (*āsavā*) was worn away today, so much yesterday, so much at another time.’ But he has the knowledge they are being worn away by their wearing away.

“Just as a sea-going boat, stranded for six months on the shore by the tide in the winter, has its rigging spoilt by wind and sun, and then, warped by a shower of rain in the rainy season, easily weakens and rots away: in the same way, Bhikkhus, for a Bhikkhu living devoted to the practice of mind-development, the fetters (*samyojanāni*) easily weaken and rot away.”

SN 22:102: Perception of Impermanence

“The perceiving of impermanence, Bhikkhus, developed and frequently practiced, removes all sensual passion, removes all passion for material existence, removes all passion for becoming, removes all ignorance, removes and abolishes all conceit of ‘I am.’

“Just as in the autumn a farmer, plowing with a large plow cuts through all a spreading

⁶⁷ They are diversified by the results of kamma, volitional acts of mind.

⁶⁸ The five aggregates are produced (and reproduced) by kamma.

rootlets as he plows; in the same way, Bhikkhus, the perceiving of impermanence, developed and frequently practiced, removes all sensual passion ... removes and abolishes all conceit of 'I am.'"

SN 23:2: A Being

... The venerable Rādha said to the Lord: "'A being' (*satto*) 'a being,' one is called. In what respect, Sir, is one called 'being'?"

"Because of being caught (*satto*) and held fast (*visatto*) by that desire, that attachment, that delight, that craving for body ... for feeling ... for perception ... for mental activities ... for consciousness, therefore one is called 'a being' (*satto*).

"Just as when little boys or girls are playing with mud-pies. As long as they are not rid of attachment to those mud-pies, are not rid of desire, are not rid of affection, thirst, excitement, and craving for them, so long do they delight in them, are amused by them, value, and cherish them. But when those little boys or girls are rid of attachment to those mud-pies, are rid of desire, are rid of affection, thirst, excitement, and craving for them, then with hand and foot they scatter them, destroy them, demolish them, stop playing with them.

"In the same way, Rādha, do you scatter body, destroy it, demolish it, stop playing with it, do you practice so as to end craving for it. Do you scatter feeling ... perception ... mental activities ... consciousness, destroy it, demolish it, stop playing with it, do you practice so as to end craving for it.

"Indeed, Rādha, the ending of craving is Nibbāna."

SN 27:10: Aggregates

"Bhikkhus, whatever there is of desire and attachment to the body—that is a corruption of the mind. Whatever there is of desire and attachment to feeling ... perception ... mental activities ... consciousness—that is a corruption of the mind.

"But when, Bhikkhus, a Bhikkhu has abandoned mental corruption with regard to these five, his mind is inclined towards renunciation. And a mind filled with [the thought of] renunciation is fit for realizing those things to be realized by direct knowledge."

Part Four: The Section on the Sixfold base (Saḷāyatana Vagga)

SN 35:23: The All

“Bhikkhus, I will teach you the All.⁶⁹ Listen, attend carefully to it and I will speak.

“Now what, Bhikkhus, is the All? It is just the eye and visible objects, the ear and sounds, the nose and odors, the tongue and tastes, the body and tangible objects, the mind and objects of mind.⁷⁰ This, Bhikkhus, is called the All.

“Now whoever should speak thus: ‘Setting aside this All I will proclaim another All,’ it would be mere talk on his part and on being questioned he would be unable to proceed and in addition, vexation will befall him. For what reason? It would not be within his scope, Bhikkhus.

SN 35:53: Abandoning Ignorance

Once a certain Bhikkhu approached the Lord. Having drawn near and prostrated himself he sat down to one side. Sitting there that Bhikkhu said to the Lord:

“How knowing, Sir, how seeing is ignorance (*avijjā*) abandoned and understanding (*vijjā*) produced?”

“By knowing and seeing the impermanence of the eye, Bhikkhus, ignorance is abandoned and understanding is produced. By knowing and seeing the impermanence of visible objects ... visual-consciousness ... visual-contact ... And whatever arises conditioned by visual-contact, felt as pleasant or painful or neutral—by knowing and seeing the impermanence of that also, ignorance is abandoned and understanding is produced.

“By knowing and seeing the impermanence of the ear ... nose ... tongue ... body ... mind ... mind-objects ... mind-consciousness ... mind-contact ... And whatever arises conditioned by mind-contact, felt as pleasant or painful or neutral—by knowing and seeing the impermanence of that also, ignorance is abandoned and understanding is produced.

“It is by thus knowing and thus seeing, Bhikkhu, that ignorance is abandoned and understanding is produced.”

SN 35:60: The Full Understanding of All Grasping

“I will teach you the Dhamma, Bhikkhus, for the full understanding of all grasping ...

“Dependent upon the eye and visible-objects, visual consciousness arises. Contact is the coming together these three. Conditioned by contact is feeling. So seeing, Bhikkhus, the instructed noble disciple is dispassionate towards the eye, is dispassionate towards visible-objects ... towards visual-consciousness ... visual-contact ... towards feeling. Being

⁶⁹ *Sabbam*: the whole, everything that is, the totality of experience.

⁷⁰ There are the twelve sense-bases (*āyatana*), six internal (subjective), the sense organs; and six external (objective), the corresponding sense objects. These present an analysis of experience complementary to that of the aggregates.

dispassionate he is detached, being detached he is liberated, being liberated he knows, 'Grasping has been fully understood by me.'

"Dependent upon the ear and sounds ... the nose and odors ... the tongue and tastes ... the body and tangible objects ...

"Dependent upon the mind and objects of mind, mind consciousness arises. Contact is the coming together of these three. Conditioned by contact is feeling. So seeing, Bhikkhus, the instructed noble disciple is dispassionate towards the mind ... towards mind-objects ... mind-consciousness ... mind-contact ... towards feeling. Being dispassionate he is detached, being detached he is liberated, being liberated he knows, 'Grasping has been fully understood by me.'

"This, Bhikkhus, is the Dhamma for the full understanding of all grasping."

SN 35:71: The Six Bases of Contact

"Bhikkhus, whatsoever Bhikkhu does not know according to actuality the arising and passing away, the satisfaction, misery and release from the six bases of contact; not lived by him is the holy life, he is far from this Dhamma and Discipline."

When this had been said a certain Bhikkhu said to the Lord:

"As to this, Sir, I am in despair; for I Sir, do not know according to actuality the arising and passing away, the satisfaction, misery and release from the six bases of contact."

"What do you think, Bhikkhu, do you look upon the eye as, 'This is mine,' 'I am this,' 'This is myself'?"

"No, Sir."

"It is good, Bhikkhu. Now by [looking upon] the eye as, 'This is not mine,' 'I am not this,' 'This is not myself,' it will be well understood by you according to actuality with perfect wisdom. Just this is the end of suffering.

"Do you look upon the ear ... the nose ... the tongue ... the body ... the mind as, 'This is mine,' 'I am this,' 'This is myself'?"

"No, Sir."

"It is good, Bhikkhu. Just this is the end of suffering."

SN 35:84: Subject to Disintegration

... Sitting at one side the venerable Ānanda said this to the Lord:

"The world, the world (*loka*) they say, Sir. In what sense, Sir, is it called 'the world'?"

"Whatever is of a nature to dissolve (*paloka*), Ānanda, this is called the world (*loka*) in the discipline of the Noble. Now what is of a nature to dissolve? The eye, Ānanda ... visible-objects ... visual-consciousness ... visual-contact ...

"The ear ... sounds ... mind ... mind-contact ... and whatever arises conditioned by mind-contact felt as pleasant or painful or neutral—that is of a nature to dissolve."

SN 35:88: Puṇṇa

Once the venerable Puṇṇa approached the Lord ... sat down to one side ... and said:

“It would be good, Sir, were the Lord to teach me the Dhamma briefly. On hearing that Dhamma from the Lord I might live alone, secluded, diligent, ardent and resolute.”

“There are, Puṇṇa, visible objects cognized by the eye ... sounds cognized by the ear ... odors cognized by the nose ... flavors cognized by the tongue ... tangible objects cognized by the body ... mind-objects cognized by the mind, pleasing, agreeable, charming, endearing, desirable, arousing the passions. If a Bhikkhu delights in them, welcomes them, cleaves to them ... enjoyment [of them] arises. The origin of enjoyment is [also] the origin of suffering, I say, Puṇṇa.

“... but if a Bhikkhu does not delight in them, does not welcome them, does not cleave to them ... enjoyment ceases. The cessation of enjoyment is the cessation [also] of suffering, I say.

“Now that you have been instructed by me, Puṇṇa, with this brief instruction in what country will you live?”

“There is, Sir, a country called Sunāparanta, I will live there.”

“The men of Sunāparanta are violent and cruel, Puṇṇa. If they were to insult and abuse you, how would it be with you?”

“If, Sir, the men of Sunāparanta were to insult and abuse me it would be thus with me: [I should think,] ‘Good are these men of Sunāparanta, very good are these men of Sunāparanta, in that they do not strike me with their hands.’ It would be thus with me, Lord. It would be thus with me, Happy One.”

“But if the men of Sunāparanta were to strike you with their hands, how would it be with you?”

“... it would be thus with me: ‘Good are these men of Sunāparanta, very good are these men of Sunāparanta, in that they do not strike me with clods of earth’ ...”

“But if the men of Sunāparanta were to strike you with clods of earth, how would it be with you?”

“... it would be thus with me: ‘Good are these men of Sunāparanta, very good are these men of Sunāparanta, in that they do not strike me with a stick’ ...”

“But if the men of Sunāparanta were to strike you with a stick, how would it be with you?”

“... it would be thus with me: ‘Good are these men of Sunāparanta very good are these men of Sunāparanta, in that they do not strike me with a weapon’ ...”

“But if the men of Sunāparanta were to deprive you of your life, how would it be with you?”

“... it would be thus with me: ‘There are disciples of the Lord who, being vexed, ashamed and disgusted with body and life, seek a weapon [to commit suicide with], but I come by [my death from] a weapon that was unsought.’ It would be thus with me, Lord. It would be thus with me, Happy One.”

“It is good, it is good Puṇṇa. Being endowed with this self-mastery and composure you will be able to settle in the country of the Sunāparanta people. Do now, Puṇṇa, whatever you consider it the time for.”

Then the venerable Puṇṇa, pleased and appreciative of the Lord’s utterance, arose from his

seat, prostrated himself before the Lord and, keeping his right side towards him, departed. And having put away his bed and seat and taking his bowl and robe he set off for the country of Sunāparanta. And walking, journeying by stages, the venerable Puṇṇa arrived in the country of Sunāparanta and dwelt there.

Now the venerable Puṇṇa during that rainy season, brought in [converted] as many as five hundred lay followers. During that rainy season he established himself in the three knowledges.⁷¹ And during that rainy season he attained final release.⁷²

Then a large number of Bhikkhus approached the Lord ... and said: “The clansman Puṇṇa, Sir, who was instructed by the Lord with a brief instruction has died. What is his destiny? What is his future state?”

“A wise man, Bhikkhus was the clansman Puṇṇa. He practiced according to Dhamma and did not trouble me with queries about Dhamma. The clansman Puṇṇa, Bhikkhus, has attained final release.”

SN 35:135: The Opportunity

“It is a gain for you, Bhikkhus, it is a great gain for you, to have found the opportunity for living the holy life.

“I have seen Bhikkhus, the hells called the ‘six bases of contacts.’ There whatever visible object one sees with the eye, one sees only the unpleasant, never the pleasant, one sees only the disagreeable, never the agreeable, one sees only the unattractive, never the attractive. Whatever sound one hears with the ear ... Whatever odor one smells with the nose ... Whatever flavor one tastes with the tongue ... Whatever tangible object one touches with the body ... Whatever mind-object one cognizes with the mind, one cognizes only the unpleasant, never the pleasant, one cognizes only the disagreeable, never the agreeable, one cognizes the unattractive, never the attractive. It is a gain for you, Bhikkhus, it is a great gain for you, to have found the opportunity for living the holy life.

“I have seen, Bhikkhus, the heavens, called the ‘six bases of contact.’ There whatever visible object one sees with the eye, one sees only the pleasant, never the unpleasant, one sees only the agreeable, never the disagreeable, one sees only the attractive, never the unattractive. Whatever sound one hears with the ear ...

“Whatever mind-object one cognizes with the mind, one only cognizes the pleasant, never the unpleasant, one cognizes only the agreeable, never the disagreeable, one cognizes only the attractive, never the unattractive.

“It is a gain for you, Bhikkhus, it is a great gain for you, to have found the opportunity for living the holy life.”⁷³

⁷¹ The three knowledges (*tevijjā*) are:

- i. recollection of former existences;
- ii. divine vision (*dibbacakkhu*) or seeing other beings arising and passing away according to their deeds, good or bad; and
- iii. knowledge of the extinction of the *āsavas* or taints. The possession of these three knowledges means one is an Arahant or Perfected One.

⁷² The attainment of final release (*parinibbata*) is a term for the death of a Perfected One, who does not grasp at another birth. Ordinarily death is merely the prelude to another birth.

⁷³ In this discourse heaven and hell are presented as two extremes of experience, partial and incomplete. It is only as a human being when both pleasure and pain are known, that existence can be viewed objectively and wholly. Hence only in a human birth can the religious or “holy” life (*brahmacariya*) be

SN 35:188: The Ocean

“The ocean, the ocean!’ says the uninstructed ordinary person, Bhikkhus. But that is not the ocean in the Noble One’s Discipline. It is [merely] a great mass of water, a great extent of water. There are, Bhikkhus, visible objects cognizable by the eye ... sounds cognizable by the ear ... odors cognizable by the nose ... flavors cognizable by the tongue ... tangible objects cognizable by the body ... mind-objects cognizable by the mind, pleasing, agreeable, charming, endearing, desirable, arousing the passions. This is called ‘the ocean’ in the Noble One’s Discipline. Herein this world with its devas, māras, brahmas, with its recluses and brāhmaṇas and mankind with its princes and ordinary men is almost entirely⁷⁴ immersed, is entangled like a ball of thread, has become entangled like [ropes of] muñja-grass and rushes, unable to go beyond a state of loss, a bad destination, ruination, the round of births [and deaths].”

SN 35:197: The Simile of the Vipers

At one time the Lord was staying near Sāvatti ... and there he addressed the Bhikkhus saying:

“Suppose, Bhikkhus, there were four poisonous snakes, highly dangerous, extremely venomous. And a man were to come along, wishing to live, not wishing to die, desiring happiness and loathing pain. And people were to say to him: ‘Here, good man, are four poisonous snakes, highly dangerous, extremely venomous. From time to time they must be roused, bathed, fed and bedded down. But when one or the other of these four poisonous snakes ... becomes disturbed and angry, then you will come by your death or suffering comparable to death. So do whatever must be done, good man.’

“Then suppose, Bhikkhus, that man, in terror of the four poisonous snakes, might run away and people were to say to him: ‘Good man, five murderers are following after you saying, “When we see him we shall kill him.” So do whatever must be done, good man.’

“Then suppose, Bhikkhus, that man, in terror of the four poisonous snakes, in terror of the five murderers, might run away and people were to say to him: ‘Good man, a sixth, a murderous robber with an upraised sword is following after you saying, “When I see him I shall cut off his head.” So do whatever must be done, good man.’

“Then suppose, Bhikkhus, that man, in terror of the four poisonous snakes, in terror of the five murderers, in terror of the sixth, the murderous robber, might run away. And, he should see an empty village. Whatever house he enters he finds it bare, void and empty. Whatever vessel he handles therein he finds it bare, void and empty. Then people were to say to him: ‘Good man, bandits who attack villages are going to attack this empty village. So do whatever must be done, good man.’

“Then suppose, Bhikkhus, that man, in terror of the four poisonous snakes, in terror of the five murderers, in terror of the sixth, the murderous robber, in terror of the village-attacking bandits, might run away. And he should see a great stretch of water, the near shore insecure and fearful, the far shore secure and free from fear, but no boat for crossing over nor a bridge for walking from one shore to the other.

“Then, Bhikkhus, it might occur to that man: ‘Here is a great stretch of water ... but no boat ... nor a bridge ... What if I were to collect grass, pieces of wood, branches and leaves, construct a raft and supported by it and laboring with hands and feet, go safely to the other shore.

lived and is a great “opportunity” for spiritual progress.

⁷⁴ All, except those who are Perfected Ones, according to the commentary.

“Crossed over, gone beyond, the brāhmaṇa stands on dry ground.”⁷⁵

“This is my simile, Bhikkhus, for showing the meaning. And this is its interpretation:

“‘The four poisonous snakes, highly dangerous, extremely venomous’—this is a designation for the four great elements: the elements of earth, water, fire and air.”⁷⁶

“‘The five murderers’—this is a designation for the five aggregates of grasping: the body-aggregate of grasping, the feeling-, perception-, mental activities-, consciousness-aggregate of grasping.

“‘The sixth, the murderous robber with an upraised sword’—this is a designation for enjoyment and attachment.

“‘The empty village’—this is a designation for the six internal sense-bases. For if a wise, learned and intelligent man examines the eye ... the ear ... the nose ... the tongue ... the body ... the mind, it appears as void, unsubstantial and empty.

“‘The village-attacking bandits’—this is a designation for the six external sense-bases. For the eye is attacked [tormented] by attractive and repulsive visible objects, the ear ... the nose ... the tongue ... the body ... the mind is attacked by attractive and repulsive mental objects.

“‘The great stretch of water,’—this is a designation for the four ‘floods’: sensual desire, [continual] becoming, [wrong] views and ignorance.”⁷⁷

“‘The near shore insecure and fearful’—this is a designation for the existence-group.”⁷⁸

“‘The far shore secure and free from fear’—this is a designation for Nibbāna.

“‘The raft—this is a designation for the Noble Eightfold Path, that is to say, right view, right thought, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness, and right concentration.

“‘Laboring with hands and feet’—this is a designation for strenuous effort.

“‘Crossed over, gone beyond, the brāhmaṇa stands on dry ground,’—this is a designation for the Perfected One (*arahant*).”

SN 35:200: The Simile of the Great Log

At one time the Lord was staying near Kosambī on the bank of the river Ganges. Now the Lord saw a large log of wood being carried along by the current of the river Ganges and on seeing it said to the Bhikkhus:

“Bhikkhus, do you see that large log of wood being carried along by the current of the river Ganges?”

“Yes, Sir.”

“If that log of wood, Bhikkhus, does not run aground on the near bank or the far bank, does not sink in midstream, is not caught on a sandbank, is not seized by humans or non-humans, is not held in a whirlpool, does not rot from within—then that log of wood will float down to the

⁷⁵ This is probably an idiomatic phrase or a popular quote.

⁷⁶ These are the four elements (*dhātu*) composing the body. When one or another of these elements becomes out of balance (“disturbed and angry”) the body becomes sick and dies.

⁷⁷ The floods (*oghā*) are identical with the taints (*āsavas*) mentioned earlier.

⁷⁸ The existence-group (*sakkāya*) is a term for the group of mental and physical factors, impermanent and subject to suffering, constituting an individual existence.

ocean, will be led down to the ocean, will tend towards the ocean.

“Similarly, Bhikkhus, if you do not run aground on the near bank or the far bank, if you do not sink in midstream, if you are not caught on a sandbank, if you are not seized by humans or non-humans, if you are not held in a whirlpool, if you do not rot from within—then you will float down to Nibbāna, you will be led down to Nibbāna, you will tend towards Nibbāna. What is the reason? Right view, Bhikkhus, floats to Nibbāna, leads to Nibbāna, tends towards Nibbāna.”

On this being said a certain Bhikkhu asked the Lord: “What, Sir, is the near bank? What is the far bank? What is sinking in midstream? What is being caught on a sandbank? What is being seized by humans? What is being seized by non-humans? What is being held in a whirlpool? What is rotting from within?”

“‘The near bank,’ Bhikkhu, is a designation for the six internal sense-bases. ‘The far bank’ is a designation for the six external sense-bases. ‘Sinking in midstream’ is a designation for enjoyment and attachment. ‘Being caught on a sandbank’ is a designation for the ‘I am-conceit.’ Now what is ‘being seized by humans’? Herein a Bhikkhu lives in close association with lay folk. He shares their joys and sorrows. He is happy with those who are happy, he suffers with those who suffer. He involves himself in all manner of business that goes on. This is called ‘being seized by humans.’

“Now what is ‘being seized by non-humans’? Herein, Bhikkhu, someone lives the holy life with the aspiration [to be born after death] among a certain group of devas. [He aspires:] ‘By this virtuous conduct or observance or austerity or holy living may I become a deva or a certain kind of deva.’ This is called ‘being seized by non-humans.’

“‘Being held in a whirlpool’ is a designation for the fivefold sensual pleasures.

“Now what is ‘rotting from within’? Herein, Bhikkhus, someone is immoral, of an evil nature, impure, of dubious behavior, of concealed deeds. Not a recluse, though pretending to be a recluse; not one who lives the holy life, though pretending to be one who does so; rotten within, full of desires, a heap of impurity. This is called ‘rotting from within.’”

Now at that time Nanda the cowherd was standing near the Lord ... and said: “I Sir, have not run aground on the near bank. I have not run aground on the far bank, I shall not sink in midstream, I shall not be caught on a sandbank, neither humans nor non-humans shall seize me, I shall not be held in a whirlpool, I shall not rot from within. Sir, may I obtain the going forth in the Lord’s presence, may I obtain full ordination?”

“Nanda, you must return the cattle to their owners.”

“They will go back by themselves, Sir; the cows are longing for their calves.”

“Do return them, Nanda.”

Then Nanda the cowherd, having returned the cattle to their owners, approached the Lord ... and said: “Sir, the cattle are restored. May I obtain, Sir, the going forth in the Lord’s presence, may I obtain full ordination?”

And Nanda the cowherd obtained the going forth in the Lord’s presence, obtained full ordination. And not long after his ordination the venerable Nanda, living alone, secluded, diligent, ardent and resolute, soon realized here and now, through his own direct knowledge, that unequalled quest of the holy life ... And the venerable Nanda became one of the Perfected Ones.

SN 35:205: The Simile of the Lute

“Let us suppose, Bhikkhus, that there is a king or a king’s chief minister who has never heard the sound of a lute (*vīṇā*). Then, on hearing the sound for the first time, he says: ‘Good man, what is that sound, so exciting, so beautiful, so intoxicating, so entrancing, so captivating?’

“And they say to him: ‘It is the sound, Sire, of what is called a lute ...’

“Thereupon he says: ‘Go and bring me that lute.’

“They bring it to him, saying: ‘This, Sire, is that lute, the sound of which is so exciting ... so captivating.’

“But he rejoins: ‘Away with the lute, my man! Just bring me that sound.’

“Then they say to him: ‘This which is called a lute, Sire, is made of various parts, a great number of parts. It is because of its various parts, that it makes a sound; that is to say, owing to the belly, sounding board, arm, head, strings, plectrum and the effort of a man’s fingers ...’

“The king or the king’s chief minister then breaks up the lute into ten or a hundred pieces. Having broken it up he splinters it further, burns it in a fire and reduces it to ashes. Having reduced it to ashes he winnows the ashes in a strong wind or lets them be borne away on the swift current of a river. And he says: ‘A poor thing is this that you call a lute, my man, whatever the so-called lute may be. People have been infatuated and led astray by it for too long.’

“Just in this way, Bhikkhus, a Bhikkhu investigates body as far as body goes; he investigates feeling ... perception ... mental activities ... consciousness as far as consciousness goes. So investigating whatever there may be, there is for him no ‘I’ or ‘mine’ or ‘I am’ in it.”

SN 36:4: The Bottomless Abyss

“The uninstructed ordinary person, Bhikkhus, has a saying: ‘There is a bottomless abyss in the great ocean.’ But the uninstructed ordinary person speaks of what does not exist, of what is not to be found, to wit, that there is a bottomless abyss in the great ocean. A designation for painful bodily feeling, Bhikkhus, is this term ‘bottomless abyss.’ When an uninstructed ordinary person experiences painful bodily feeling he grieves, is afflicted, laments, beats his breast, cries out loud and becomes distraught. So it is said, Bhikkhus, the uninstructed ordinary person has not emerged from the bottomless abyss, has not obtained a firm foothold.

“But, Bhikkhus, when an instructed noble disciple experiences painful bodily feeling he does not grieve, is not afflicted, does not lament nor beat his breast nor cry out loud nor become distraught. So it is said, Bhikkhus, the instructed noble disciple has emerged from the bottomless abyss and has obtained a firm foothold.⁷⁹”

SN 38:1: A Question on Nibbāna

At one time the venerable Sāriputta was dwelling in [the country of] Magadha at the village of

⁷⁹ The noble disciple has control over his mind. As he has had a realization of the Four Noble Truths, he knows that pain is an exemplification of the first Noble Truth and is the result of past kamma (deeds). If he reacts to it in the way ordinary man does, this would merely be accumulating more kamma with its result in the future.

Nālaka. There the wandering ascetic Jambukhādaka approached the venerable Sāriputta and exchanged friendly greetings with him. After exchanging greetings and reminiscences he sat down to one side. Having sat down the wandering ascetic Jambukhādaka said this to the venerable Sāriputta:

“Nibbāna, Nibbāna! It is called, friend Sāriputta. But what, friend, is Nibbāna?”

“The ending of greed, aversion and delusion, friend, is called Nibbāna.”

“But is there a path, is there a line of conduct, for the realization of this Nibbāna?”

“There is a path, there is a line of conduct, friend, for the realization of this Nibbāna.”

“What is the path, what is the line of conduct ...?”

“It is just this Noble Eightfold Path ... that is to say, right view, right thought, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness, and right concentration ...”

“It is a good path, friend, a good line of conduct for the realization of this Nibbāna, and a sufficient reason for being diligent!”

Part Five: The Great Section (Maha Vagga)

SN 45:2: Half the Holy Life

Thus have I heard. At one time the Lord was staying amongst the Sakyas, at the Sakya market town of Sakkara. Then the venerable Ānanda approached the Lord, prostrated himself and sat down to one side. Sitting there the venerable Ānanda said to the Lord:

“Half of this holy life, Lord, is friendship with the good, companionship with the good, association with the good.”

“Do not say that, Ānanda. Do not say that, Ānanda. It is the whole of this holy life, this friendship, companionship and association with the good. Of a Bhikkhu, Ānanda, who is a friend, companion, and associate of the good it is to be expected that he will cultivate and seriously practice the Noble Eightfold Path. And how, Ānanda, does a Bhikkhu ... cultivate and seriously practice the Noble Eightfold Path? Herein, Ānanda, a Bhikkhu cultivates right view centered on detachment, centered on dispassion, centered on cessation, ending in relinquishment [of all attachments]. He cultivates right thought ... speech ... action ... livelihood ... effort ... mindfulness ... right concentration centered on detachment, centered on dispassion, centered on cessation, ending in relinquishment.

“In this manner, Ānanda, a Bhikkhu who is a friend, companion, associate of the good cultivates and seriously practices the Noble Eightfold Path.

“It is in this manner, Ānanda, it should be understood how the whole of this holy life is friendship, companionship, and association with the good.

“By taking me as a good friend, beings liable to birth are released from birth, beings liable to old age are released from old age, beings liable to death are released from death, beings liable to sorrow, lamentation, suffering, grief and despair are released therefrom.

“In this manner, Ānanda, it should be understood how the whole of this holy life is friendship with the good, companionship with the good, association with the good.”

SN 45:4: The Brahmin

Whoso has faith and wisdom yoked in harness,
With conscience as the pole, the mind as reins
And mindfulness as watchful charioteer,
Goes in a chariot equipped with virtue,
Its axle meditation, energy its wheel
Mind's equipoise its even shaft,
Desirelessness its drapery; his arms
Are freedom from all malice, harmlessness,
Detachment of the mind; his leather coat
Forbearance. Furnished thus, the chariot
Rolls on from bondage to security.

Built by oneself alone is it,
This vehicle divine and unsurpassed.
In it the wise are carried from the world,
In it they drive to certain victory.

SN 45:8: Analysis

Sāvattḥī was the place [where this discourse was given].

“I will teach you, Bhikkhus, the Noble Eightfold Path and analyze it. Listen, attend carefully and I will speak.”

“Yes, Sir,” those Bhikkhus replied to the Lord.

The Lord said: “What, Bhikkhus, is the Noble Eightfold Path? It is right view and so forth ...

“Now what, Bhikkhus, is right view? Whatever is knowledge of suffering, the origin of suffering, the cessation of suffering and the way leading to cessation of suffering. This, Bhikkhus, is called right view.

“Now what, Bhikkhus, is right thought? Whatever is a thought of renunciation, a thought of friendliness, a thought of harmlessness. This, Bhikkhus, is called right thought.

“Now what, Bhikkhus, is right speech? Whatever is abstention from lying speech, abstention from malicious speech, abstention from harsh speech, abstention from idle speech. This, Bhikkhus, is called right speech.

“Now what, Bhikkhus, is right action? Whatever is abstention from harming living creatures, abstention from unchastity (*abrahmacariyā*). This, Bhikkhus, is called right action.

“Now what, Bhikkhus, is right livelihood? Herein, Bhikkhus, the noble disciple having given up a wrong livelihood lives his life by means of a right livelihood. This, Bhikkhus, is called right livelihood.

“Now what, Bhikkhus, is right effort? Herein, Bhikkhus, a Bhikkhu generates desire, strives, stirs up energy, exerts his mind and struggles to prevent the arising of evil, unskilled states that have not arisen. He generates desire and strives ... to be rid of evil, unskilled states that have arisen. He generates desire and strives ... to establish and not lose, for the further cultivation, abundance, development and perfection of skilled states that have arisen. This, Bhikkhus, is called right effort.

“Now what, Bhikkhus, is right mindfulness? Herein, Bhikkhus, a Bhikkhu lives practicing body-contemplation on the body, ardent, clearly comprehending and mindful, having overcome covetousness and grief concerning the world. He lives practicing feeling-contemplation on feelings ... mind-contemplation on [the states of] mind ... mind-object-contemplation on the objects of mind, ardent, clearly comprehending and mindful, having overcome covetousness and grief concerning the world. This, Bhikkhus, is called right mindfulness. Now what, Bhikkhus, is right concentration? Herein, Bhikkhus, a Bhikkhu, secluded from unskilled things, dwells having entered the first absorption (*jhāna*), accompanied by thinking and investigation, born of detachment and [filled with] joy and bliss.

“After the subsiding of thinking and investigation and by gaining inner serenity and unification of mind, he dwells having entered the second absorption, which is without thinking and investigation, is born of concentration and [filled with] joy and bliss.

“After the fading away of joy he dwells in equanimity, mindful and clearly comprehending, and experiences in his person a bliss of which the Noble Ones say, ‘He who has equanimity and is mindful lives blissfully,’ and he dwells having entered the third absorption.

“After the abandoning of pleasure and pain and the disappearance of former happiness and grief, he dwells having entered the fourth absorption which is without pleasure and pain and is purified by equanimity and mindfulness. This, Bhikkhus, is called right concentration.”

SN 46:3: Virtue

“Bhikkhus, whatsoever Bhikkhus possess moral virtue, possess concentration, possess wisdom, possess liberation, possess the knowledge and insight of liberation—the [mere] seeing of those Bhikkhus is of great profit, I say. To hear about those Bhikkhus ... to approach those Bhikkhus ... to associate with those Bhikkhus ... to remember those Bhikkhus ... to imitate those Bhikkhus in going forth [into homelessness] is of great profit, I say. For what reason? On hearing the Dhamma⁸⁰ of such Bhikkhus one lives secluded with a twofold seclusion, of body and mind. Living thus secluded one remembers the Dhamma and reflects upon it.

“At whatever time, Bhikkhus, a Bhikkhu living thus secluded remembers and reflects upon the Dhamma, at that time the enlightenment factor⁸¹ of mindfulness is aroused in that Bhikkhu. At whatever time a Bhikkhu develops the enlightenment factor of mindfulness, at that time that Bhikkhu’s development of it comes to perfection. He living mindful thus, considers with wisdom and investigates the Dhamma and undertakes an inquiry into it.

“At whatever time, Bhikkhus, a Bhikkhu, living thus mindful, considers with wisdom, investigates and undertakes an inquiry into the Dhamma, at that time the enlightenment factor of reality-investigation⁸² is aroused in that Bhikkhu. At whatever time a Bhikkhu develops the enlightenment factor of reality-investigation, at that time that Bhikkhu’s development of it comes to perfection. In him, considering with wisdom, investigating and undertaking an inquiry into the Dhamma, tireless energy is aroused.

“At whatever time ... tireless energy is aroused, at that time the enlightenment factor of energy is aroused in that Bhikkhu. At whatever time a Bhikkhu develops the enlightenment factor of energy, at that time that Bhikkhu’s development of it comes to perfection. In one who has energy aroused non-carnal joy arises.

“At whatever time, in one who has energy aroused non-carnal joy arises, at that time the enlightenment factor of joy is aroused in that Bhikkhu. At whatever time a Bhikkhu develops the enlightenment factor of joy, at that time that Bhikkhu’s development of it comes to perfection. In one who is joyful body and mind are tranquilized.

“At whatever time ... body and mind are tranquilized, at that time the enlightenment factor of tranquility is aroused in that Bhikkhu. At whatever time a Bhikkhu develops the enlightenment factor of tranquility, at that time that Bhikkhu’s development of it comes to perfection. One who has tranquility of body is blissful; in one who is blissful the mind is concentrated.

“At whatever time ... the mind is concentrated, at that time the enlightenment factor of concentration is aroused in that Bhikkhu. At whatever time a Bhikkhu develops the enlightenment factor of concentration at that time that Bhikkhu’s development of it comes to perfection. On his mind thus concentrated he looks with perfect equanimity.

⁸⁰ “Dhamma” is a word of several meanings. Here besides meaning “the teaching of ...,” it could also mean: “the virtuous nature or conduct of ...,” “the (inspiring) ideal of those Bhikkhus.” All these meanings of the term “dhamma” may be taken into consideration.

⁸¹ These seven factors of enlightenment (*satta-bojjhaṅga*): mindfulness, reality-investigation (see following note), energy, joy, tranquility, concentration and equanimity, are, according to SN XLVI 5, so called because “they lead to enlightenment” (*bodhāya saṃvattanti*), or else they are the constituent factors (*aṅga*) of enlightenment (*bodhi*) itself.

⁸² *Dhamma-vicaya*. The term *dhamma* here does not refer to the Buddha’s Teaching, but to the mental and physical phenomena (*dhammā*) presented to the mind in their real nature (i.e., without emotional coloring, likes and dislikes, etc.) through the cultivation of mindfulness.

“At whatever time, Bhikkhus, a Bhikkhu looks with perfect equanimity on the mind thus concentrated, at that time the enlightenment factor of equanimity is aroused in that Bhikkhu. At whatever time a Bhikkhu develops the enlightenment factor of equanimity, at that time that Bhikkhu’s development of it comes to perfection.

“By developing the seven enlightenment factors and seriously practicing them thus, seven fruits, seven benefits are certain. What seven fruits, what seven benefits?

“One attains final knowledge (*aññā*) here and now prior [to one’s death]; if one does not attain final knowledge here and now prior [to one’s death], then one attains it at the time of death; if one does not attain final knowledge here and now ... nor at the time of death, then by the destruction of the five lower fetters⁸³ one attains final deliverance early [in one’s next existence]; if one does not attain final knowledge here and now ... nor ... early [in one’s next existence], then by the destruction of the five lower fetters one attains final deliverance late [in one’s next existence]; if one does not attain final knowledge here and now ... nor ... late [in one’s next existence], then by the destruction of the five lower fetters one attains final deliverance without [much] effort; if one does not attain final knowledge here and now ... nor ... without [much] effort, then by the destruction of the five lower fetters one attains final deliverance with [some] effort; if one does not attain final knowledge here and now ... nor ... with [some] effort, then by the destruction of the five lower fetters one goes up-stream, bound for the highest gods.⁸⁴

“By developing the seven enlightenment factors and seriously practicing them thus, these seven benefits are certain.”

SN 47:18: Brahma

At one time the Lord was staying at Uruvela on the bank of the river Nerañjara beneath the Goatherd’s Banyan Tree, having just attained full Enlightenment. While thus alone and secluded this thought arose in the Lord’s mind:

“This is the sole way for the purification of beings, for the surmounting of sorrow and lamentation, for the disappearing of suffering and grief, for reaching the right path, for realizing Nibbāna, namely, the four foundations of mindfulness. What are the four?

⁸³ *Orambhāgiya-saṃyojana*: the five fetters belonging to the lower, the sensual realms of existence, these being:

- i. *Sakkāya-ditṭhi*—views about the “existing group” of mental and physical phenomena (i.e., the five aggregates), that they constitute a “self” or a “person” or an “ego” thought of as being permanent or existing in unbroken continuity from the past into the future;
- ii. *Vicikicchā*—wavering doubt;
- iii. *Sīlabbata-parāmāsa*—holding to habits and customs, mere external observances, thinking they will bring release of themselves;
- iv. *Kāmarāga*—sensual passions and attachments;
- v. *Vyāpāda*—ill-will, aversion.

A person who has eliminated these five fetters is called an *anāgāmi*, a never-returner. After death he does not come back again to this world, but is born in one of the five Pure Abodes (*Suddhāvāsa*) of the realm of form (*rūpaloka*) and there realizes final deliverance. The last five of these seven fruits refer to the five grades of *anāgāmi* in descending order, the highest is “one who attains final deliverance early,” down to the “one going upstream.”

⁸⁴ *Akaniṭṭhāgāmi*: bound for the gods (*devā*) of the highest of the Pure Abodes. This is the lowest of the five types of *anāgāmi* who, starting from the lowest, has to work his way through all five Pure Abodes before attaining final deliverance.

“A Bhikkhu should live practicing body-contemplation on the body ... feeling-contemplation on feelings ... mind-contemplation on mind ... mind-object-contemplation on the objects of mind, ardent, clearly comprehending and mindful, having overcome covetousness and grief concerning the world. This is the sole way ... namely, the four foundations of mindfulness.”

Then Brahma Sahampati, being aware by his mind of the thought in the Lord’s mind, just as a strong man might stretch his bent arm or bend his stretched arm, so did he disappear from the Brahma world and appear in front of the Lord. And arranging his upper robe over one shoulder, he bowed down before the Lord with folded hands and said:

“So it is, Lord! So it is, Happy One! This is the sole way for the purification of beings ... namely, the four foundations of mindfulness.”

So spoke Brahma Sahampati. And after these words he further said:

The sole way ending birth he sees;
Compassionate, he knows the path.
By this path they crossed before,
Will cross and cross now the flood.⁸⁵

SN 47:35: Mindful

“Bhikkhus, a Bhikkhu should live mindful and clearly comprehending. This is our instruction to you. And how is a Bhikkhu mindful? Herein, Bhikkhus, a Bhikkhu lives practicing body-contemplation on the body feeling ... feeling-contemplation on feelings ... mind-contemplation on mind ... mind-object-contemplation on the objects of mind, ardent, clearly comprehending and mindful, having overcome covetousness and grief concerning the world. In this manner, Bhikkhus, a Bhikkhu is mindful. And how is a Bhikkhu clearly comprehending?

“Herein, Bhikkhus, feelings are known to a Bhikkhu as they arise, known as they stay, known as they come to an end. Thoughts are known as they arise, known as they stay, known as they come to an end. Perceptions are known as they arise, known as they stay, known as they come to an end. In this manner, Bhikkhus, a Bhikkhu is clearly comprehending.

“A Bhikkhu should live mindful and clearly comprehending. This is our instruction to you.”

SN 47:37: Desire

“These, Bhikkhus, are the four foundations of mindfulness ...

“While he is living practicing body-contemplation on the body, whatever desire there is with regard to the body is abandoned. By abandoning desire the deathless is realized.

“While he is living practicing feeling-contemplation on feelings ... mind-contemplation on mind ... mind-object contemplation on the objects of mind, whatever desire there is with regard to mind-objects is abandoned. By abandoning desire the deathless is realized.”

⁸⁵ The four *satipaṭṭhānā* or foundations of mindfulness are most important and the basis of all the meditation practices leading to liberation found within Buddhism. In its stress upon *sati* (mindfulness, attentiveness, awareness or recollection), and in its detailed instruction, Buddhism is unique. Its importance is emphasized here by its being described as “the sole way” (the “one,” the “only,” the “direct way,” *ekāyano*).

SN 48:9: Analysis

“Bhikkhus, there are these five faculties. What five? The faculties of faith, energy, mindfulness, concentration and wisdom. Now what, Bhikkhus, is the faculty of faith?”

“Herein, Bhikkhus, the noble disciple has faith. He has faith in the Enlightenment of the Tathāgata thus: ‘The Lord is such since he is Arahant, fully Enlightened, perfect in understanding and conduct, sublime, knower of the worlds, unsurpassed leader of men to be tamed, the Teacher of devas and men, enlightened, the Lord.’ This, Bhikkhus, is called the faculty of faith.

“Now what, Bhikkhus, is the faculty of energy?”

“Herein, Bhikkhus, the noble disciple lives with energy aroused for getting rid of unskilled states and perfecting skilled states, strenuous and energetic, not giving up the effort with regard to skilled states. This, Bhikkhus, is called the faculty of energy.

“Now what, Bhikkhus, is the faculty of mindfulness?”

“Herein, Bhikkhus, the noble disciple is mindful, possessing excellent mindfulness and prudence, remembering and recollecting what was done and said long ago.⁸⁶ This, Bhikkhus, is called the faculty of mindfulness.

“Now what, Bhikkhus, is the faculty of concentration?”

“Herein, Bhikkhus, the noble disciple, by making relinquishment [of attachment] the object of thought, obtains concentration, obtains unification of mind. This, Bhikkhus, is called the faculty of concentration.

“Now what, Bhikkhus, is the faculty of wisdom?”

“Herein, Bhikkhus, the noble disciple is wise, possessing the wisdom [that sees] the rising and passing away [of phenomena], noble, penetrating, leading to the complete ending of suffering. This, Bhikkhus, is called the faculty of wisdom.”

SN 52:9: All, or Ambapāli’s Grove

At one time the venerable Sāriputta and the venerable Anuruddha were staying at Vesālī in Ambapāli’s Grove. And the venerable Sāriputta, emerging from seclusion in the evening, approached the venerable Anuruddha ... and said:

“Very clear and bright are your faculties, friend Anuruddha. Quite pure and cleansed are your features. In what state does the venerable Anuruddha mostly dwell now?”

“I mostly dwell now, friend with the mind well established in the four foundations of mindfulness. What four? I live practicing body-contemplation on the body ... feeling ... mind ... mind-object-contemplation on the objects of mind, ardent, clearly comprehending and mindful, having overcome covetousness and grief concerning the world. I mostly dwell now, friend, with the mind well established in these four foundations of mindfulness.

“Whatever Bhikkhu, friend, is an Arahant, has finished with the taints, reached fulfillment, done what had to be done, laid aside the burden, attained his objective, completely finished with the fetter of becoming and is released through perfect knowledge, he mostly dwells with a

⁸⁶ Besides meaning awareness in the present, in the here and now, mindfulness also has the secondary meaning of memory.

mind well established in the four foundations of mindfulness.”

“It is indeed a gain for us, friend. It is indeed a great gain for us, friend, that in the presence of the venerable Anuruddha we have heard him utter this impressive speech.⁸⁷”

SN 55:1: Wheel-Turning King

“Bhikkhus, even though a Wheel-turning King has absolute lordship and sovereignty over the four continents, and when the body breaks up at death he arises in a good bourne, the heaven world, in companionship with the devas of the Heaven of the Thirty-three, and there in the Nandana Grove, surrounded by a group of celestial nymphs he roams about possessing and enjoying the fivefold heavenly sense-pleasures—even so, there are four things he does not have. And thus he is not completely freed from [liability to arise in] Niraya hell, the animal womb, the realm of [hungry] ghosts, a state of loss, an evil bourne, a state of ruin.

“Even though a noble disciple, Bhikkhus, keeps himself alive with scraps of food and wears cast-off rags—yet there are four things that he has, and is thus completely freed from Niraya hell, the animal womb, the realm of [hungry] ghosts, a state of loss, an evil bourne, a state of ruin. What are the four things he has?

“The noble disciple, Bhikkhus, through [having had] experience [of reality] has confidence⁸⁸ in the Enlightened One thus: ‘The Lord is such since he is an Arahant, fully enlightened, perfect in understanding and conduct, sublime, knower of the worlds, unsurpassed leader of men to be tamed, the Teacher of devas and men, enlightened, the Lord.’

“Through [having had] experience [of reality] he has confidence in the Dhamma thus: ‘Well taught is the Dhamma by the Lord, visible here and now, immediate [in result],⁸⁹ inviting one to come and see, guiding one onward and capable of being experienced by the wise.’

“Through [having had] experience [of reality] he has confidence in the Community thus: ‘The community of the Lord’s disciples has progressed by the good way, the community of the Lord’s disciples has progressed by the straight way, the community of the Lord’s disciples has progressed by the true way, the community of the Lord’s disciples has progressed by the proper way, that is to say, the four pairs of men, the eight types of persons.⁹⁰ This community of the Lord’s disciples is worthy of adoration, is worthy of hospitality, is worthy of gifts, is worthy of reverential salutation, as an unsurpassed field of merit for the world.’

“He has the virtues pleasing to the Noble Ones; [virtues that are] unbroken, untorn, unblotched, unmottled, liberating, commended by the perceptive, not misapprehended, conducive to concentration.

⁸⁷ Sāriputta calls it “this impressive speech” (literally “bull-like utterance,” *āsabhī-vācā*) for it is the Ven. Anuruddha’s declaration of having attained the status of a Perfected One.

⁸⁸ Faith (*saddhā*) or confidence (*pasāda*) in Buddhism is not mere belief in something or someone, but arises upon the attachment of (spiritual) knowledge and realization, the vision of the goal—Nibbāna. A noble disciple is a person who has obtained this knowledge by entering upon one of the Noble Paths, of stream-entry, once-returning, never-returning and arahant. The “four things” are also called the “four factors of stream-entry” (*sotāpattiyāṅga*). A stream-enterer is liable to be born seven times at the most, either in the human world or one of the heavens, but never lower than human (e.g., in hell, the animal state, etc.), before attaining final deliverance.

⁸⁹ The attainment of one of the Noble Paths (which is a *kamma*, a willed action) is immediately followed by its fruit (result).

⁹⁰ The “four pairs” are those who have attained to the path of stream-entry and the fruit of stream-entry (*sotāpatti-magga*, *sotāpatti-phala*) and similarly for the other three, making the “eight persons.”

“These are the four things he has.

“There is the possession of the four continents, Bhikkhus, and there is the possession of these four things. But the possession of the four continents is not worth a sixteenth of the possession of these four things.”

SN 55:16: Friends and Colleagues

“Bhikkhus, those for whom you have compassion, those who you think worth listening to—whether friends, acquaintances, kinsmen or relatives—they should be encouraged in, introduced to and established in the four factors of stream-entry. What are the four?

“They should be encouraged in, introduced to and established in confidence in the Enlightened One ... the Dhamma ... the Community ... in the virtues pleasing to the Noble Ones, unbroken, untorn, unblotched, unmottled, liberating, commended by the perceptive, not misapprehended, conducive to concentration.

“Those for whom you have compassion, those who think you worth listening to—whether friends, acquaintances, kinsmen or relatives—they should be encouraged in, introduced to and established in these four factors of stream-entry.”⁹¹

SN 55:51: With Verses

Whoso has faith in the Tathāgata
Unshakable and well established,
Whoso has virtue that is good,
Pleasing and commended by the Noble,

Whoso has confidence in the Community
And vision that is straight and true:
“Not poor is he,” they say,
“Not empty and not wasted is his life.”

Therefore the wise should give themselves
To faith and virtue and to confidence
In clear vision of the Dhamma,
Remembering the message of the Buddhas.

SN 56:13: Aggregates

“There are, Bhikkhus, these four Noble Truths. What four? The Noble Truth of suffering, the Noble Truth of the origin of suffering, the Noble Truth of the cessation of suffering and the Noble Truth of the way leading to cessation of suffering.

“Now what, Bhikkhus, is the Noble Truth of suffering?

“It may be said to be the five aggregates of grasping, namely, the body-aggregate of grasping, the feeling-aggregate of grasping, the perception-aggregate of grasping, the mental activities-aggregate of grasping, the consciousness-aggregate of grasping. This, Bhikkhus, is called the Noble Truth of suffering.

⁹¹ In SN XLVII 48 a similar exhortation is found, substituting the four foundations of mindfulness for the four factors of stream-entry.

“Now what, Bhikkhus, is the Noble Truth of the origin of suffering?”

“It is that craving leading to [renewal of] becoming along with enjoyment and attachment, finding enjoyment now here, now there; namely, sensual craving, the craving for becoming, the craving for non-becoming.⁹² This, Bhikkhus, is called the Noble Truth of the origin of suffering.

“Now what, Bhikkhus, is the Noble Truth of the cessation of suffering?”

“It is the complete fading away and cessation of this very craving, the abandoning and rejecting of it, liberation and detachment from it. This, Bhikkhus, is called the Noble Truth of the cessation of suffering.

“Now what, Bhikkhus, is the Noble Truth of the way to cessation of suffering?”

“It is just this Noble Eightfold Path, that is to say, right view, right thought, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness, and right concentration. This, Bhikkhus, is called the Noble Truth of the way to cessation of suffering.

“These, Bhikkhus, are the four Noble Truths.

“Therefore, Bhikkhus, to realize, ‘This is suffering,’ an effort must be made. To realize, ‘This is the origin of suffering,’ an effort must be made. To realize, ‘This is the cessation of suffering,’ an effort must be made. To realize, ‘This is the way leading to cessation of suffering,’ an effort must be made.”

SN 56:35: A Hundred Spears

“Suppose, Bhikkhus, a man whose life-span is a hundred years, who would live a hundred years, and they were to say to him: ‘Come, good man, in the morning they will strike you with a hundred spears and again at midday and in the evening. Now, good man, you, whose life-span is a hundred years, who will live a hundred years, being struck daily with three hundred spears, at the end of the hundred years will penetrate [to a realization of] the four Noble Truth not penetrated before.’

“Even if it were to happen like that a son of good family, Bhikkhus, influenced by what is of value, might well undergo [the ordeal]. For what reason? Unimaginable, Bhikkhus, is the beginning to the round of births [and deaths]. A starting point is not evident of [the suffering endured from] blows by spears, swords, and axes. But [actually], O monks, I do not say that the penetration of the four Noble Truths is accompanied by suffering and grief, but it is accompanied by pleasure and happiness, I say ... Therefore, Bhikkhus, to realize, ‘This is suffering,’ an effort must be made ... To realize, ‘This is the way to cessation of suffering,’ an effort must be made.”

SN 56:38: The Sun

“Bhikkhus, as long as moon and sun do not arise in the world, so long is there no manifestation of a great light, of great brightness. There is then blinding darkness, a total darkness. There is no discerning of night and day, the months and half-months nor the seasons and the years.

⁹² These last two forms of craving are: the desire for the perpetuation of existence and for self annihilation, and are connected with the two extreme views of eternalism (*sassata-dit̐hi*), belief in the continuation of a “self” or “soul” after death, and annihilation (*uccheda-dit̐hi*), belief that the personality, identified with the five aggregates, ceases completely after death.

“But when moon and sun arise in the world, then there is a manifestation of a great light, of great brightness. There is then no blinding darkness, no total darkness. Then night and day are discerned, the months and half-months and the seasons and the years.

“Similarly, Bhikkhus, as long as a Tathāgata, a Perfected One, a fully Enlightened One does not arise in the world, so long is there no manifestation of a great light, of great brightness. There is then a blinding darkness, a total darkness. There is no declaring, teaching, making known, establishing, disclosing, analyzing, making clear of the four Noble Truths.

“But when a Tathāgata, a Perfected One, a fully Enlightened One arises in the world, then there is a manifestation of a great light, of great brightness. There is then no blinding darkness, no total darkness. There is then a declaring, a teaching, a making clear of the four Noble Truths ...

“Therefore, Bhikkhus, to realize, ‘This is suffering,’ an effort must be made ... To realize, ‘This is the way leading to cessation of suffering,’ an effort must be made.”
