

The Noble Quest

Ariyapariyesana Sutta

*The 26th Discourse
of the Middle Length Sayings
(Majjhima Nikāya)*

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The Discourse on The Noble Quest (Ariyapariyesana Sutta)

Thus have I heard: At one time the Lord was staying near Sāvattthī in the Jeta Grove in Anāthapiṇḍika’s monastery. Then the Lord having dressed early, taking his bowl and robe, entered Sāvattthī for alms-food. Then a number of monks approached the venerable Ānanda; having approached, they spoke thus to the venerable Ānanda: “It is long since we, reverend Ānanda, heard a talk on dhamma face to face with the Lord. It would be good if we, reverend Ānanda, got a chance of hearing a talk on dhamma face to face with the Lord.”

“Well then, the venerable ones should go to the hermitage of the brahman Rammaka, and probably you would get a chance of hearing a talk on dhamma face to face with the Lord.”

“Yes, your reverence,” these monks answered the venerable Ānanda in assent. Then the Lord, having walked for alms in Sāvattthī, returning from (the quest for) alms, after the meal, said to the venerable Ānanda: “We will go along, Ānanda, and approach the Eastern Park, the palace of Migara’s mother, for the day-sojourn.”

“Very well, Lord,” the venerable Ānanda answered the Lord in assent. Then the Lord together with the venerable Ānanda approached the Eastern Park, the palace of Migara’s mother for the day-sojourn. Then the Lord, emerging from seclusion towards evening, said to the venerable Ānanda:

“We will go along, Ānanda, and approach the Eastern Porch to bathe our limbs.”

“Very well, Lord,” the venerable Ānanda answered the Lord in assent. Then the Lord, together with the venerable Ānanda, approached the Eastern Porch to bathe their limbs. When he had bathed his limbs at the Eastern Porch and had come out (of the water), he stood in a single robe drying his limbs. Then the venerable Ānanda spoke thus to the Lord:

“Lord, the hermitage of the brahman Rammaka is not far; the hermitage of the brahman Rammaka is lovely, Lord; the hermitage of the brahman Rammaka is beautiful, Lord. It were good, Lord, if out of compassion¹ the Lord were to approach the hermitage of the brahman Rammaka.” The Lord consented by becoming silent. Then the Lord approached the hermitage of the brahman Rammaka. At that time a number of monks came to be sitting down and talking Dhamma in the hermitage of the brahman Rammaka. Then the Lord stood outside the porch waiting for the talk to finish. Then the Lord, knowing that the talk had finished, coughed and knocked on the bar of the door; those monks opened the door to the Lord. Then the Lord, having entered the hermitage of the brahman Rammaka, sat down on the appointed seat. As he was sitting down, the Lord said to the monks:

“As you were sitting down just now, what was your talk about, monks? What was your talk that was interrupted?”

“Lord, our talk that was interrupted was about the Lord himself; then he arrived.”

“It were good, monks, that when young men of family such as you who have gone forth from home into homelessness out of faith are gathered together that you talk about dhamma. When you are gathered together, monks, there are two things to be done: either talk about Dhamma or noble silence.

“These, monks, are the two quests: the noble quest and the ignoble quest. And what, monks, is the ignoble quest? As to this, monks, someone himself liable to birth, seeks what is likewise

¹ For the five-hundred monks who wished to hear the Lord, and who had gone to the hermitage.

liable to birth; himself being liable to ageing, seeks what is likewise liable to ageing; himself being liable to decay, ... himself being liable to dying, ... himself being liable to sorrow, ... himself being liable to stain, seeks what is likewise liable to stain.

And what, monks, would you say is liable to birth? Sons and wife, monks, are liable to birth, women-slaves and men-slaves are liable to birth, goats and sheep are liable to birth, cocks and swine are liable to birth, elephants, cows, horses and mares are liable to birth, gold and silver are liable to birth. These attachments, monks, are liable to birth; yet this (man), enslaved, infatuated, addicted, himself being liable to birth, seeks what is likewise liable to birth.

And what, monks, would you say is liable to ageing? Sons and wife, monks, are liable to ageing, women-slaves and men-slaves ... goats and sheep ... cocks and swine ... elephants, cows, horses and mares ... gold and silver are liable to ageing. These attachments, monks, are liable to ageing; yet this (man), enslaved, infatuated, addicted, himself being liable to ageing, seeks what is likewise liable to ageing.

And what, monks, would you say is liable to disease? Sons and wife, monks, are liable to disease, women-slaves and men-slaves... goats and sheep ... cocks and swine ... elephants, cows, horses and mares are liable to disease. These attachments, monks, are liable to disease ... seeks what is likewise liable to disease.

And what, monks, would you say is liable to dying? Sons and wife, monks, are liable to dying, women-slaves and men-slaves ... goats and sheep ... cocks and swine ... elephants, cows, horses and mares are liable to dying. These attachments, monks are liable to dying ... seeks what is likewise liable to dying.

And what, monks, would you say is liable to sorrow? Sons and wife, monks, are liable to sorrow, women-slaves and men-slaves ... goats and sheep ... cocks and swine ... elephants, cows, horses and mares are liable to sorrow. These attachments, monks, are liable to sorrow ... seeks what is likewise liable to sorrow

And what monks, do you say is liable to stain? Sons and wife, monks, are liable to stain, women-slaves and men-slaves ... goats and sheep ... cocks and swine ... elephants, cows, horses and mares ... gold and silver are liable to stain. These attachments, monks, are liable to stain; yet this (man), enslaved, infatuated, addicted, himself being liable to stain, seeks what is likewise liable to stain. This, monks, is the ignoble quest.

And what, monks, is the noble quest? As to this, monks, someone, himself being liable to birth, having known the peril in what is likewise liable to birth, seeks the unborn, the uttermost security from the bonds—*nibbāna*; himself being liable to ageing, having known the peril in what is likewise liable to ageing, seeks the unageing, the uttermost security from the bonds—*nibbāna*; himself being liable to decay, having known the peril in what is likewise liable to decay, seeks the undecaying, the uttermost security from the bonds—*nibbāna*; himself being liable to dying, having known the peril in what is likewise liable to dying, seeks the undying, the uttermost security from the bonds—*nibbāna*; himself being liable to sorrow, having known the peril in what is likewise liable to sorrow, seeks the unsorrowing, the uttermost security from the bonds—*nibbāna*; himself being liable to stain, seeks the stainless, the uttermost security from the bonds—*nibbāna*. This, monks, is the noble quest.

And I too, monks, before awakening, while I was still the bodhisatta, not fully awakened, being myself liable to birth, sought what was likewise liable to birth; being myself liable to ageing, sought what was likewise liable to ageing; being myself liable to disease ... being myself liable to dying ... being myself liable to sorrow ... being myself liable to stain, sought what was likewise liable to stain. Then it occurred to me, monks: "Why do I, liable to birth myself, seek what is likewise liable to birth; being myself liable to ageing ... being myself liable to stain, seek

what is likewise liable to stain? Suppose that I, (although) being myself liable to birth, having known the peril in what is likewise liable to birth, should seek the unborn, the uttermost security from the bonds, nibbāna? Being myself liable to ageing, ... should seek the unageing, ... Being myself liable to decay, ... should seek the undecaying, ... Being myself liable to dying, ... should seek the undying, ... Being myself liable to sorrow, ... should seek the unsorrowing, ... Being myself liable to stain, having known the peril in what is likewise liable to stain, should seek the stainless, the uttermost security from the bonds—nibbāna?

Then, I, monks, after a time, being young, my hair coal-black, possessed of radiant youth, in the prime of my life—although my unwilling parents wept and wailed having cut off my hair and beard, having put on yellow robes, went forth from home into homelessness. I, being gone forth thus, a quester for what is good, searching for the incomparable, matchless path to peace, approached Ālāra the Kālāma; having approached, I spoke thus to Ālāra the Kālāma; ‘I, reverend Kālāma, want to lead the Holy Life in this dhamma and discipline.’ This said, monks, Ālāra the Kālāma spoke thus to me: ‘Let the venerable one stay here. This dhamma is such that an intelligent man, having soon realised super-knowledge for himself (as learnt from) his own teacher, may enter on and abide in it.’ So I, monks, very soon, very quickly, mastered that dhamma. I, monks, as far as mere lip service, mere repetition were concerned, spoke the doctrine of knowledge, and the doctrine of the elders, and I claimed—I as well as others—that ‘I know, I see.’ Then it occurred to me, monks: ‘But Ālāra the Kālāma does not merely proclaim this dhamma simply out of faith; it is because having realised Super-knowledge for himself, entering on it, he abides therein. For surely Ālāra the Kālāma proceeds knowing, seeing this dhamma.’ Then did I, monks, approach Ālāra the Kālāma; having approached, I spoke thus to Ālāra the Kālāma: ‘To what extent do you, reverend Kālāma, having realised super-knowledge for yourself, entering thereon, proclaim this dhamma?’

When this had been said, monks, Ālāra the Kālāma proclaimed the plane of no-thing.² Then it occurred to me, monks: ‘it is not only Ālāra the Kālāma who has faith; I too have faith. It is not only Ālāra the Kālāma who has energy; I too have energy. It is not only Ālāra the Kālāma who has mindfulness; I too have mindfulness. It is not only Ālāra the Kālāma who has concentration; I too have concentration. It is not only Ālāra the Kālāma who has intuitive wisdom; I too have intuitive wisdom. Suppose now that I should strive for the realisation of that dhamma which Ālāra the Kālāma proclaims: ‘Having realised super-knowledge for myself, entering on it I am abiding therein?’ So I, monks, very soon, very quickly, having realised super-knowledge for myself, entering on that dhamma, abided therein. Then I, monks, approached, Ālāra the Kālāma; having approached, I spoke thus to Ālāra the Kālāma: ‘Is it to this extent that you, reverend Kālāma, proclaim this dhamma, entering on it, having realised it by your own super-knowledge?’

‘It is to this extent that I, your reverence, proclaim this dhamma, entering on it, having realised it by my own super-knowledge.’

‘I too, your reverence, having realised this dhamma by my own super-knowledge, entering on it am abiding in it.’

‘It is profitable for us, it is well gotten for us, your reverence, that we see a fellow in the Holy Life such as the venerable one. This dhamma that I, entering on, proclaim, having realised it by my own super-knowledge, is the dhamma that you, entering on, are abiding in, having realised it by your own super-knowledge; the dhamma that you, entering on, are abiding in, having realised it by your own super-knowledge, is the dhamma that I, entering on, proclaim, having realised it by my own super-knowledge. The dhamma that I know, this is the dhamma that you know. The dhamma that you know, this is the dhamma that I know. As I am, so are you, as you

² ākiñcaññāyatana; the third of the immaterial (meditative) Absorptions (arūpajhāna).

are so am I. Come now, your reverence, being just the two of us, let us look after this group. In this way, monks, did Ālāra the Kālāma, being my teacher, set me—the pupil—on the same level as himself and honoured me with the highest honour. Then it occurred to me, monks: 'This dhamma does not conduce to disregard nor to dispassion nor to stopping nor to tranquillity nor to super-knowledge nor to awakening nor to nibbāna, but only as far as reaching the plane of no-thing.' So I, monks, not getting enough from this dhamma, disregarded and turned away from this dhamma.

Then I, monks, a quester for what is good, searching for the incomparable, matchless path to peace, approached Uddaka, Rāma's son; having approached, I spoke thus to Uddaka, Rāma's son: 'I, your reverence, want to lead the Holy Life in this dhamma and discipline.' This said, monks, Uddaka, Rāma's son, spoke thus to me: 'Let the venerable stay here. This dhamma is such that an intelligent man, having soon realised super-knowledge for himself, (as learnt from) his own teacher, may enter on and abide in it.' So I, monks, very soon, very quickly, mastered that dhamma. I, monks, as far as mere lip service, mere repetition were concerned, spoke the doctrine of knowledge and the doctrine of the elders, and I claimed—I as well as others—that 'I know, I see.' Then it occurred to me, monks: 'But Uddaka, Rāma's son, does not merely proclaim this dhamma simply out of faith; it is because having realised super-knowledge for himself, entering on it, he abides in it. For surely Uddaka, Rāma's son, proceeds knowing and seeing this Dhamma.' Then did I, monks, approach Uddaka, Rāma's son; having approached, I spoke thus to Uddaka, Rāma's Son 'To what extent do you, reverend Rāma, having realised super-knowledge for yourself, entering thereon proclaim this dhamma?' When this had been said, monks, Uddaka, Rāma's son, proclaimed the plane of neither perception nor non-perception.³ Then it occurred to me, monks: 'It is not only Rāma who has faith; I too have faith. It is not only Rāma who has energy; I too have energy. It is not only Rāma who has mindfulness; I too have mindfulness. It is not only Rāma who has concentration; I too have concentration. It is not only Rāma who has intuitive wisdom; I too have intuitive wisdom. Suppose now that I should strive for the realisation of that dhamma which Rāma proclaims: 'Having realised super-knowledge I myself, entering on it I am abiding in it?' So monks, very soon, very quickly, having realised super-knowledge for myself, entering on that dhamma, abided therein. Then I, monks, approached Uddaka, Rāma's son; having approached, I spoke thus to Uddaka, Rāma's son: 'Is it to this extent that you, reverend Rāma, proclaim this dhamma, entering on it, having realised it by your own super-knowledge?'

'It is to this extent that I, your reverence, proclaim this dhamma, entering on it, having realised it by my own super-knowledge.'

'I too, your reverence, having realised this dhamma my own super-knowledge, entering on it am abiding in it.'

'It is profitable for us, it is well gotten by us, your reverence, that we see a fellow in the Holy Life such as the venerable one. This dhamma that I, entering on, proclaim, having realised it by my own super-knowledge, is the dhamma that you, entering on, are abiding in, having realised it by your own super-knowledge; the dhamma that you, entering on, are abiding in, having realised it by your own super-knowledge, is the dhamma that I, entering on, proclaim, having realised it by my own super-knowledge. The dhamma that I know, this is the dhamma that you know. That dhamma that you know, this is the dhamma that I know. As I am, so are you; as you are, so am I. Come now, your reverence, being just the two of us, let us look after this group.' In this way, monks, did Uddaka, Rāma's son, being my teacher, set me—the pupil—on the same level as himself and honoured me with the highest honour. Then it occurred to me, monks: 'This dhamma does not conduce to disregard nor to

³ nevasaññānāsaññāyatana; the fourth Immaterial Absorption.

dispassion nor to stopping nor to tranquillity nor to super-knowledge nor to awakening nor to nibbāna, but only as far as reaching the plane of neither-perception nor non-perception. So I, monks, not getting enough from this dhamma, disregarded and turned away from this dhamma.

Then I, monks, a quester for what is good, searching for the incomparable, matchless path to peace, walking on tour through Magadha in due course arrived at Uruvelā, the camp township. There I saw a delightful stretch of land and a lovely woodland grove, and a clear flowing river⁴ with a delightful ford, a village for support nearby. It occurred to me, monks: 'Indeed it is a delightful stretch of land, and the woodland grove is lovely, and the river flows clear with a delightful ford, and there is a village support nearby. Indeed this does well for the striving of a young man set on striving.' So I, monks, sat down just there, thinking: 'Indeed this does well for striving.'

So I, monks, being myself liable to birth, having known the peril in what is liable to birth, seeking the unborn, the uttermost security from the bonds—nibbāna—won the unborn, the uttermost security from the bonds—nibbāna—being myself liable to ageing, having known the peril in what is liable to ageing, seeking the unageing, the uttermost security from the bonds—nibbāna—won the unageing, the uttermost security from the bonds—nibbāna; being myself liable to decay, having known the peril in what is liable to decay, seeking the undecaying, the uttermost security from the bonds—nibbāna—won the undecaying, the uttermost security from the bonds—nibbāna; being myself liable to dying, having known the peril in what is liable to dying, seeking the undying, the uttermost security from the bonds—nibbāna—won the undying, the uttermost security from the bonds—nibbāna; being myself liable to sorrow, having known the peril in what is liable to sorrow, seeking the unsorrowing, the uttermost security from the bonds—nibbāna—won the unsorrowing, the uttermost security from the bonds—nibbāna; being myself liable to stain, having known the peril in what is liable to stain, seeking the stainless, the uttermost security from the bonds—nibbāna—won the stainless, the uttermost security from the bonds—nibbāna. Knowledge and vision arose in me; unshakable is freedom for me, this is the last birth, there is not now again-becoming.

It occurred to me, monks: 'This dhamma, won to by me is deep, difficult to see, difficult to understand, tranquil, excellent, beyond dialectic, subtle, to be experienced by the wise. But this is a generation delighting in sensual pleasure delighted by sensual pleasure, rejoicing in sensual pleasure. So that for a generation delighting in sensual pleasure, delighted by sensual pleasure, rejoicing in sensual pleasure, this were a matter difficult to see, that is to say casual uprising by way of condition. This too were a matter difficult to see, that is to say the tranquillising of all the activities, the renunciation of all attachment, the destruction of craving, dispassion, stopping, nibbāna. But if I were to teach dhamma and others were not to understand me, that would be a weariness to me, that would be a vexation to me.

Moreover, monks, these verses not heard before in the past spontaneously occurred to me:

This that through many toils I've won
Enough! why should I make it known?
By folk with lust and hate consumed
This dhamma is not understood.
Leading on against the stream,
Deep, subtle, difficult to see, delicate,
Unseen 'twill be by passion's slaves,
Cloaked in the murk of ignorance.

⁴ The Nerañjarā.

In such wise, as I was pondering, monks, my mind inclined to inaction and not to teaching Dhamma. Then, monks, it occurred to Brahma Sahampati who knew with his mind the reasoning in my mind: 'Alas, the world is lost, alas, the world is destroyed, inasmuch as the mind of the Tathāgata, the perfected one, the fully awakened one, inclines to inaction and not to teaching dhamma.' Then, monks, as a strong man might stretch out his bent arm, or might bend back his outstretched arm, even so did Brahma Sahampati, vanishing from the Brahma-world, become manifest before me. Then, monks, Brahma Sahampati, having arranged his upper robe over one shoulder, having saluted me with joined palms, spoke thus to me: 'Lord, let the Lord teach dhamma; let the Well-farer teach dhamma; there are beings with little dust in their eyes who, not hearing dhamma, are decaying, (but if) they are learners of dhamma they will grow.' Thus spoke Brahma Sahampati to me, monks; having said this, he further spoke thus:

'There has appeared in Magadha before thee
An unclean dhamma by (minds) with stains devised.
Open this door of deathlessness; let them hear
Dhamma awakened to by the stainless one.

As on a crag or crest of mountain standing
A man might watch the people all around,
E'en so do thou, O Wisdom fair, ascending,
O Seer of all; the terraced heights of truth,
Look down, from grief released, upon the peoples
Sunken in grief, oppressed with birth and age.

Arise, thou hero! Conqueror in the battle!
Thou leader of the caravan, without a debt!
Walk in the world. Let the Blessed One
Teach dhamma; they who learn will grow.'

And then I, monks, having understood Brahma's entreaty, out of compassion surveyed the world with the eye of an Awakened One. As I, monks, was surveying the world with the eye of an Awakened One, I saw beings with little dust in their eyes, with much dust in their eyes, with acute faculties, with dull faculties, of good dispositions, of bad dispositions, docile, indocile; and a few seeing danger in sins and the world beyond. Even as in a pond of blue lotuses or in a pond of red lotuses or in a pond of white lotuses, a few red and blue and white lotuses are born in the water, grow in the water, do not rise above the water but thrive while altogether immersed; a few blue or red or white lotuses are born in the water, grow in the water and reach the surface of the water; a few blue or red or white lotuses are born in the water, grow in the water, and stand rising out of the water, undefiled by the water; even so did I, monks, surveying the world with the eye of an Awakened One, see beings with little dust in their eyes, with much dust in their eyes, with acute faculties, with dull faculties, of good dispositions, of bad dispositions, docile, indocile; and a few seeing danger in sins and the world beyond. Then I, monks, addressed Brahma Sahampati in verses:

Opened for those who hear are the doors of the Deathless, Brahma,
Let them give forth their faith;
Thinking of useless fatigue, Brahma,
I have not preached dhamma
Sublime and excellent for men.

Then, monks, Brahma Sahampati, thinking: 'The opportunity was made by me for the Lord to teach dhamma,' having greeted me, keeping his right side towards me, vanished then and there.

Then it occurred to me, monks: 'Now, to whom should I first teach this dhamma? Who will understand this dhamma quickly?' Then it occurred to me, monks: 'Indeed this Ālāra the Kālāma is learned, experienced, wise, and for a long time has had little dust in his eyes. Suppose that I were to teach dhamma first to Ālāra the Kālāma; he will understand this dhamma quickly.'

Then devatas having approached me, spoke thus: 'Lord, Ālāra the Kālāma passed away seven days ago. So knowledge and vision arose in me that Ālāra the Kālāma had passed away seven days ago. Then it occurred to me monks: 'Ālāra the Kālāma has suffered a great loss. For if he had heard this dhamma, he would have understood it quickly.' Then it occurred to me Monks: 'Now, to whom could I first teach this dhamma? Who will understand this dhamma quickly?' Then it occurred to me monks: 'This Uddaka, Rāma's son, is learned, experienced, wise, and for a long time has had little dust in his eyes. Suppose that I were to teach dhamma first to Uddaka, Rāma's son? He will understand this dhamma quickly.' Then monks, devatas, having approached me, spoke thus: Lord, Uddaka, Rāma's son, passed away last night. So knowledge and vision arose in me that Uddaka, Rāma's son, had passed away last night. Then it occurred to me monks: 'Uddaka, Rāma's son, has suffered a great loss. For if he had heard this dhamma, he would have understood it quickly.' Then it occurred to me, monks: 'Now to whom could I teach this dhamma? Who will understand this dhamma quickly?' Then it occurred to me, monks: "This group of five monks who waited on me when I was self-resolute in striving, were very helpful. Suppose that I were to teach dhamma first to this group of five monks?" Then it occurred to me, monks: 'But where is the group of five monks staying at present?' Then, monks, I saw with deva-vision, purified and surpassing that of men, the group of five monks staying near Benares at Isipatana in the deer-park. Then I, monks, having stayed at Uruvelā for as long as I found suiting, set out on tour for Benares.

Then, monks, Upaka, a Naked Ascetic, saw me as I was going along the high road between Gayā and the (Tree of) Awakening; having seen me, he spoke thus: 'Your reverence, your faculties are quite pure, your complexion is very bright, very clear. On account of whom have you, your reverence, gone forth, or who is your teacher, or whose dhamma do you profess?' When this had been said, I, monks, addressed Upaka, the Naked Ascetic, in verses:

'Victorious over all, omniscient am I,
Among all things undefiled,
Leaving all, through death of craving freed,
By knowing for myself, whom should I point to?

For me there is no teacher,
One like me does not exist,
In the world with its devas
No one equals me.

For I am perfected in the world,
A teacher supreme am I,
I alone am all-awakened,
Become cool am I, nibbāna-attained.

To turn the dhamma-wheel
I go to Kasi's city,
Beating the drum of deathlessness
In a world that's blind become.'

'According to what you claim, your reverence, you ought to be the Universal Victor.'

'Like me, they are victors indeed
Who have won destruction of the cankers;
Vanquished by me are evil things,
Therefore am I, Upaka, a victor.'

When this had been said, monks, Upaka the Naked Ascetic, having said: 'May it be (so), your reverence,' having shaken his head, went off having taken a different road. Then I, monks, walking on tour, in due course arrived at Benares, Isipatana, the deer-park and the group of five monks. Monks, the group of five monks saw me coming in the distance, and seeing me they agreed among themselves; saying: 'Your reverence, this recluse Gotama is coming, he lives in abundance, he is wavering in his striving, he has reverted to a life of abundance. He should be neither greeted, nor stood up for, nor should his bowl and robe be received; all the same a seat may be put out, he can sit down if he wants to.' But as I, monks, gradually approached this group of five monks, so this group of five monks were not able to adhere to their own agreement; having approached me, some received my bowl and robe, some made a seat ready, some brought water for washing the feet, and they addressed me by name and with the epithet 'your reverence.' When this had been said, I, monks, spoke thus to the group of five monks: 'Do not, monks, address a Tathāgata by his name or by the epithet 'your reverence.' Monks, the Tathāgata is one perfected, a fully Self-awakened One. Give ear, monks, the deathless is found, I instruct, I teach dhamma. Going along in accordance with what is enjoined, having soon realised here and now by your own super-knowledge that supreme goal of the Holy Life for the sake of which young men of family rightly go forth from home into homelessness, you will abide in it.'

When this had been said, monks, the group of five monks addressed me thus: 'But you, reverend Gotama, did not come to a super-human state, to knowledge and vision befitting the noble by this conduct, by this course, by this practise of austerities. So how can you now come to a super-human state, to knowledge and vision befitting the noble when you live in abundance and, wavering in your striving, revert to a life of abundance?'

When this had been said, monks, I spoke to the group of five monks thus: 'A Tathāgata, monks, does not live in abundance nor, wavering in striving, does he revert to a life of abundance. The Tathāgata, monks, is one perfected, a fully Self-awakened One. Give ear, monks, the deathless is found, I instruct, I teach dhamma. Going along in accordance with what is enjoined, having soon realised here and now by your own super-knowledge that supreme goal of the Holy Life for the sake of which young men of family rightly go forth from home into homelessness, you will abide in it.' And a second time, monks, the group of five monks spoke to me thus: 'But you, reverend Gotama ... you will abide in it.' And a third time, monks, the group of five monks spoke to me thus: 'But you, reverend Gotama ... revert to a life of abundance?'

When this has been said, I, monks, spoke thus to the group of five monks: 'Do you recall, monks, that I have ever spoken to you like this before?'

'You have not, Lord.'

'A Tathāgata, monks, is a perfected one, a fully Self-awakened One. Give ear, monks, the deathless is found, I instruct, I teach dhamma. Going along in accordance with what is enjoined, having soon realised here and now by your own super-knowledge that supreme goal of the Holy Life for the sake of which young men of family rightly go forth from home into homelessness, you will abide in it.' And I, monks, was able to convince the group of five monks.

Monks, I now exhorted two monks; three monks walked for alms-food, Whatever the three monks who had walked for alms-food brought back, that the group of six lived on. And then, monks, I exhorted three monks; two monks walked for alms-food. Whatever the two monks

who had walked for alms-food brought back, that the group of six lived on. Then, monks, the group of five monks, being thus exhorted, thus instructed by me, being themselves liable to birth, having known the peril in what is liable to birth, seeking the unborn, the uttermost security from the bonds—nibbāna—won the unborn, the uttermost security from the bonds—nibbāna, being themselves liable to ageing, ... won the unageing, being themselves liable to decay ... won the undecaying ... being themselves liable to dying ... won the undying ... being themselves liable to sorrow ... won the unsorrowing ... being themselves liable to stain, having known the peril in what is liable to stain, seeking the stainless, the uttermost security from the bonds—nibbāna—won the stainless, the uttermost security from the bonds—nibbāna. Knowledge and vision arose in them: Unshakable is freedom for us, this is the last birth, there is not now again-becoming.

Monks, there are these five strands of sense-pleasures. What are the five? Material shapes cognisable by the eye, alluring, agreeable, pleasant, liked, connected with sense-pleasures, enticing; sounds cognisable by the ear ... smells cognisable by the nose ... tastes cognisable by the tongue ... touches cognisable by the body, alluring, agreeable, pleasant, liked, connected with sense-pleasures, enticing. These, monks, are the five strands of sense-pleasures. Monks, those recluses or brahmins who enjoy these five strands of sense-pleasures enslaved and infatuated by them, addicted to them, not seeing the peril in them, not aware of the escape from them - these should be told: 'You have come to calamity, you have come to misfortune and are ones to be done by Evil One as he wills. Monks, it is like a deer living in a forest who might be living caught on a heap of snares - this may be said of it: It has come to calamity, it has come to misfortune, it is one to be done to by the trapper as he wills, for when the trapper comes it will not be able to go away as it wishes. Even so, monks, those recluses or brahmins ... are ones to be done by the Evil One as he wills.

Monks, those recluses or brahmins who enjoy these five strands of sense-pleasures, not enslaved, not infatuated by them, not addicted to them, seeing the peril in them, aware of the escape from them, these should be told: You have not come to calamity, you have not come to misfortune, you are not ones to be done by the Evil One as he wills. Monks, it is like a deer living in a forest who might lie down on a heap of snares but is not caught by it - this may be said of it: It has not come to calamity, it has not come to misfortune, it is not one to be done by the trapper as he wills, for when the trapper comes it will be able to go away as it wishes. Even so, monks, those recluses or brahmins ... are not ones to be done by the Evil One as he wills.

Monks, it is like a deer living in a forest, roaming the forest slopes, who walks confidently, stands confidently, sits down confidently, goes to sleep confidently. What is the reason for this? Monks, it is out of the trapper's reach. Even so, monks, a monk, aloof from pleasures of the senses, aloof from unskilled states of mind, enters on and abides in the first meditation which is accompanied by initial thought and discursive thought, is born of aloofness, and is rapturous and joyful, Monks, this monk is called one who has put a darkness round Mara, and having blotted out Mara's vision so that it has no range, goes unseen by the Evil One.

And again, monks, a monk, by allaying initial and discursive thought, his mind inwardly tranquillised and fixed on one point, enters on and abides in the second meditation which is devoid of initial and discursive thought, is born of concentration and is rapturous and joyful. Monks, this monk is called one who ... goes unseen by the Evil One.

And again, monks, a monk, by the fading out of rapture, dwells with equanimity, attentive and clearly conscious, and experiences in his person that joy of which the ariyans say: 'Joyful lives he who has equanimity and is mindful'; and he enters on and abides in the third meditation. Monks, this monk is called one who ... goes unseen by the Evil One.

And again, monks, a monk, by getting rid of joy, by getting rid of anguish, by the going down of his former pleasures and sorrows, enters on and abides in the fourth meditation which has neither anguish nor joy, and which is entirely purified by equanimity and mindfulness. Monks, this monk is called one who ... goes unseen by the Evil One.

And again, monks, a monk, by passing quite beyond perception of material shapes, by the going down of perception of sensory reactions, by not attending to perceptions of variety, thinking: 'Either is unending,' enters on and abides in the plane of infinite ether. Monks, this monk is called one who ... goes unseen by the Evil One.

And again, monks, a monk, by passing quite beyond the plane of infinite ether, thinking: 'Consciousness is unending' enters on and abides in the plane of infinite consciousness. Monks, this monk is called one who ... goes unseen by the Evil One.

And again, monks, a monk by passing quite beyond the plane of infinite consciousness, thinking: 'There is not anything,' enters on and abides in the plane of nothing. Monks, this monk is called one who ... goes unseen by the Evil One.

And again, monks, a monk by passing quite beyond the plane of no-thing, enters on and abides in the plane of neither-perception-nor-non-perception, Monks. This monk is called one who has put a darkness round Mara, and who, having blotted out Mara's vision so that it has no range, goes unseen by the Evil One.

And again, monks, a monk, by passing quite beyond the plane of neither-perception-nor-non-perception, enters on and abides in the stopping of perception and feeling; and having seen by intuitive wisdom, his cankers are utterly destroyed. Monks, this monk is called one who has put a darkness round Mara, and who, having blotted out Mara's vision so that it has no range, goes unseen by the Evil One; he has crossed over the entanglement in the world. He walks confidently, sits down confidently, goes to sleep confidently. What is the reason for this? Monks, he is out of reach of the Evil One.

Thus spoke the Lord. Delighted, these monks rejoiced in what the Lord had said.

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