

## III: The Basic Factors

### A. CONVICTION

As we noted in the Introduction, all of the 37 factors listed in the Wings to Awakening can be subsumed under the five faculties. Whereas Part II focused on the interrelationships among these various factors, this part of the book is devoted to using the five faculties as a framework for discussing the individual factors in and of themselves.

Of the five faculties, the faculty of conviction covers the most ground, as it includes the total context for the practice of the Buddha's teachings. The many issues related to the attitudes and ethics needed to lead a Buddhist life, whether as a lay person or a monastic, fall under this category.

Passage §69 defines the faculty of conviction as the four factors of stream-entry [II/A], so to understand the nature of conviction, it is necessary to know what these four factors are. Passages §70 and §71 give different definitions for the four. The first list gives prerequisites for stream-entry: association with good people, listening to the true Dhamma, appropriate attention, and practice in accordance with the Dhamma. The second list gives qualities that characterize a person who has entered the stream: verified confidence in the Buddha, Dhamma, and Sangha; and virtues appealing to the noble ones. Both lists are relevant here, for conviction is a quality that leads to stream-entry, whereas the attainment of stream-entry is the point where conviction becomes unshakable. Only on the attainment of Arahantship does knowledge become so total that conviction is no longer needed [§89].

The two lists of the factors of stream-entry are similar in that they both cover all three aspects of conviction: social (whom to trust), intellectual (what to believe), and practical (how to act as a result). Because conviction is focused not on a descriptive proposition but on a course of action—the skillful mastery of the processes of kamma in a social context—these aspects are inextricably intertwined. The social aspect comes from the need to associate with people who have already mastered these processes, learning from their words and emulating their actions. The intellectual aspect—belief in the principle of kamma—is necessary because the development of skillfulness within the mind requires that one understand the nature of kamma, take responsibility for one's actions, and have conviction in one's ability to benefit from developing one's skills. The practical aspect is necessary, for if one does not follow through in developing skill, it shows that one's conviction in the development of skillfulness is not genuine, and that one is not fully benefiting from one's beliefs.

The relationship of these factors to the development of skillfulness is shown in several passages. For instance, §53 and §54 cite association with good people and appropriate attention—both of which are members of the first list above—as the

primary external and internal prerequisites for the development of what is skillful. At the same time, the intellectual and practical aspects of conviction help to counteract the grosser levels of the roots of unskillfulness [§3]: belief in the principle of kamma helps to undercut delusion, while the practice of virtue helps to weaken the force of greed and aversion in the mind.

To understand the detailed interaction of the social, intellectual, and practical aspects of conviction, we first have to examine them separately. Because having admirable people as friends is the whole of the holy life [§115], we will begin with the **social aspect** first.

The passages in this section focusing on the social aspect of conviction touch on two major issues: how to recognize good people, and why one should associate with them.

Passage §119 lists three basic teachings of good people. These can be taken as criteria for judging whether a person qualifies as good. If one meets people who criticize the practice of generosity, the practice of going forth into the renunciate life, or the practice of giving service to one's parents, one would do well to avoid associating with them, for their wisdom and motives cannot be trusted. If one must associate with them, one should not regard them as people to learn from or to emulate. Thus the social and intellectual aspects of conviction interact in that one way of knowing whether to associate with a person is by listening to what that person teaches; at the same time, the teachings of good people enable one to know what is good.

Passage §117 carries this point further, listing positive qualities to look for in a good person: conviction in the principle of kamma, generosity, virtue, and discernment. People who teach these qualities and embody them in their lives qualify as good. The important point here, of course, is that good people are ultimately recognized by what they habitually do, rather than simply by what they say. These habits can be known only through long association over time. This is why, in the Buddhist monkhood, a student does not take a lifetime vow of obedience to a teacher. If he feels that the teacher does not have his best interests at heart—i.e., if he sees that the teacher does not really embody the above qualities—he is free to leave the teacher in search of another.

A person who has attained stream-entry finds it easier to recognize good people, for he/she is now a member of the noble Sangha and can recognize the qualities of that attainment in others as well. "Good people" for a member of the Sangha means the Buddha and the rest of the noble Sangha. Of course the Buddha has long been totally unbound, but he left his Dhamma and Vinaya as a teacher in his stead [DN 16], and so on that level one may still associate with him.

The reason why a person embarking on the path to practice would need to associate with good people, rather than trying to be totally self-reliant, is that the roots of skillfulness within the mind lie mixed with the roots of unskillfulness, and the roots of unskillfulness make it difficult to tell which is which. Thus one needs the advice and example of others more experienced on the path to help identify one's own skillful qualities and to give encouragement in the task of developing them [§9]. Even if one is not yet committed to following the path, one would be wise to associate with good people who embody conviction, generosity, virtue, and discernment, for they are unlikely to treat one in an unfair or harmful manner. If they

truly embody conviction and virtue, one can trust that their sense of shame and compunction will prevent them from acting on unskillful intentions. If they truly embody generosity and discernment, they have wisdom worth acquiring and will be willing to share it. This sharing of wisdom forms the basis for further benefits—as listed in §125 & §126—setting in motion a causal chain leading all the way to the experience of Awakening. This causal chain requires that one listen to the teachings of good people so as to understand the implications of the principle of kamma. It also requires that one take such people as examples to emulate in one's own life. In this way, one can become a better person oneself and can enjoy the benefits coming with one's own improved mastery over the principle of kamma.

The wide availability of books on Buddhism tends to obscure the fact that the truths of the Buddha's teachings are not simply words or propositions, but are qualities of the heart and mind: the skillful mastery of thoughts, words, and deeds. These qualities are best learned not from books but from people who are actually skilled. This is like learning a sport. One can pick up important principles from books written about the sport, but there is much more on a non-verbal level that can be learned only by associating with people who have actually mastered the sport. This might include a sense of how much practice is enough, a sense of one's own strengths and weaknesses, a sense of timing, a sense of one's teammates and opponents, and so forth. AN 7:64 gives a similar list of the principles that characterize a good person, many of which cannot be verbalized in simple rules: knowledge of the Dhamma, knowledge of the meaning of statements, a sense of one's own strengths and weaknesses, a sense of moderation in the use of the requisites of life, a sense of the proper time and season for doing things, a sense of different levels of societies, and a sense of how to judge people. Although the first two types of knowledge in this list are verbal and can be passed on in words, the others are more subliminal and can be picked up only by associating with good people and watching them in action.

With the issue of verbal knowledge we move from the social aspect of conviction to its **intellectual aspect**. The content of the verbal knowledge that can be picked up from good people begins with what §106 defines as mundane right view:

There is what is given, what is offered, what is sacrificed. There are fruits & results of good & bad actions. There is this world & the next world. There is mother & father. There are spontaneously reborn beings; there are contemplatives & brahmins who, faring rightly & practicing rightly, proclaim this world & the next after having directly known & realized it for themselves.

As noted in II/H, this passage means that there is merit in generosity; that the moral qualities of good and bad are inherent in the universe, and not simply social conventions; that there is life after death; that one has a true moral debt to one's parents; and that there are people who have lived the renunciate's life properly in such a way that they have gained true and direct knowledge of these matters. These beliefs form the minimum prerequisite for following the path to skillfulness. If one doubts them, one will find it difficult to muster the energy or commitment needed to develop skillful qualities in the mind. One would be more likely to revert to the selfish gratification of immediate desires, with little thought for right or wrong. The willingness to accept these beliefs on faith thus counts as the first step from the stage of mere acquaintance with the Buddha's teachings to the stage of commitment.

These beliefs form the basis for the three points mentioned above as the teachings of good people: generosity, going forth, and service to one's parents [§119]. Appreciating the value of these principles, and following them to the extent of one's abilities, enables one to develop the proper character needed for comprehending the higher levels of the Buddha's teachings, culminating in the four noble truths. As the first list of factors of stream-entry points out, simply listening to the Dhamma is not enough. One has to develop appropriate attention as well, which as we have already seen [II/G] involves knowing how to focus on the right questions. In this context, one begins by learning how to ask productive questions of one's teacher and then moves on to using the categories of the four noble truths to ask questions of one's experience in general. In this sense, the act of listening and paying appropriate attention covers the first two levels in the development of discernment—understanding based on listening and on reasoning—and gets one started on the third: understanding based on the development of skillful qualities in the mind [DN 33].

Although listening to the Dhamma is a prerequisite for appropriate attention, appropriate attention does not follow automatically from listening to the Dhamma. It has to be consciously cultivated; otherwise, the causal process will not lead to clear knowledge and release. This point is expressed in a famous stanza from the Dhammapada (64-65):

Even if for a lifetime  
a fool stays with the wise,  
he knows nothing of the Dhamma—  
as the ladle,  
the taste of the soup.

Even if for a moment,  
a perceptive person stays with the wise,  
he knows the Dhamma—  
as the tongue,  
the taste of the soup.

The purpose of meditation, in which one consciously develops mindfulness and discernment so as to master and understand the skillful use of the mind, is to turn one into the perceptive person who can fully understand the Dhamma.

With the attainment of stream-entry at one's first taste of the Deathless, the intellectual aspect of conviction is expressed in terms of verified conviction in the Awakening of the Buddha [§72], which branches out into verified conviction in the Triple Gem: the Buddha, the Dhamma, and the Sangha [§71]. One's own taste of Awakening verifies the reality of the Buddha's Awakening and that of the noble Sangha; one's understanding of how the Awakening came about through the practice of the Dhamma verifies that the noble eightfold path is the ideal synopsis of that practice, with nothing lacking or in excess. From this comes the standard expression of conviction in the Triple Gem: The Buddha is rightly self-awakened; the Dhamma, well taught; and the noble Sangha, worthy of honor [§71]. What this means in practical terms is that one is now convinced beyond a doubt that the human ability to develop skillfulness can lead all the way to the Deathless, and that the Deathless is the highest excellence.

Several passages [§87] emphasize that the experience of stream-entry reinforces one's conviction that the true Dhamma is fully expressed only in the Buddha's

teachings. This point will come as a surprise to many people who are aware of Buddhism's long history of tolerance toward other religions, and who assume that the enlightened attitude toward alternative teachings is to endorse the statement that many roads lead to the top of the mountain. This assumption, though, is based on a confusion between "tolerance" and "endorsement." As we have already noted, from the streamwinner's point of view the noble eightfold path is the ideal expression of the way to Awakening. To endorse any other path to the same goal would be to concede that the noble eightfold path either lacks something essential or contains something superfluous. The Buddha is quoted as saying that any other supposed path to Awakening would by definition be wrong: wrong view, wrong resolve, wrong speech, etc. To try to get results from such a path, he says, would be like trying to squeeze sesame oil out of gravel or to churn butter out of water [MN 126]. He did not deny that other teachings, advocating virtue and concentration, can lead to states of great peace or to rebirth in the higher heavens, but if one views those attainments as equivalent to Unbinding, one is suffering from wrong view. To hold to that wrong view puts the total release to be found with Unbinding beyond reach.

This unwillingness to endorse other paths, however, does not necessarily lead to intolerance. Buddhism's basic premise is the principle of kamma, that happiness and suffering are the results of one's own past and present actions. The noble eightfold path grows out of this principle as the most skillful mode of action for escaping from the cycle of kammic retribution and attaining the Deathless. Other paths are either incomplete expressions of the noble eightfold path or are based on other principles. For example, they may state that there is a being who can sidestep the law of kamma and provide for one's happiness without one's having to master the skills of the noble eightfold path, or that certain ritual actions or words can provide a similar shortcut to happiness. People who follow either of these two latter beliefs could well feel threatened by outsiders who do not share their beliefs, for the outsiders are in effect denying the existence of a shortcut on which the insiders are placing their hopes. This explains why such people have often been intolerant of outside views.

But because the principle of kamma is a teaching of full personal responsibility, no one who believes in kamma will feel threatened by people who teach shortcuts around kamma. Buddhists who have yet to attain stream-entry may waver in their conviction—as the path can seem long and arduous, and the results slow in coming—and this is one reason why they are encouraged not to associate with anyone who rejects the principle of kamma. But those who have had their first taste of Awakening can in no way be persuaded to doubt the principle, for they have seen that the Deathless can be touched only through a process that requires the utmost skill in mindfulness and discernment applied to the processes of one's own mind. Their attitude toward other teachings is that of a skilled artisan toward those with lesser skills, or of a woman who has learned how to extract sesame oil from sesame seeds toward those who are still trying to extract it from gravel: she will want to teach them the right way if they are willing to listen, but if they are unwilling, she will tolerate their ignorance and hope that someday they will be ready to learn.

To attain this level of unshakable conviction requires that one put the Dhamma into practice. This shows the intimate relationship between the intellectual and practical aspects of conviction: one must have a certain level of intellectual understanding of the doctrinal Dhamma before one can practice it, and one must

practice it to the point of touching the Dhamma of Deathlessness as an attainment before one's conviction in the teaching of the Dhamma can become unshakably firm. The commentaries bring out this relationship by applying the term Dhamma to all three of these levels: doctrine, practice, and attainment, or in other words, Dhamma as an object of awareness (on the intellectual level), as a means of releasing awareness from bondage to its objects (on the practical level), and as the awareness released (at the point of Awakening).

The **practical aspect** of conviction, prior to stream-entry, is covered by the factor of stream-entry called "practicing in accordance with the Dhamma." What this factor means is that one must be willing to put the Dhamma ahead of one's preferences, so that one is not practicing simply in line with one's likes and dislikes. This is the true test of one's conviction. It is all too easy to pick and choose from the teachings on the basis of other standards—here in the West it is common to judge the Dhamma against Western psychology or other social sciences, and to pick and choose accordingly—but one must ask oneself the same question that Prince Siddhattha posed for himself: Which is a more worthwhile use of one's time, the pursuit of objects and ideals subject to change and death, or the pursuit of the Deathless? Although there is a long-standing recognition in the Buddhist tradition that people benefit even if they follow only part of the teaching, the Dhamma can give its full results only if one commits oneself fully to developing the skill of release in one's thoughts, words, and deeds. This training is similar to following a doctor's regimen. One will benefit even from following the regimen only occasionally, but a full cure requires sticking to the regimen consistently and putting the goal of recovery ahead of one's other preferences. The skill of release requires ordering one's priorities, taking the teachings and example of those who have attained that skill as one's primary guide, and regarding everything else as secondary.

With the attainment of stream-entry, one's conviction in the principle of kamma and its skillful mastery becomes so firm that one would not intentionally break any of the basic precepts that comprise right speech, right action, or right livelihood. This is the import of the factor of stream-entry called "virtues appealing to the noble ones." In addition to virtue, streamwinners have also begun to develop the other two aggregates in the noble path—concentration and discernment—but those two aggregates are not yet fully matured [II/A; MFU, pp. 103-04]. As §74 & §75 make clear, conviction cannot become firm until the remaining four faculties, including concentration and discernment, have been strengthened to at least some extent. Once conviction does become firm, it can then function to strengthen those faculties even further. The streamwinner realizes, from the experience of stream-entry, not only that he/she attained that experience through mastery of the processes of kamma, but also that his/her Awakening is not yet complete because there are gaps in that mastery. This realization is what gives impetus for the further development of all five faculties until they issue in the full realization of the Deathless.

§ 115. As he was seated to one side, Ven. Ānanda said to the Blessed One, 'This is half of the holy life, lord: admirable friendship, admirable companionship, admirable camaraderie.'

'Don't say that, Ānanda. Don't say that. Admirable friendship, admirable

companionship, admirable camaraderie is actually the whole of the holy life. When a monk has admirable people as friends, companions, & comrades, he can be expected to develop & pursue the noble eightfold path.

‘And how does a monk who has admirable people as friends, companions, & comrades, develop & pursue the noble eightfold path? There is the case where a monk develops right view dependent on seclusion, dependent on dispassion, dependent on cessation, resulting in letting go. He develops right resolve... right speech... right action... right livelihood... right effort... right mindfulness... right concentration dependent on seclusion... dispassion... cessation, resulting in letting go. This is how a monk who has admirable people as friends, companions, & comrades, develops & pursues the noble eightfold path.

‘And through this line of reasoning one may know how admirable friendship, admirable companionship, admirable camaraderie is actually the whole of the holy life: It’s in dependence on me as an admirable friend that beings subject to birth have gained release from birth, that beings subject to aging have gained release from aging, that beings subject to death have gained release from death, that beings subject to sorrow, lamentation, pain, distress, & despair have gained release from sorrow, lamentation, pain, distress, & despair.’

SN 45:2

§ 116. Mahānāma, to the Buddha: There may be the case where a Dhamma disagreement arises, with the Blessed One on one side and the Community of monks on the other. I would be on the same side as the Blessed One. May the Blessed One remember this as my confidence in him.

There may be the case where a Dhamma disagreement arises, with the Blessed One on one side and the Community of monks & the Community of nuns on the other. I would be on the same side as the Blessed One. May the Blessed One remember this as my confidence in him....

There may be the case where a Dhamma disagreement arises, with the Blessed One on one side and the Community of monks & the Community of nuns & the male lay followers & the female lay followers & the world with its devas, māras, brahmās, its generations with their contemplatives & brahmans, their royalty & common folk on the other. I would be on the same side as the Blessed One. May the Blessed One remember this as my confidence in him.

The Buddha [turning to Mahānāma’s companion, Godha]: Now Godha, what do you have to say about Mahānāma when he speaks in such a way?

Godha: I have nothing to say about Mahānāma when he speaks in such a way, except that he is admirable & skillful.

SN 55:23

§ 117. **Advice to a lay person.** Now what, TigerPaw [Byagghapajja], is meant by admirable friendship? There is the case where a lay person, in whatever town or village he may dwell, spends time with householders or householders’ sons, young or old, who are advanced in virtue. He talks with them, engages them in discussions. He emulates consummate conviction in those who are consummate

in conviction, consummate virtue in those who are consummate in virtue, consummate generosity in those who are consummate in generosity, & consummate discernment in those who are consummate in discernment. This is called admirable friendship.

AN 8:54

§ 118. A friend endowed with these three qualities is worth associating with. Which three? He gives what is hard to give, does what is hard to do, endures what is hard to endure. A friend endowed with these three qualities is worth associating with.

AN 3:133

§ 119. These three things have been promulgated by wise people, by people of integrity. Which three? Generosity... going-forth [from the home life]... & service to one's mother & father. These three things have been promulgated by wise people, by people of integrity.

AN 3:45

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

AN 7:6

§ 121. If beings knew, as I know, the results of giving & sharing, they would not eat without having given, nor would the stain of miserliness overcome their minds. Even if it were their last bite, their last mouthful, they would not eat without having shared, if there were someone to receive their gift. But because beings do not know, as I know, the results of giving & sharing, they eat without having given. The stain of miserliness overcomes their minds.

Iti 26

§ 122. Monks, brahmins & householders are very helpful to you, as they provide you with the requisites of robes, alms food, lodgings, & medical requisites for the sick. And you, monks, are very helpful to brahmins & householders, as you teach them the Dhamma admirable in the beginning, admirable in the middle, & admirable in the end, as you expound the holy life both in letter & meaning, entirely complete, surpassingly pure. In this way the holy life is lived in mutual dependence, for the purpose of crossing over the flood, for making a right end to stress.

Householders & the homeless  
in mutual dependence  
both reach the true Dhamma—



the unsurpassed safety from bondage.

From householders, the homeless  
 receive requisites—robes, lodgings,  
 protection from inclemencies.  
 While in dependence on those well-gone,  
 home-loving householders  
 have conviction in Arahants

of noble discernment,  
 absorbed in jhāna.

Having practiced the Dhamma here—  
 the path leading to good destinations—  
 delighting in the heavenly world,  
 they rejoice,  
 enjoying sensual pleasures.

Iti 107

§ 123. Now what is the level of a person of no integrity? A person of no integrity is ungrateful & unthankful. This ingratitude, this lack of thankfulness, is advocated by rude people. It is entirely on the level of people of no integrity. A person of integrity is grateful & thankful. This gratitude, this thankfulness, is advocated by civil people. It is entirely on the level of people of integrity.

I tell you, monks, there are two people who are not easy to repay. Which two? Your mother & father. Even if you were to carry your mother on one shoulder & your father on the other shoulder for 100 years, and were to look after them by anointing, massaging, bathing, & rubbing their limbs, and they were to defecate & urinate right there (on your shoulders), you would not in that way pay or repay your parents. If you were to establish your mother & father in absolute sovereignty over this great earth, abounding in the seven treasures, you would not in that way pay or repay your parents. Why is that? Mother & father do much for their children. They care for them, they nourish them, they introduce them to this world. But anyone who rouses his unbelieving mother & father, settles & establishes them in conviction; rouses his unvirtuous mother & father, settles & establishes them in virtue; rouses his stingy mother & father, settles & establishes them in generosity; rouses his foolish mother & father, settles & establishes them in discernment [§117]: To this extent one pays & repays one's mother & father.

AN 2:31-32

§ 124. Living with Brahmā are those families where, in the home, mother & father are revered by the children. Living with the first devas are those families where, in the home, mother & father are revered by the children. Living with the first teachers are those families where, in the home, mother & father are revered by the children. Living with those worthy of gifts are those families where, in the home, mother & father are revered by the children. 'Brahmā' is a designation for mother & father. 'The first devas'... 'the first teachers'... 'those worthy of gifts' is a designation for mother & father. Why is that? Mother & father do much for

their children. They care for them, they nourish them, they introduce them to this world.

Mother & father  
 compassionate to their family  
 are called  
     Brahmā,  
     first teachers  
     those worthy of gifts from their children.

So the sage should pay them  
     homage  
     honor  
     with food & drink  
     clothing & bedding  
     anointing & bathing  
     & washing their feet.

Performing these services to their parents, the wise  
 are praised right here  
 and after death  
 rejoice in heaven.

Iti 106

§ 125. 'A beginning point for ignorance—[such that one might say], "Before this, ignorance did not exist; then it came into play"—cannot be discerned.' This has been said. Nevertheless, it can be discerned, 'Ignorance comes from this condition.' And I tell you, ignorance has its nutriment. It is not without nutriment. And what is the nutriment for ignorance? The five hindrances.... And what is the nutriment for the five hindrances? The three forms of misconduct.... And what is the nutriment for the three forms of misconduct? Lack of restraint of the senses.... And what is the nutriment for lack of restraint of the senses? Lack of mindfulness & alertness.... And what is the nutriment for lack of mindfulness & alertness? Inappropriate attention.... And what is the nutriment for inappropriate attention? Lack of conviction.... And what is the nutriment for lack of conviction? Not hearing the true Dhamma.... And what is the nutriment for not hearing the true Dhamma? Associating with people of no integrity, (or: not associating with people of integrity)....

Just as when the devas pour rain in heavy drops & crash thunder on the upper mountains: the water, flowing down along the slopes, fills the mountain clefts & rifts & gullies. When the mountain clefts & rifts & gullies are full, they fill the little ponds. When the little ponds are full, they fill the big lakes... the little rivers... the big rivers. When the big rivers are full, they fill the great ocean, and thus is the great ocean fed, thus is it filled. In the same way, when not associating with people of integrity is brought to fulfillment, it fulfills (the conditions for) not hearing the true Dhamma... lack of conviction... inappropriate attention... lack of mindfulness & alertness... lack of restraint of the senses... the three forms of misconduct... the five hindrances. When the five hindrances are brought to fulfillment, they fulfill (the conditions for) ignorance. Thus is ignorance fed, thus is it brought to fulfillment.

Now, I tell you, clear knowing & release have their nutriment. They are not without nutriment. And what is their nutriment? The seven factors for Awakening.... And what is the nutriment for the seven factors for Awakening? The four frames of reference.... And what is the nutriment for the four frames of reference? The three forms of right conduct.... And what is the nutriment for the three forms of right conduct? Restraint of the senses.... And what is the nutriment for restraint of the senses? Mindfulness & alertness.... And what is the nutriment for mindfulness & alertness? Appropriate attention.... And what is the nutriment for appropriate attention? Conviction.... And what is the nutriment for conviction? Hearing the true Dhamma.... And what is the nutriment for hearing the true Dhamma? Associating with people of integrity....

Just as when the devas pour rain in heavy drops & crash thunder on the upper mountains: the water, flowing down along the slopes, fills the mountain clefts & rifts & gullies... the little ponds... the big lakes... the little rivers... the big rivers. When the big rivers are full, they fill the great ocean, and thus is the great ocean fed, thus is it filled. In the same way, when associating with people of integrity is brought to fulfillment, it fulfills (the conditions for) hearing the true Dhamma... conviction... appropriate attention... mindfulness & alertness... restraint of the senses... the three forms of right conduct... the four frames of reference... the seven factors for Awakening. When the seven factors for Awakening are brought to fulfillment, they fulfill (the conditions for) clear knowing & release. Thus is clear knowing & release fed, thus is it brought to fulfillment.

AN 10:61

§ 126. These are eight causes, eight conditions, for the attainment of discernment basic to the holy life when it has not yet been attained, and for its growth, its increase, & for the culmination of its development when it has. Which eight?

There is the case where a monk dwells in dependence on the Teacher, or another fellow in the holy life worthy of being a teacher, under whom he becomes firmly established in a strong sense of shame & compunction, love & respect. This is the first cause, the first condition....

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

And what is the treasure of compunction? There is the case where a disciple of the noble ones feels compunction at (the thought of) bodily misconduct, verbal misconduct, mental misconduct. This is called the treasure of compunction.}

As he so lives, he periodically approaches his teacher to ask & inquire of him, 'How, venerable sir, does this happen? What is the meaning of this?' To him the teacher reveals what is hidden, clarifies what is obscure, and dispels any doubt he may have about the various things that give him reason to doubt. This is the second cause, the second condition....

When he has heard the Dhamma, he accomplishes twofold seclusion: seclusion of body & seclusion of mind. This is the third cause, the third condition....

He is virtuous & lives restrained by the Paṭimokkha, consummate in his behavior & range of activity. Seeing danger in the slightest fault, he undertakes &

trains himself in the training rules. This is the fourth cause, the fourth condition....

He is erudite, a keeper & storehouse of learning. He is erudite in the teachings—admirable in their beginning, admirable in their middle, admirable in their end—that affirm the holy life in letter & meaning, entirely complete, surpassingly pure; he has resolved on them, has made them familiar to his speech, has pondered them over in his mind, and has penetrated them [attuned himself to them] in terms of his views. This is the fifth cause, the fifth condition....

He keeps his persistence aroused for abandoning unskillful mental qualities and taking on skillful mental qualities. He is steadfast, solid in his effort, not shirking his duties with regard to skillful mental qualities. This is the sixth cause, the sixth condition....

When he joins the Community he is not talkative, nor does he discuss low topics. He either speaks Dhamma himself or asks someone else to, and he does not despise noble silence [the second jhāna]. This is the seventh cause, the seventh condition....

Finally, he remains focused on the arising & passing away of the five clinging-aggregates: 'Such is form, such its origination, such its disappearance. Such is feeling... Such is perception... Such are fabrications... Such is consciousness, such its origination, such its disappearance.' This is the eighth cause, the eighth condition for the attainment of discernment basic to the holy life when it has not yet been attained, and for its growth, its increase, & for the culmination of its development when it has.

AN 8:2 { + AN 7:6}

§ 127. Regard him as one who  
points out  
treasure,  
the wise man who  
seeing your faults  
rebukes you.

Stay with this sort of sage.  
For the one who stays  
with a sage of this sort,  
things get better,  
not worse.

Dhp 76

§ 128. These are the five rewards of conviction in a lay person. Which five?

When people of integrity in the world show compassion, they will first show compassion to people of conviction, and not to people without conviction. When visiting, they first visit people of conviction, and not people without conviction. When accepting gifts, they will first accept those from people with conviction, and not from people without conviction. When teaching the Dhamma, they will first teach those with conviction, and not those without conviction. A person of

conviction, on the breakup of the body, after death, will arise in a good destination, the heavenly world. These are the five rewards of conviction in a lay person.

Just as a large banyan tree, on level ground where four roads meet, is a haven for the birds all around, even so a lay person of conviction is a haven for many people: monks, nuns, male lay followers, & female lay followers.

A massive tree whose branches carry fruits & leaves,  
with trunks & roots & an abundance of fruits:

There the birds find rest.

In that delightful sphere they make their home,  
Those seeking shade come to the shade,  
those seeking fruit find fruit to eat.

So with the person consummate  
in virtue & conviction,  
humble, sensitive, gentle, delightful, & mild:  
To him come those without effluent,  
free from passion,  
free from aversion,  
free from delusion:  
the field of merit for the world.  
They teach him the Dhamma  
that dispels all stress.  
And when he understands,  
he is freed from effluents,  
totally unbound.

AN 5:38

§ 129. A female disciple of the noble ones who grows in terms of these five types of growth grows in the noble growth, grasps hold of what is essential, what is excellent in the body. Which five? She grows in terms of conviction, in terms of virtue, in terms of learning, in terms of generosity, in terms of discernment. Growing in terms of these five types of growth, the female disciple of the noble ones grows in the noble growth, grasps hold of what is essential, what is excellent in the body.

Growing in conviction & virtue,  
discernment, generosity, & learning,  
a virtuous female lay disciple  
such as this  
takes hold of the essence within herself.

SN 37:34

§ 130. For a disciple who has conviction in the Teacher's message & lives to penetrate it, what accords with the Dhamma is this: 'The Blessed One is the

Teacher, I am a disciple. He is the one who knows, not I.' For a disciple who has conviction in the Teacher's message & lives to penetrate it, the Teacher's message is healing & nourishing. For a disciple who has conviction in the Teacher's message & lives to penetrate it, what accords with the Dhamma is this: 'Gladly would I let the flesh & blood in my body dry up, leaving just the skin, tendons, & bones, but if I have not attained what can be reached through human firmness, human persistence, human striving, there will be no relaxing my persistence.' For a disciple who has conviction in the Teacher's message & lives to penetrate it, one of two fruits can be expected: either gnosis here & now, or—if there be any remnant of clinging/sustenance—non-return.

MN 70

## **B. PERSISTENCE**

*See the Four Right Exertions [II/C].*

## **C. MINDFULNESS**

*See the Four Frames of Reference [II/B].*

## **D. CONCENTRATION: ABANDONING THE HINDRANCES**

Several discourses in the Canon [such as DN 2] state that the first step in concentration practice is to abandon the five hindrances, which we have already discussed in conjunction with the seven factors for Awakening [II/G]. They are: sensual desire, ill will, sloth & drowsiness, restlessness & anxiety, and uncertainty. These hindrances need to be abandoned because they function as intermediate levels of the three roots of unskillfulness [§3]. Sensual desire is a form of greed; ill will, a form of aversion; and the remaining three hindrances, forms of delusion. All five, in their various ways, block concentration and weaken discernment by making it difficult to realize what is beneficial for oneself, for others, or for both.

This last point makes them particularly tricky to deal with, for one needs to have a sense that they are unbeneficial states of mind before one can work at abandoning them, yet while one is overcome with them, they impair one's ability to see that they are in fact unbeneficial [§133]. For instance, when one feels sensual desire for another person, it is hard to focus on the unattractive side of that person or on the drawbacks of the desire itself. Similarly, when one feels anger, it is hard not to feel that the anger is justified; when sleepy, it is hard not to feel that one should get some sleep; when worried, it is hard not to believe that one needs to worry, and so forth.

Although the hindrances cannot be totally relinquished prior to the various stages of Awakening, they can be lessened on a preliminary level to the point where the mind can settle down in jhana. This preliminary level is the focus of the passages in this section. Passage §159 lists five methods for dealing with unskillful thoughts in the course of meditation. The passages included here focus almost exclusively on using the first two of those methods—replacing the unskillful

thoughts with skillful ones, and contemplating the drawbacks of the unskillful thoughts until one feels repulsed by them—so as to escape from the power of any hindrances that have overcome the mind. Examples of the first method include focusing on the unattractive side of any sensual object to which one may be attracted [§§30, 140, 142]; focusing on the good qualities of a person who has aroused thoughts of ill will [§144]; focusing on the foolishness of expecting all people to act in line with one's wants [§145]; and changing one's object of concentration when finding that the current object is inducing sleepiness [§147]. Examples of the second method include realizing that the hindrance is placing the mind in a state of bondage and limitation [§§134, 137-138], and that one can find freedom only by releasing oneself from its power. In practice, these are not the only ways of applying these two general approaches. The examples in the texts can act as inspiration for any similar techniques that a meditator might devise to obtain the desired effect.

To escape the double bind mentioned above—the fact that the hindrances blind one to one's own true best interests, and yet one needs to see those true interests if one is to overcome the hindrances—one must depend on all five faculties as one has been able to develop them. Conviction is needed so that one will listen to the advice of those who point out the drawbacks of the hindrances. A certain momentum of persistence, as right exertion, is needed so that one will make the effort to abandon the hindrance as soon as one is aware that it has arisen and before it grows into anything stronger. Mindfulness, based on the frames of reference, is needed so that one can be alert to the arising of the hindrances and can remember why they should be abandoned in the first place. This mindfulness can be strengthened by remembering the teachings of others who have pointed out the drawbacks of the hindrances—the many similes for the hindrances given in passages §§131-134 and §138 serve the purpose of keeping those memories vivid. It can also be strengthened by remembering the drawbacks of the hindrances as encountered in one's own personal experience: the damage that has come when another person has given in to them, and the things that one regrets having done oneself when under their influence.

Because preliminary levels of concentration and discernment are present in right exertion and the practice of the frames of reference, these faculties play a role in abandoning the hindrances as well. As they develop strength, they make one more and more skilled in cutting off the hindrances as effectively as possible. The seven factors for Awakening, which are developed in concentration, act as direct antidotes to the hindrances [§76], while discernment—combined with concentrated mindfulness—helps in mastering what is probably the most effective tool for not being fooled by the hindrances: the ability to separate the hindrance, as an act of the mind, from its object.

For instance, discernment makes one able to see the feeling of sensual desire as one thing, and the object of the desire as something separate. This ability is crucial in a number of ways. To begin with, it helps separate the positive qualities of the object from the act of desiring the object, so that one does not confuse the two. The tendency to confuse the two is what makes it hard to see the drawbacks of the desire when it is present in the mind, and at the same time, serves to harden the mind in general against the Buddha's admonishments against sensuality.

There is a widespread feeling that Buddhism gives an unfair valuation of

sensuality and is blind to the positive beauties of sensual objects, but this is simply not true. The Buddha admitted that sensual objects have their beauty and can give a measure of satisfaction [MN 13]. He pointed out, however, that the beauty of an object is not the whole story, for all beautiful objects must decay. If one's happiness is based on them, that happiness is in for a fall.

More importantly, though, the Buddha defined sensuality not as the objects of the senses, but as the passion and delight that one feels for one's intentions toward such objects [AN 6:63; MFU, p. 53]. Although the objects of the senses are neither good nor evil *per se*, the act of passion and delight forms a bond on the mind, disturbing its immediate peace and ensuring its continued entrapment in the round of rebirth and redeath. Only by separating the desire from its object can one directly perceive the truth of these teachings.

This point applies to the other hindrances as well. For instance, when one can separate the object of one's anger from the anger itself as a mental event, one can see the obvious drawbacks of allowing anger to take over the mind.

In addition, the ability to separate the act from its object enables one to become sensitive to the act before it becomes overpowering, at the same time allowing one to regard it simply as a mental quality in and of itself. One can then engage in the practice outlined in §30—that of observing the coming and going of the hindrances as one tries to bring the mind to concentration. In this way, one eventually becomes so familiar with the patterns underlying their occurrence that one can undercut them and eliminate them from the mind for good.

Passage §137 gives an example of one of the patterns that one will see when sensual desire arises: sexual attraction for another person begins with a sense of attraction for one's own sexuality. Passage §96, in a more abstract fashion, lists other patterns of mind that feed the hindrances. By perceiving such patterns, one can take one's analysis of the roots of unskillfulness in the mind to ever more subtle levels. In this way, the skill of being able to abandon the hindrances will go beyond simply the preliminary level of concentration practice, exercising all five of the faculties to the point where they issue in Awakening.

§ 131. These are the five hindrances & obstructions that overcome awareness & weaken discernment. Which five? Sensual desire is a hindrance & obstruction that overcomes awareness & weakens discernment. Ill will... Sloth & drowsiness... Restlessness & anxiety... Uncertainty is a hindrance & obstruction that overcomes awareness & weakens discernment....

Suppose there were a river, flowing down from the mountains, going far, its current swift, carrying everything with it: If a man were to open watercourses leading off from both sides, the current in the middle of the river would be interrupted, diverted, & dispersed. The river would not go far, its current would not be swift, and it would not carry everything with it. In the same way, if a monk has not rid himself of these five hindrances... there is no possibility that he can know what is for his own benefit, or the benefit of others, or both; or that he should come to realize a superior human attainment, a truly noble knowledge & vision....

But suppose there were a river, flowing down from the mountains, going far, its current swift, carrying everything with it: If a man were to close off the



watercourses leading off from both sides, the current in the middle of the river would not be interrupted, diverted, or dispersed. The river would go far, its current swift, carrying everything with it. In the same way, if a monk has rid himself of these five hindrances... there is the possibility that he can know what is for his own benefit, or the benefit of others, or both, and that he should come to realize a superior human attainment, a truly noble knowledge & vision.

AN 5:51

§ 132. When gold is debased by these five impurities, it is not pliant, malleable, or luminous. It is brittle and not ready to be worked. Which five? Iron, copper, tin, lead, & silver.... But when gold is not debased by these five impurities, it is pliant, malleable, & luminous. It is not brittle and is ready to be worked. Then whatever sort of ornament one has in mind—whether a belt, an earring, a necklace, or a gold chain—it would serve one's purpose.

In the same way, when the mind is debased by these five impurities, it is not pliant, malleable, or luminous. It is brittle and not rightly concentrated for the ending of the effluents. Which five? Sensual desire, ill will, sloth & drowsiness, restlessness & anxiety, and uncertainty.... But when the mind is not debased by these five impurities, it is pliant, malleable, & luminous. It is not brittle and is rightly concentrated for the ending of the effluents. Then whichever of the six higher knowledges [§64] one turns one's mind to know & realize, one can witness them for oneself whenever there is an opening....

AN 5:23

**§ 133. Similes for the Hindrances.** Imagine a bowl of water mixed with lac, yellow orpiment, indigo, or crimson, such that a man with good eyesight examining the reflection of his face in it would not be able to know or see his face as it has come to be. In the same way, when one remains with awareness possessed by sensual passion, overcome with sensual passion, and neither knows nor sees the escape, as it is has come to be, from sensual passion once it has arisen, then one neither knows nor sees what is for one's own benefit, or for the benefit of others, or for the benefit of both....

Now imagine a bowl of water heated on a fire, boiling & bubbling over, such that a man with good eyesight examining the reflection of his face in it would not be able to know or see his face as it has come to be. In the same way, when one remains with awareness possessed by ill will, overcome with ill will, and neither knows nor sees the escape, as it has come to be, from ill will once it has arisen, then one neither knows nor sees what is for one's own benefit, or for the benefit of others, or for the benefit of both....

Now imagine a bowl of water covered with algae & slime, such that a man with good eyesight examining the reflection of his face in it would not be able to know or see his face as it has come to be. In the same way, when one remains with awareness possessed by sloth & drowsiness, overcome with sloth & drowsiness, and neither knows nor sees the escape, as it has come to be, from sloth & drowsiness once it has arisen, then one neither knows nor sees what is for one's own benefit, or for the benefit of others, or for the benefit of both....

Now imagine a bowl of water ruffled by the wind, disturbed, & covered with waves, such that a man with good eyesight examining the reflection of his face in it would not be able to know or see his face as it has come to be. In the same way, when one remains with awareness possessed by restlessness & anxiety, overcome with restlessness & anxiety, and neither knows nor sees the escape, as it has come to be, from restlessness & anxiety once it has arisen, then one neither knows nor sees what is for one's own benefit, or for the benefit of others, or for the benefit of both....

Now imagine a bowl of water stirred up, turbid, muddied, & left in the dark, such that a man with good eyesight examining the reflection of his face in it would not be able to know or see his face as it has come to be. In the same way, when one remains with awareness possessed by uncertainty, overcome with uncertainty, and neither knows nor sees the escape, as it has come to be, from uncertainty once it has arisen, then one neither knows nor sees what is for one's own benefit, or for the benefit of others, or for the benefit of both....

SN 46:55

§ 134. Suppose that a man, taking a loan, invests it in his business affairs. His business affairs succeed. He repays his old debts and has extra left over for maintaining his wife. The thought would occur to him, 'Before, taking a loan, I invested it in my business affairs. Now my business affairs have succeeded. I have repaid my old debts and have extra left over for maintaining my wife.' Because of that he would gain joy & experience happiness.

Now suppose that a man falls sick—in pain & seriously ill. He does not enjoy his meals and has no measure of strength in his body. At a later time he is released from that sickness. He enjoys his meals and has a measure of strength in his body. The thought would occur to him, 'Before, I was sick.... Now I am released from that sickness. I enjoy my meals and have a measure of strength in my body.' Because of that he would gain joy & experience happiness.

Now suppose that a man is bound in prison. At a later time he is released from that bondage, safe & sound, with no loss of property. The thought would occur to him, 'Before, I was bound in prison. Now I am released from that bondage, safe & sound, with no loss of my property.' Because of that he would gain joy & experience happiness.

Now suppose that a man is a slave, subject to others, not subject to himself, unable to go where he likes. At a later time he is released from that slavery, subject to himself, not subject to others, freed, able to go where he likes. The thought would occur to him, 'Before, I was a slave.... Now I am released from that slavery, subject to myself, not subject to others, freed, able to go where I like.' Because of that he would gain joy & experience happiness.

Now suppose that a man, carrying money & goods, is traveling by a road through desolate country. At a later time he emerges from that desolate country, safe & sound, with no loss of property. The thought would occur to him, 'Before, carrying money & goods, I was traveling by a road through desolate country. Now I have emerged from that desolate country, safe & sound, with no loss of my property.' Because of that he would gain joy & experience happiness.

In the same way, when these five hindrances are not abandoned within him, the monk regards it as a debt, a sickness, a prison, slavery, a road through desolate country. But when these five hindrances are abandoned within him, he regards it as unindebtedness, good health, release from prison, freedom, a place of security.

MN 39

§ 135. **Sensual desire.** I have heard that on one occasion the Blessed One was staying near Sāvattī in Jeta's Grove, Anāthapiṇḍika's Park. Now on that occasion the Blessed One was sitting out in the open in the pitch black of the night, while oil lamps were burning. Many flying insects were meeting their downfall & misfortune in those oil lamps. Seeing this... the Blessed One exclaimed,

Rushing headlong, missing what's essential,  
bringing on one new bond after another,  
like insects falling into the flame,  
some are intent only on what's seen & heard.

Ud 6:9

§ 136. Clinging to sensuality, to sensual ties,  
seeing no blame in the fetter,  
never will those tied up in the fetter  
cross over the flood so great & wide.

Ud 7:3

§ 137. I will teach you a Dhamma discourse on bondage & lack of bondage.... A woman attends inwardly to her feminine faculties, her feminine gestures, her feminine manners, feminine poise, feminine desires, feminine voice, feminine charms. She is excited by that, delighted by that. Being excited & delighted by that, she attends outwardly to masculine faculties, masculine gestures, masculine manners, masculine poise, masculine desires, masculine voices, masculine charms. She is excited by that, delighted by that... wants to be bonded to what is outside her, wants whatever pleasure & happiness that arise based on that bond. Delighting, caught up in her femininity, a woman goes into bondage with reference to men. This is how a woman does not transcend her femininity.

A man attends inwardly to his masculine faculties, masculine gestures, masculine manners, masculine poise, masculine desires, masculine voice, masculine charms. He is excited by that, delighted by that. Being excited & delighted by that, he attends outwardly to feminine faculties, feminine gestures, feminine manners, feminine poise, feminine desires, feminine voices, feminine charms. He is excited by that, delighted by that... wants to be bonded to what is outside him, wants whatever pleasure & happiness that arise based on that bond. Delighting, caught up in his masculinity, a man goes into bondage with reference to women. This is how a man does not transcend his masculinity.

And how is there lack of bondage? A woman does not attend inwardly to her feminine faculties... feminine charms. She is not excited by that, not delighted by

that... does not attend outwardly to masculine faculties... masculine charms. She is not excited by that, not delighted by that... does not want to be bonded to what is outside her, does not want whatever pleasure & happiness that arise based on that bond. Not delighting, not caught up in her femininity, a woman does not go into bondage with reference to men. This is how a woman transcends her femininity.

A man does not attend inwardly to his masculine faculties... masculine charms. He is not excited by that, not delighted by that... does not attend outwardly to feminine faculties... feminine charms. He is not excited by that, not delighted by that... does not want to be bonded to what is outside him, does not want whatever pleasure & happiness that arise based on that bond. Not delighting, not caught up in his masculinity, a man does not go into bondage with reference to women. This is how a man transcends his masculinity.

This is how there is lack of bondage. And this is the Dhamma discourse on bondage & lack of bondage.

AN 7:48

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

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

‘In the same way, householder, a disciple of the noble ones considers this: “The Blessed One has compared sensuality to a chain of bones, of much stress, much despair. The drawback there is greater.” Seeing this with right discernment as it has come to be, then avoiding the equanimity coming from multiplicity, dependent on multiplicity, he develops the equanimity coming from singleness, dependent on singleness [III/G], where clingings for worldly baits totally cease without trace.

‘Now suppose a vulture, a kite, or a hawk were to take off, having seized a lump of flesh, and other vultures, kites, or hawks—following right after it—were to tear at it & pull at it. What do you think? If that vulture, kite, or hawk were not quickly to drop that lump of flesh, would it meet with death from that cause, or with death-like pain?’

‘Yes, lord.’

‘In the same way, householder, a disciple of the noble ones considers this: “The Blessed One has compared sensuality to a lump of flesh, of much stress, much despair. The drawback there is greater”.... He develops the equanimity coming from singleness, dependent on singleness, where clingings for worldly baits totally cease without trace.

‘Now suppose a man were to come against the wind, carrying a burning grass torch. What do you think? If he were not quickly to drop that grass torch, would

he burn his hand or his arm or some other part of his body, so that he would meet with death from that cause, or with death-like pain?’

‘Yes, lord.’

‘In the same way, householder, a disciple of the noble ones considers this: “The Blessed One has compared sensuality to a grass torch, of much stress, much despair. The drawback there is greater” .... He develops the equanimity coming from singleness, dependent on singleness, where clingings for worldly baits totally cease without trace.

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

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

‘In the same way, householder, a disciple of the noble ones considers this: “The Blessed One has compared sensuality to a pit of glowing embers, of much stress, much despair. The drawback there is greater” .... He develops the equanimity coming from singleness, dependent on singleness, where clingings for worldly baits totally cease without trace.

‘Now suppose a man, when dreaming, were to see delightful parks, delightful forests, delightful stretches of land, & delightful lakes, and on awakening were to see nothing. In the same way, householder, a disciple of the noble ones considers this point: “The Blessed One has compared sensuality to a dream, of much stress, much despair. The drawback there is greater” .... He develops the equanimity coming from singleness, dependent on singleness, where clingings for worldly baits totally cease without trace.

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

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

‘In the same way, householder, a disciple of the noble ones considers this point: “The Blessed One has compared sensuality to borrowed goods, of much stress, much despair. The drawback there is greater” .... He develops the equanimity coming from singleness, dependent on singleness, where clingings for worldly baits totally cease without trace.

‘Now suppose that, not far from a village or town, there were a dense forest grove, and there in the grove was a tree with delicious fruit, abundant fruit, but with no fruit fallen to the ground. A man would come along, desiring fruit, looking for fruit, searching for fruit. Plunging into the forest grove, he would see the tree... and the thought would occur to him, “This is a tree with delicious fruit,

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

'Yes, lord.'

'In the same way, householder, a disciple of the noble ones considers this point: "The Blessed One has compared sensuality to the fruits of a tree, of much stress, much despair. The drawback there is greater." Seeing this with right discernment as it has come to be, then avoiding the equanimity coming from multiplicity, dependent on multiplicity, he develops the equanimity coming from singleness, dependent on single-ness, where clings for worldly baits totally cease without trace.

MN 54

§ 139. The Buddha: Māgandiya, suppose that there was a leper covered with sores & infections, devoured by worms, picking the scabs off the openings of his wounds with his nails, cauterizing his body over a pit of glowing embers. Then suppose his friends, companions, & relatives brought a doctor to treat him. The doctor would concoct medicine, and by means of that medicine he would be cured of his leprosy: well & happy, free, master of himself, going wherever he liked. Then suppose two strong men, having grabbed him with their arms, were to drag him to a pit of glowing embers. What do you think? Wouldn't he twist his body this way and that?

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

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

Māgandiya: Both now & before is it painful to the touch, very hot & scorching. It's just that when the man was a leper... his faculties were impaired, which was why, even though the fire was actually painful to the touch, he had the skewed perception of 'pleasant.'

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

Now suppose that there was a leper covered with sores & infections, devoured

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

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

Māgandiya: No, Master Gotama.

The Buddha: Very good, Māgandiya. Neither have I... But whatever contemplatives or brahmans who have dwelt or will dwell or are dwelling free from thirst, their minds inwardly at peace, all have done so having realized—as it has come to be—the origination & disappearance, the allure, the danger, & the escape from sensuality, having abandoned sensual craving and removed sensual fever.

MN 75

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

A city made of bones,  
plastered over with flesh & blood,  
whose hidden treasures are:

pride & deceit,  
aging & death.

Dhp 147, 150

§ 141. Not even if it rained gold coins  
would we have our fill  
of sensual pleasures.  
'Stressful,  
they give little enjoyment'—  
knowing this, the wise one finds no delight  
even in heavenly sensual pleasures.  
He is one who delights in the ending of craving—

a disciple of the Rightly Self-Awakened One.

Dhp 186-87

§ 142. As Subhā the nun was going through Jivaka's delightful mango grove, a libertine [a goldsmith's son] blocked her path, so she said to him:

“What wrong have I done you  
that you stand in my way?  
It's not proper, my friend,  
that a man should touch  
a woman gone forth.  
I respect the Teacher's message,  
the training pointed out by the one well-gone.  
I am pure, without blemish:  
Why do you stand in my way?

You—your mind agitated,  
I—unagitated;  
You—impassioned,  
I—unimpassioned, unblemished,  
with a mind everywhere released:  
Why do you stand in my way?”

“You are young & not bad-looking,  
what need do you have for going forth?  
Throw off your ochre robe—  
Come, let's delight in the flowering forest.  
A sweetness they exude from all around,  
the towering trees with their pollen.  
The beginning of spring is a pleasant season—  
Come, let's delight in the flowering forest.  
The trees with their blossoming tips  
moan, as it were, in the breeze:  
What delight will you have  
if you plunge into the forest alone?  
Frequented by herds of wild beasts,  
disturbed by elephants rutting & aroused:  
you want to go unaccompanied  
into the great, lonely, frightening forest?  
Like a doll made of gold, you will go about,  
like a goddess in the gardens of heaven.  
With delicate, smooth Kāsi fabrics,  
you will shine, O beauty without compare.  
I would be under your power  
if we were to dwell in the wood.  
For there is no creature dearer to me  
than you,  
O nymph with the languid regard.  
If you do as I ask, happy, come live in my house.



Dwelling in the calm of a palace,  
 have women wait on you,  
 wear delicate Kāsi fabrics,  
 adorn yourself with garlands & creams.

I will make you many & varied ornaments  
 of gold, jewels, & pearls.

Climb onto a costly bed,  
 scented with sandalwood carvings,  
 with a well-washed coverlet, beautiful,  
 spread with a woolen quilt, brand new.  
 Like a blue lotus rising from the water,  
 where there dwell non-human spirits,  
 you will go to old age with your limbs unseen,  
 if you stay as you are in the holy life."

"What do you assume of any essence,  
 here in this cemetery grower, filled with corpses,  
 this body destined to break up?  
 What do you see when you look at me,  
 you who are out of your mind?"

"Your eyes  
 are like those of a fawn,  
 like those of a nymph in the mountains.  
 Seeing your eyes, my sensual delight  
 grows all the more.

Like tips they are, of blue lotuses,  
 in your golden face  
 —spotless:

Seeing your eyes, my sensual delight  
 grows all the more.

Even if you should go far away,  
 I will think only of your pure,  
 long-lashed gaze,  
 for there is nothing dearer to me  
 than your eyes,

O nymph with the languid regard."

"You want to stray from the road,  
 you want the moon as a plaything,  
 you want to jump over Mount Sineru,  
 you who have designs on one born of the Buddha.  
 For there is nothing anywhere at all  
 in the world with its devas,  
 that would be an object of passion for me.

I don't even know what that passion would be,  
 for it's been killed, root & all, by the path.

Like embers from a pit—scattered,  
 like a bowl of poison—evaporated,

I don't even see what that passion would be,  
 for it's been killed, root & all, by the path.

Try to seduce one who hasn't reflected on this,  
 or who the Teacher hasn't instructed.  
 But try it with this one who knows  
     and you do yourself violence.

For whether insulted or worshiped,  
     in pleasure or pain,  
 my mindfulness stands firm.

Knowing the unattractiveness  
     of fabricated things,  
 my heart adheres nowhere at all.  
 I am a follower of the one well-gone,  
 riding the vehicle of the eightfold way:  
 My arrow removed, effluent-free,  
 I delight, having gone to an empty dwelling.

For I have seen well-painted puppets,  
 hitched up with sticks & strings,  
 made to dance in various ways.  
 When the sticks & strings are removed,  
 thrown away, scattered, shredded,  
 smashed into pieces, not to be found,  
     in what will the mind there make its home?  
 This body of mine, which is just like that,  
 when devoid of dhammas doesn't function.  
 When, devoid of dhammas, it doesn't function,  
     in what will the mind there make its home?  
 Like a mural you've seen, painted on a wall,  
 smeared with yellow orpiment,  
 there your vision has been distorted,  
 meaningless your perception of a human being.  
 Like an evaporated mirage,  
 like a tree of gold in a dream,  
 like a magic show in the midst of a crowd—  
     you run blind after what is unreal.

Resembling a ball of sealing wax,  
 set in a hollow,  
 with a bubble in the middle  
 & bathed with tears,  
 eye secretions are born there too:  
 The parts of the eye  
 are rolled all together  
 in various ways."

Plucking out her lovely eye,  
 with mind unattached  
 she felt no regret.

"Here, take this eye. It's yours."

Straightaway she gave it to him.  
 Straightaway his passion faded right there,  
 and he begged her forgiveness.

“Be safe, follower of the holy life.

This sort of thing  
 won’t happen again.

Harming a person like you  
 is like embracing a blazing fire,  
 It’s as if I have seized a poisonous snake.  
 So may you be safe. Forgive me.”

And freed from there, the nun  
 went to the excellent Buddha’s presence.  
 When she saw the mark of his excellent merit,  
 her eye became  
 as it was before.

Thig 14

**§ 143. Ill will.** These are five ways of subduing hatred by which, when hatred arises in a monk, he should wipe it out completely. Which five?

When one gives birth to hatred for an individual, one should develop good will for that individual. Thus the hatred for that individual should be subdued.

When one gives birth to hatred for an individual, one should develop compassion for that individual... equanimity toward that individual... one should pay him no mind & pay him no attention.... When one gives birth to hatred for an individual, one should direct one’s thoughts to the fact of his being the product of kamma: ‘This venerable one is the doer of kamma, heir of kamma, born of kamma, related by kamma, and has kamma as his arbitrator. Whatever kamma he does, for good or for evil, to that will he fall heir.’ Thus the hatred for that individual should be subdued.

These are five ways of subduing hatred by which, when hatred arises in a monk, he should wipe it out completely.

AN5:161

**§ 144. Ven. Sāriputta:** There are some people who are impure in their bodily behavior but pure in their verbal behavior. Hatred for a person of this sort should be subdued.

There are some people who are impure in their verbal behavior but pure in their bodily behavior. Hatred for a person of this sort should also be subdued.

There are some people who are impure in their bodily behavior & verbal behavior, but who periodically experience mental clarity & calm. Hatred for a person of this sort should also be subdued.

There are some people who are impure in their bodily behavior & verbal behavior, and who do not periodically experience mental clarity & calm. Hatred

for a person of this sort should also be subdued.

There are some people who are pure in their bodily behavior & their verbal behavior, and who periodically experience mental clarity & calm. Hatred for a person of this sort should also be subdued.

Now as for a person who is impure in his bodily behavior but pure in his verbal behavior, how should one subdue hatred for him? Just as when a monk who makes use of things that are thrown away sees a rag in the road: taking hold of it with his left foot and spreading it out with his right, he would tear off the sound part and go off with it. In the same way, when the individual is impure in his bodily behavior but pure in his verbal behavior, one should at that time pay no attention to the impurity of his bodily behavior, and instead pay attention to the purity of his verbal behavior. Thus the hatred for him should be subdued.

And as for a person who is impure in his verbal behavior, but pure in his bodily behavior, how should one subdue hatred for him? Just as when there is a pool overgrown with slime & water plants, and a person comes along, burning with heat, covered with sweat, exhausted, trembling, & thirsty. He would jump into the pool, part the slime & water plants with both hands, and then, cupping his hands, drink the water and go on his way. In the same way, when the individual is impure in his verbal behavior but pure in his bodily behavior, one should at that time pay no attention to the impurity of his verbal behavior, and instead pay attention to the purity of his bodily behavior. Thus the hatred for him should be subdued.

And as for a person who is impure in his bodily behavior & verbal behavior, but who periodically experiences mental clarity & calm, how should one subdue hatred for him? Just as when there is a little puddle in a cow's footprint, and a person comes along, burning with heat, covered with sweat, exhausted, trembling, & thirsty. The thought would occur to him, 'Here is this little puddle in a cow's footprint. If I tried to drink the water using my hand or cup, I would disturb it, stir it up, & make it unfit to drink. What if I were to get down on all fours and slurp it up like a cow, and then go on my way?' So he would get down on all fours, slurp up the water like a cow, and then go on his way. In the same way, when an individual is impure in his bodily behavior & verbal behavior, but periodically experiences mental clarity & calm, one should at that time pay no attention to the impurity of his bodily behavior... the impurity of his verbal behavior, and instead pay attention to the fact that he periodically experiences mental clarity & calm. Thus the hatred for him should be subdued.

And as for a person who is impure in his bodily behavior & verbal behavior, and who does not periodically experience mental clarity & calm, how should one subdue hatred for him? Just as when there is a sick man—in pain, seriously ill—traveling along a road, far from the next village & far from the last, unable to get the food he needs, unable to get the medicine he needs, unable to get a suitable assistant, unable to get anyone to take him to human habitation. Now suppose another person were to see him coming along the road. He would do what he could out of compassion, pity, & sympathy for the man, thinking, 'O that this man should get the food he needs, the medicine he needs, a suitable assistant, someone to take him to human habitation. Why is that? So that he won't fall into ruin right here.' In the same way, when a person is impure in his bodily behavior

& verbal behavior, and who does not periodically experience mental clarity & calm, one should do what one can out of compassion, pity, & sympathy for him, thinking, 'O that this man should abandon wrong bodily conduct and develop right bodily conduct, abandon wrong verbal conduct and develop right verbal conduct, abandon wrong mental conduct and develop right mental conduct. Why is that? So that, on the breakup of the body, after death, he won't fall into the plane of deprivation, the bad destination, the lower realms, hell.' Thus the hatred for him should be subdued.

And as for a person who is pure in his bodily behavior & verbal behavior, and who periodically experiences mental clarity & calm, how should one subdue hatred for him? Just as when there is a pool of clear water—sweet, cool, & limpid, with gently sloping banks, & shaded on all sides by trees of many kinds—and a person comes along, burning with heat, covered with sweat, exhausted, trembling, & thirsty. Having plunged into the pool, having bathed & drunk & come back out, he would sit down or lie down right there in the shade of the trees. In the same way, when an individual is pure in his bodily behavior & verbal behavior, and periodically experiences mental clarity & calm, one should at that time pay attention to the purity of his bodily behavior... the purity of his verbal behavior, and to the fact that he periodically experiences mental clarity & calm. Thus the hatred for him should be subdued. An entirely inspiring individual can make the mind grow serene.

These are five ways of subduing hatred by which, when hatred arises in a monk, he should wipe it out completely.

AN 5:162

§ 145. There are these ten ways of subduing hatred. Which ten? [1] Thinking, 'He has done me harm. But what should I expect?' one subdues hatred. [2] Thinking, 'He is doing me harm. But what should I expect?... [3] He is going to do me harm. But what should I expect?... [4] He has done harm to people who are dear & pleasing to me. But what should I expect?... [5] He is doing harm to people who are dear & pleasing to me. But what should I expect?... [6] He is going to do harm to people who are dear & pleasing to me. But what should I expect?... [7] He has aided people who are not dear or pleasing to me. But what should I expect?... [8] He is aiding people who are not dear or pleasing to me. But what should I expect?... [9] He is going to aid people who are not dear or pleasing to me. But what should I expect?' one subdues hatred. [10] One doesn't get worked up over impossibilities. These are ten ways of subduing hatred.

AN 10:80

§ 146. 'He insulted me, hit me, beat me, robbed me'—  
for those who brood on this,  
hostility isn't stilled.

'He insulted me, hit me, beat me, robbed me'—  
for those who don't brood on this,  
hostility is stilled.

Hostilities aren't stilled through hostility,  
regardless.

Hostilities are stilled through non-hostility:  
this, an unending truth.

Dhp 3-5

§ 147. **Sloth & drowsiness.** Once the Blessed One was living among the Bhaggas in the Deer Park at Bhesakalā Grove, near Crocodile Haunt. At that time Ven. Mahā Moggallāna [prior to his Awakening] sat nodding near the village of Kallavalaputta, in Magadha. The Blessed One saw this with his purified divine eye, surpassing the human, and as soon as he saw this—just as a strong man might extend his flexed arm or flex his extended arm—disappeared from the Deer Park... appeared right in front of Ven. Mahā Moggallāna, and sat down on a prepared seat. As he was sitting there, the Blessed One said to Ven. Mahā Moggallāna, ‘Are you nodding, Moggallāna? Are you nodding?’

‘Yes, lord.’

‘Well then, Moggallāna, whatever perception you have in mind when drowsiness descends on you, don’t attend to that perception, don’t pursue it. It’s possible that by doing this you will shake off your drowsiness.

‘But if by doing this you don’t shake off your drowsiness, then recall to your awareness the Dhamma as you have heard & memorized it, re-examine it & ponder it over in your mind. It’s possible that by doing this you will shake off your drowsiness.

‘But if by doing this you don’t shake off your drowsiness, then repeat aloud in detail the Dhamma as you have heard & memorized it. It’s possible that by doing this you will shake off your drowsiness.

‘But if by doing this you don’t shake off your drowsiness, then pull both your earlobes and rub your limbs with your hands. It’s possible that by doing this you will shake off your drowsiness.

‘But if by doing this you don’t shake off your drowsiness, then get up from your seat and, after washing your eyes out with water, look around in all directions and upward to the major stars & constellations. It’s possible that by doing this you will shake off your drowsiness.

‘But if by doing this you don’t shake off your drowsiness, then attend to the perception of light, resolve on the perception of daytime, (dwelling) by night as by day, and by day as by night. By means of an awareness thus open & unhampered, develop a brightened mind [§66]. It’s possible that by doing this you will shake off your drowsiness.

‘But if by doing this you don’t shake off your drowsiness, then—percipient of what lies in front & behind—set a distance to meditate walking back & forth, your senses inwardly immersed, your mind not straying outward. It’s possible that by doing this you will shake off your drowsiness.

‘But if by doing this you don’t shake off your drowsiness, then—reclining on your right side—take up the lion’s posture, one foot placed on top of the other, mindful, alert, with your mind set on getting up. As soon as you wake up, get up quickly, with the thought, “I won’t stay indulging in the pleasure of lying down, the pleasure of reclining, the pleasure of drowsiness.”

‘Thus, Moggallāna, should you train yourself....’

## E. RIGHT CONCENTRATION

The passages in this section deal with right concentration in terms of three questions that deserve appropriate attention:

- What is right concentration?
- How is it mastered?
- How can it be put to use?

To answer **the first question**: Passage §148 defines concentration as singleness of mind, but not every instance of mental singleness counts as right concentration. Passage §102 identifies right concentration with the four levels of jhana—meditative absorption—and §152 makes the point that jhana can be considered right concentration only if it is devoid of unskillful qualities such as the hindrances. Absorption in sensual passion, for instance, even though it may be very single-minded, does not count as part of the path. Thus the definition for the first level of jhana specifies that it counts as a path factor only when the mind is secluded from sensuality and unskillful mental qualities.

The singleness of jhana means not only that awareness is focused on a single object, but also that the object is reduced to a single quality that fills the entirety of one's awareness, at the same time that one's awareness broadens to suffuse the entire object. This mutual pervasion of awareness and object in a state of expansion is what is meant by *absorption*. The similes used to illustrate the various levels of jhana repeatedly make mention of "expansion," "suffusing," "stretching," and "filling" [§150; also MN 121; MFU, pp. 82-85], culminating in the fourth jhana where one's body is filled with a bright sense of awareness. This sense of expansion and making-single is also indicated in passages that teach specific meditation techniques. The directions for keeping the breath in mind, for instance, state that one should be sensitive to the entire body while breathing in and out. This accounts for the term "*mahaggata*"—enlarged or expanded—used to describe the mind in the state of jhana.

There are two basic types of jhana, which the commentaries term "form jhana" (*rupa jhana*) and "formless jhana" (*arupa jhana*). Each type has several levels. In the case of form jhana, different passages in the Canon list the levels in different ways. The differences revolve around two different senses of the word "form." In one sense, "form" denotes the body, and form jhana is a state of mental absorption in the form of one's own physical body, as sensed from within. Jhana focused on this type of form comes in four levels, identical with the four levels mentioned in the definition of the faculty of concentration [§72] and of right concentration under the noble eightfold path [§102]. In another sense, "form" can also denote the visible forms and light that some meditators can see in the mind's eye in the course of their meditation. This type of form jhana is analyzed into two patterns, one with two levels [§164], the other with three [§163]. Both patterns end with the perception of the "beautiful," which in terms of its function is equivalent to the sense of radiance filling the body on the fourth level of "body form" jhana.

For a person practicing form jhana in either sense of the term, the equanimity

experienced with the sense of beautiful radiance can then act as the basis for the formless levels of jhana, which the Canon terms the four “formlessnesses beyond form.” These are invariably defined as progressive absorption in the perceptions of “infinite space,” “infinite consciousness,” and “there is nothing,” leading to a fourth state of neither perception nor non-perception.

As for **the second question**, on how to master right concentration: Passage §154 notes that the ability to attain the first level of jhana—however one experiences the “form” acting as its focus—depends on the abandoning of the hindrances, because the feeling of freedom that comes with their abandoning provides the sense of joy and pleasure that lets the mind settle skillfully in the present moment. How to master this process is best shown by following the Buddha’s most detailed set of meditation instructions—the sixteen steps in the practice of keeping the breath in mind [§151]—and comparing them with the standard description of the four stages of jhana [§§149-150]. Before we analyze these maps of the practice, however, we must make a few comments on how to use them skillfully.

To begin with, internal obstacles to the practice of jhana do not end with the preliminary ground-clearing of the hindrances discussed in the preceding section. More refined levels of unskillful mental states can get in the way [§§160-61]. Lapses in mindfulness and alertness can leave openings for the hindrances to return. Thus, although the maps of the various stages of concentration proceed in a smooth, seemingly inevitable progression, the actual experience of the practice does not. For this reason, the Buddha gives specific instructions on how to deal with these obstacles as they arise in the course of the practice. Passage §159 lists five basic approaches, the first two of which we have already covered in the preceding section. The remaining three are:

1) One ignores the obstacles. This works on the principle that paying attention to the distraction feeds the distraction, just as paying attention to a crazy person—even if one is simply trying to drive him away—encourages him to stay.

2) One notices that the act of thinking a distracting thought actually takes more energy than not thinking the thought, and one consciously relaxes whatever tension or energy happens to accompany it. This approach works best when one is sensitive enough to bodily sensations to see the pattern of physical tension that appears in conjunction with the thought, and can intentionally relax it.

3) The approach of last resort is simply to exert force on the mind to drive out the distracting thought. This is a temporary stopgap measure that works only as long as mindfulness is firm and determination strong. It is useful in cases where discernment is not yet sharp enough to make the other approaches work, but once discernment is up to the task, the other approaches are more effective in the long run.

Another point to keep in mind in understanding the maps of the practice is that they list the steps of meditation, not in the order in which they will be experienced, but in the order in which they can be mastered. There are cases, for instance, where one will feel rapture in the course of the practice (step 5 in the practice of breath meditation) before one is able to breath in and out sensitive to the entire body (step 3). In such cases, it is important not to jump to any conclusions as to one’s level of attainment, or to feel that one has bypassed the need to master an earlier step. Instead—when several different experiences arise together in a jumble, as they often do—one should use the maps to tell which experience to focus on first for the sake



of developing one's meditation as a skill.

One qualification here is that it is not necessary to master all the levels of concentration in order to gain Awakening. The relationship of concentration to discernment is a controversial issue, which we will cover in the following section, but here we may simply note that many texts [§§173-74] point out that the experience of the first jhana can be a sufficient basis for the discernment leading to Awakening. The same holds true for the first four steps in breath meditation, which constitute one of the alternative ways of developing the body in and of itself as a frame of reference [§30]. In this case, one's practice of breath meditation would jump from a mastery of step 4 straight to step 13, skipping the intervening steps. In fact, beginning with step 4, it is possible to jump directly to 13 from any of the steps, and from there to progress all the way to Awakening.

The fact that the higher stages are unnecessary in some cases, however, does not mean that they are superfluous. Many people, as they develop the skill of their meditation, will find that their minds naturally go to deeper levels of stillness with no liberating insight arising. For them, the maps are valuable aids for a number of reasons. To begin with, the maps can help indicate what does and does not count as Awakening. When one arrives at a new, more refined level of awareness in one's practice, it is easy to assume that one has attained the goal. Comparing one's experience to the maps, however, can show that the experience is simply a higher level of concentration. Furthermore, awareness of the distinct levels can help one review them after attaining them, so that in the course of trying to master them, moving from one level to another, one can begin to gain insight into the element of will and fabrication that goes into them. This insight can then provide an understanding into the pattern of cause and effect in the mind and, as passage §182 shows, can lead to a sense of dispassion and ultimately to Awakening.

However, the maps should not be used to plan one's practice in advance. This is the message of §162, which makes the point that one should not try to use one's knowledge of the various levels of the practice to force one's way through them. In other words, one should not try to concoct a particular state of jhana based on ideas picked up from the maps. On reaching a particular level, one should not be in a hurry to go to the next. Instead, one should familiarize oneself with that level of mind, perfecting one's mastery; eventually that state of concentration will ripen naturally into the next level. To continue the image of the passage, one will find that there is no need to jump to another pasture to taste different grass and water, for the new grass and water will develop right in one's own pasture.

Finally, although the maps to the various stages of concentration seem exhaustive and complete, bear in mind that they list only the stages of *right* concentration, and not the varieties of wrong. In addition to the types of wrong concentration mentioned in §152, there are states of mind that may be very quiet but lack the mindfulness that would make them right. One of these stages is a blurred state—essentially a concentration of delusion—half-way between waking and sleep, in which one's object becomes hazy and ill-defined. On leaving it, one is hard put to say where the mind was focused, or whether it was awake or asleep.

Another type of wrong concentration is one that a modern practice tradition, following DN 1, calls a state of non-perception (*asaññi*). In this state, which is essentially a concentration of subtle aversion—the result of a strongly focused determination not to stay with any one object—everything seems to cease: the mind

blanks out, with no perception of sights or sounds, or of one's own body or thoughts. There is just barely enough mindfulness to know that one hasn't fainted or fallen asleep. One can stay there for long periods of time, and yet the experience will seem momentary. One can even determine beforehand when one will leave the state; but on emerging from it, one may feel somewhat dazed or drugged, a reaction caused by the intense aversive force of the concentration that induced the state to begin with. There are other forms of wrong concentration, but a general test is that right concentration is a mindful, fully alert state. Any state of stillness without clear mindfulness and alertness is wrong.

With these points in mind we can now turn to the maps to see their answer to the question of how breath meditation leads to the mastery of jhana. As noted above, the practice of keeping the breath in mind is the meditation method that the Canon teaches in most detail. There are two possible reasons for this, one historical and the other more theoretical. From the historical point of view, the breath was the focal point that the Buddha himself used on the night of his own Awakening. From the theoretical perspective, a state of concentration focused on the breath is the meeting place of all the elements of the factor of "fabrication" (*sankhara*) in the formula for dependent co-arising [§§218, 223]. This factor, as experienced in the present, consists of bodily fabrication (the breath itself), verbal fabrication (the factors of directed thought and evaluation applied to the breath in the first jhana), and mental fabrication (feeling and perception, in this case the feelings of pleasure and equanimity experienced in the four jhanas, plus the mental label of "breath" or "form" that act as the basis for the state of jhana). Because transcendent discernment must deal directly with these three types of fabrication if it is to eliminate the ignorance that underlies them, the practice of jhana based on the breath is an ideal point to focus on all three at once.

The first two steps of breath meditation [§151] involve simple tasks of directed thought and evaluation: directing one's thoughts and attention to the breath in and of itself, in the present, at the same time evaluating it as one begins to discern variations in the length of the breath. Some modern teachers maintain that the factor of evaluation here also includes taking one's observations of short and long breathing as a basis for adjusting the rhythm of the breath to make it as comfortable as possible. Because the first level of jhana must be based on a sense of pleasure [§238], this advice is very practical.

The remaining steps are willed or determined: One "trains oneself," first by manipulating one's sense of conscious awareness, making it sensitive to the body as a whole. Then one can begin manipulating the bodily sensations of which one is aware, reducing them to a single sensation of calm by letting "bodily fabrication"—the breath—grow calm so as to create an easeful sense of rapture and pleasure. A comparison between the stages of breath meditation and the graphic analogies for jhana [§150] indicates that the fifth and sixth steps—being sensitive to rapture and pleasure—involve making these feelings "single" as well, by letting them suffuse the entire body, just as the bathman kneads the moisture throughout his ball of bath powder. With bodily fabrications stilled, mental fabrications—feelings and perceptions—become clearly apparent as they occur, just as when a radio is precisely tuned to a certain frequency, static is eliminated and the message sent by the radio station broadcasting at that frequency becomes clear. These mental fabrications, too, are calmed, a step symbolized in the analogies for jhana by the

still waters in the simile for the third level, in contrast to the spring waters welling up in the second. What remains is simply a sense of the mind itself, corresponding to the level of fourth jhana, in which the body is filled from head to toe with a single sense of bright, radiant awareness. This completes the first level of frames-of-reference practice [II/B].

Once this stage is reached, steps 10-12 indicate that one can now turn one's attention to consolidating one's mastery of concentration. One does this by reviewing the various levels of jhana, focusing not so much on the breath as on the mind as it relates to the breath. This allows a perception of the different ways in which the mind can be satisfied and steadied, and the different factors from which it can be released by taking it through the different levels of jhana—for example, releasing it from rapture by taking it from the second level to the third, and so forth [§175]. One comes to see that although the breath feels different on the different levels of jhana, the cause is not so much the breath as it is the way the mind relates to the breath, shedding the various mental activities surrounding its single preoccupation. As one ascends through the various levels, directed thought and evaluation are stilled, rapture fades, and pleasure is abandoned.

Another way of consolidating one's skills in the course of these steps is to examine the subtle defilements that interfere with full mastery of concentration. The fact that one's focus is now on the mind makes it possible to see these defilements clearly, and then to steady the mind even further by releasing it from them. Passage §161, although aimed specifically at the problems faced by those who have visions in their meditation, gives a useful checklist of subtle mental defilements that can hamper the concentration of any meditator. The image of grasping the quail neither too loosely nor too tight has become a standard one in Buddhist meditation manuals.

The mastery of concentration developed in steps 9-12 provides an excellent chance to develop discernment into the pattern of cause and effect in the process of concentrating the mind, in that one must master the causal factors before one can gain the desired results in terms of satisfaction, steadiness, and release. Here we see at work the basic pattern of skillfulness mentioned in several earlier sections: that discernment is sharpened and strengthened by employing it in developing the skills of concentration. This would correspond to the second level of frames-of-reference meditation—focusing on the phenomenon of origination and passing away—mentioned in II/B.

Another development that can happen during these steps—although this goes outside of the practice of breath meditation *per se*—is the discovery of how the equanimity developed in the fourth jhana can be applied to other refined objects of the mind. These are the four formless jhanas: the dimension of the infinitude of space, the dimension of the infinitude of consciousness, the dimension of nothingness, and the dimension of neither perception nor non-perception. These states may sound impossibly abstract, but in actual practice they grow directly from the way the mind relates to the still sense of the body in the fourth jhana. The first stage comes when the mind consciously ignores its perception (mental label) of the form of the body, attending instead to the remaining sense of space that surrounds and pervades that form; the second stage comes when the mind sheds its perception of “space,” leaving a limitless sense of awareness; the third, when it lets go of the oneness of its perception of “awareness,” leaving a perception of

inactivity; and the fourth, when it sheds the perception of that lack of activity. That leaves a state where perception is so refined that it can hardly be called perception at all, even though it is still there. As one masters these steps, one realizes that whereas the first four levels of jhana differ in the type of activity the mind focuses on its one object, the four formless jhanas differ in their objects, as one level of mental labeling falls away to be replaced by a more subtle one.

Passages §162 and §164 list one more meditative attainment beyond the dimension of neither perception nor non-perception—the cessation of feeling and perception—but this is qualitatively different from the others, in that a meditator cannot attain it without at the same time awakening to the level of at least non-returning. The reason behind this is related, once more, to the factor of “fabrication” (*sankhara*) in dependent co-arising [§218]. In the course of mastering the levels of jhana, verbal fabrication grows still as one enters the second jhana; bodily fabrication, as one enters the fourth; and mental fabrication, as one enters this last stage. For all three types of fabrication to stop, however, ignorance—the condition for fabrication—must stop as well, and this can happen only with the insight that leads to Awakening.

We have come to the end of the list of the stages of mastery in meditative attainment, but four steps in breath meditation remain unexplained. This is because, aside from the ninth level of attainment, the stages of mastery can all be attained without developing the discernment that constitutes Awakening, while the last four steps in breath meditation deal specifically with giving rise to that discernment. This brings us to **the third question** that was broached at the beginning of this introduction: how right concentration can be put to use.

Passage §149 lists four possible uses for concentration:

- a pleasant abiding in the here and now,
- the attainment of knowledge and vision,
- mindfulness and alertness, and
- the ending of the effluents.

The first use is the simple enjoyment of the experience of jhana; the second relates to the first five supranormal powers [II/D]. The third relates to the development of the frames of reference [II/B]; and the fourth, to the discernment that constitutes Awakening. We have already discussed the second and third uses of concentration in the passages just cited in brackets. This leaves us with the first and fourth.

The Canon [MN 138; MFU, pp. 114-15] notes that meditators can become “chained and fettered” to the attractions of the pleasure to be found in jhana. As a result, many meditators are afraid to let their minds settle into blissfully still states, for fear of becoming stuck. The Canon, however, never once states that stream-entry can be attained without at least some experience in jhana; and it states explicitly [AN 3:88; MFU, p. 103] that the attainment of non-returning requires a mastery of concentration. MN 36 relates that the turning point in the Buddha’s own practice—when he abandoned the path of self-affliction and turned to the middle way—hinged on his realization that there is nothing blameworthy in the pleasure to be found in jhana. Thus, there is nothing to fear.

This pleasure plays an important function in the practice. To begin with, it enables the mind to stay comfortably in the present moment, helping it attain the

stability it needs for gaining insight. This can be compared to a scientific experiment in which the measuring equipment needs to be absolutely steady in order to give reliable readings. Second, because a great deal of sensitivity is required to “tune” the mind to the refined pleasure of jhana, the practice serves to increase one’s sensitivity, making one more acutely aware of even the most refined levels of stress as well. Third, because the pleasure and equanimity of jhana are more exquisite than sensory pleasures, and because they exist independently of the five senses, they can enable the mind to become less involved in sensory pleasures and less inclined to search for emotional satisfaction from them. In this sense, the skillful pleasures of jhana can act as a fulcrum for prying loose one’s attachments to the less skillful pleasures of sensuality. The fact that fully mature mastery of jhana brings about the attainment of non-returning, the preliminary level of Awakening where sensual passion is abandoned, shows the necessary role that jhana plays in letting go of this particular defilement. Finally, the pleasure of jhana provides a place of rest and rehabilitation along the path when the mind’s powers of discernment become dulled or it must be coaxed into the proper mood to accept some of the harsher lessons it needs to learn in order to abandon its cravings. Just as a person who is well-fed and rested is more open to receiving criticism than when he is tired and hungry, the mind is often more willing to admit its own foolishness and lack of skill when it is nourished by the pleasure of jhana than when it is not.

Thus, although the pleasure of jhana can become an obstacle if treated as an end in itself, there are phases of the practice where the pursuit of this form of pleasure is a useful strategy toward the fourth use of concentration: the ending of the mental effluents. This fourth use is the topic of the next section, but here we can simply note that it is related to the fifth factor of noble right concentration mentioned in §150. As the simile illustrating it suggests—with the standing person reflecting on the person sitting down—this factor is a pulling back or a lifting of the mind above the object of its absorption, without at the same time disturbing the absorption. This factor corresponds to steps 9 through 12 in the guide to breath meditation, in that one is able to focus on the way the mind relates to its object at the same time that the mind is actually in a state of concentration. Passage §172 shows that this factor can be applied to any level of jhana except for the states of neither perception nor non-perception and the cessation of perception and feeling. As for those two states, one can reflect on their component factors only after leaving them. With the other states, one stays with the object, but one’s prime focus is on the mind. One sees the various mental events that go into maintaining that state of concentration, and as one contemplates these events, one becomes struck by how inconstant they are, how fabricated and willed. This provides insight into how the present aspect of kamma—one’s present intentions—shape one’s present experience. It also gives insight into the general pattern of cause and effect in the mind.

Focusing on the inconstancy and unreliability of the factors in this pattern gives rise to the realization that they are also stressful and not-self: neither “me” nor “mine,” but simply instances of the first noble truth [III/H/i]. When this realization goes straight to the heart, there comes a sense of dispassion for any craving directed at them (the second noble truth) and an experience of their fading and cessation (the third). Finally, one relinquishes attachment not only to these events, but also to the discernment that sees through to their true nature (the fourth). This completes steps 13 through 16 in the guide to breath meditation, at the same time bringing the

seven factors for Awakening to completion in a state “dependent on seclusion... dispassion... cessation, resulting in letting go [§93],” where “letting go” would appear to be equivalent to the “relinquishment” in step 16. When one can simply experience the act of relinquishment without fashioning an identity around “doing” the relinquishing, one passes through the third stage of frames-of-reference meditation to the state of non-fashioning [§§179, 183], which forms the threshold to release.

Even after attaining release, the Arahant continues to practice meditation, although now that the effluents are ended, the concentration is not needed to put them to an end. MN 107 mentions that Arahants practice concentration both for the sake of a pleasant abiding in the here and now, and for mindfulness and alertness. A number of passages in the Canon mention the Buddha and his Arahant disciples exercising their supranormal powers, which shows that they were practicing concentration for the sake of attaining knowledge and vision as well, to use in instructing those around them. The description of the Buddha’s passing away tells that he entered total Unbinding after exercising his mastery in the full range of jhanic attainments. Thus the practice of concentration is useful all the way to the point where one gains total release from the round of death and rebirth.

§ 148. Visākha: Now what is concentration, what qualities are its themes, what qualities are its requisites, and what is its development?

Sister Dhammadinnā: Singleness of mind is concentration; the four frames of reference are its themes; the four right exertions are its requisites; and any cultivation, development, & pursuit of these qualities is its development.

MN 44

§ 149. These are the four developments of concentration. Which four? There is the development of concentration that, when developed & pursued, leads to a pleasant abiding in the here & now. There is the development of concentration that... leads to the attainment of knowledge & vision. There is the development of concentration that... leads to mindfulness & alertness. There is the development of concentration that, when developed & pursued, leads to the ending of the effluents.

And what is the development of concentration that, when developed & pursued, leads to a pleasant abiding in the here & now? There is the case where a monk—quite secluded from sensuality, secluded from unskillful qualities—enters & remains in the first jhāna: rapture & pleasure born from seclusion, accompanied by directed thought & evaluation. With the stilling of directed thoughts & evaluations, he enters & remains in the second jhāna: rapture & pleasure born of concentration, unification of awareness free from directed thought & evaluation—internal assurance. With the fading of rapture he remains equanimous, mindful, & alert, and senses pleasure with the body. He enters & remains in the third jhāna, of which the noble ones declare, ‘Equanimous & mindful, he has a pleasant abiding.’ With the abandoning of pleasure & pain—as with the earlier disappearance of joys & distresses—he enters & remains in the

fourth jhāna: purity of equanimity & mindfulness, neither pleasure nor pain. This is the development of concentration that... leads to a pleasant abiding in the here & now.

And what is the development of concentration that... leads to the attainment of knowledge & vision? There is the case where a monk attends to the perception of light and is resolved on the perception of daytime [at any hour of the day]. Day (for him) is the same as night, night is the same as day. By means of an awareness open & unhampered, he develops a brightened mind. This is the development of concentration that... leads to the attainment of knowledge & vision. [§§64; 66]

And what is the development of concentration that... leads to mindfulness & alertness? There is the case where feelings are known to the monk as they arise, known as they persist, known as they subside. Perceptions are known to him as they arise, known as they persist, known as they subside. Thoughts are known to him as they arise, known as they persist, known as they subside. This is the development of concentration that... leads to mindfulness & alertness. [§30]

And what is the development of concentration that... leads to the ending of the effluents? There is the case where a monk remains focused on arising & falling away with reference to the five clinging-aggregates: 'Such is form, such its origination, such its disappearance. Such is feeling... Such is perception... Such are fabrications... Such is consciousness, such its origination, such its disappearance.' This is the development of concentration that... leads to the ending of the effluents. [§173]

These are the four developments of concentration.

AN 4:41

**§ 150. Noble right concentration.** Now what, monks, is five-factored noble right concentration? There is the case where a monk—quite secluded from sensuality, secluded from unskillful qualities—enters & remains in the first jhāna: rapture & pleasure born of seclusion, accompanied by directed thought & evaluation. He permeates & pervades, suffuses & fills this very body with the rapture & pleasure born of seclusion. There is nothing of his entire body unpermeated by rapture & pleasure born of seclusion.

Just as if a skilled bathman or bathman's apprentice would pour bath powder into a brass basin and knead it together, sprinkling it again & again with water, so that his ball of bath powder—saturated, moisture-laden, permeated within & without—would nevertheless not drip; even so, the monk permeates... this very body with the rapture & pleasure born of seclusion. There is nothing of his entire body unpermeated by rapture & pleasure born of seclusion. This is the first development of the five-factored noble right concentration.

Furthermore, with the stilling of directed thoughts & evaluations, he enters & remains in the second jhāna: rapture & pleasure born of concentration, unification of awareness free from directed thought & evaluation—internal assurance. He permeates & pervades, suffuses & fills this very body with the rapture & pleasure born of concentration. There is nothing of his entire body unpermeated by rapture & pleasure born of concentration.

Just like a lake with spring-water welling up from within, having no inflow from east, west, north, or south, and with the skies periodically supplying abundant showers, so that the cool fount of water welling up from within the lake would permeate & pervade, suffuse & fill it with cool waters, there being no part of the lake unpervaded by the cool waters; even so, the monk permeates... this very body with the rapture & pleasure born of concentration. There is nothing of his entire body unpervaded by rapture & pleasure born of concentration. This is the second development of the five-factored noble right concentration.

And furthermore, with the fading of rapture, he remains equanimous, mindful, & alert, and senses pleasure with the body. He enters & remains in the third jhāna, of which the noble ones declare, 'Equanimous & mindful, he has a pleasant abiding.' He permeates & pervades, suffuses & fills this very body with the pleasure divested of rapture, so that there is nothing of his entire body unpervaded with pleasure divested of rapture.

Just as in a blue-, white-, or red-lotus pond, there may be some of the blue, white, or red lotuses which, born & growing in the water, stay immersed in the water and flourish without standing up out of the water, so that they are permeated & pervaded, suffused & filled with cool water from their roots to their tips, and nothing of those blue, white, or red lotuses would be unpervaded with cool water; even so, the monk permeates... this very body with the pleasure divested of rapture. There is nothing of his entire body unpervaded with pleasure divested of rapture. This is the third development of the five-factored noble right concentration.

And furthermore, with the abandoning of pleasure & stress—as with the earlier disappearance of joys & distresses—he enters & remains in the fourth jhāna: purity of equanimity & mindfulness, neither-pleasure-nor-pain. He sits, permeating the body with a pure, bright awareness, so that there is nothing of his entire body unpervaded by pure, bright awareness.

Just as if a man were sitting wrapped from head to foot with a white cloth so that there would be no part of his body to which the white cloth did not extend; even so, the monk sits, permeating his body with a pure, bright awareness. There is nothing of his entire body unpervaded by pure, bright awareness. This is the fourth development of the five-factored noble right concentration.

And furthermore, the monk has his theme of reflection well in hand, well attended to, well pondered, well tuned [well penetrated] by means of discernment.

Just as if one person were to reflect on another, or a standing person were to reflect on a sitting person, or a sitting person were to reflect on a person lying down; even so, monks, the monk has his theme of reflection well in hand, well attended to, well pondered, well tuned by means of discernment. This is the fifth development of the five-factored noble right concentration.

When a monk has developed & pursued the five-factored noble right concentration in this way, then whichever of the six higher knowledges he turns his mind to know & realize, he can witness them for himself whenever there is an opening. [§64]

Suppose that there were a water jar, set on a stand, brimful of water so that a



crow could drink from it. If a strong man were to tip it in any way at all, would water spill out?

Yes, lord.

In the same way, when a monk has developed & pursued the five-factored noble right concentration in this way, then whichever of the six higher knowledges he turns his mind to know & realize, he can witness them for himself whenever there is an opening.

Suppose there were a rectangular water tank—set on level ground, bounded by dikes—brimful of water so that a crow could drink from it. If a strong man were to loosen the dikes anywhere at all, would water spill out?

Yes, lord....

Suppose there were a chariot on level ground at four crossroads, harnessed to thoroughbreds, waiting with whips lying ready, so that a skilled driver, a trainer of tamable horses, might mount and—taking the reins with his left hand and the whip with his right—drive out & back, to whatever place and by whichever road he liked; in the same way, when a monk has developed & pursued the five-factored noble right concentration in this way, then whichever of the six higher knowledges he turns his mind to know & realize, he can witness them for himself whenever there is an opening.

AN 5:28

**§ 151. Breath Meditation.** Now how is mindfulness of in-&-out breathing developed & pursued so that it bears great fruit & great benefits?

There is the case where a monk, having gone to the wilderness, to the shade of a tree, or to an empty building, sits down folding his legs crosswise, holding his body erect, and setting mindfulness to the fore. Always mindful, he breathes in; mindful he breathes out.

[1] Breathing in long, he discerns, 'I am breathing in long'; or breathing out long, he discerns, 'I am breathing out long.' [2] Or breathing in short, he discerns, 'I am breathing in short'; or breathing out short, he discerns, 'I am breathing out short.' [3] He trains himself, 'I will breathe in sensitive to the entire body'; he trains himself, 'I will breathe out sensitive to the entire body.' [4] He trains himself, 'I will breathe in calming bodily fabrication, and to breathe out calming bodily fabrication.

[5] He trains himself, 'I will breathe in sensitive to rapture'; he trains himself, 'I will breathe out sensitive to rapture.' [6] He trains himself, 'I will breathe in sensitive to pleasure'; he trains himself, 'I will breathe out sensitive to pleasure.' [7] He trains himself, 'I will breathe in sensitive to mental fabrication'; he trains himself, 'I will breathe out sensitive to mental fabrication.' [8] He trains himself, 'I will breathe in calming mental fabrication'; he trains himself, 'I will breathe out calming mental fabrication.'

[9] He trains himself, 'I will breathe in sensitive to the mind'; he trains himself, 'I will breathe out sensitive to the mind.' [10] He trains himself, 'I will breathe in gladdening the mind'; he trains himself, 'I will breathe out gladdening the mind.' [11] He trains himself, 'I will breathe in steadying the mind'; he trains himself, 'I will breathe out steadying the mind.' [12] He trains himself, 'I will breathe in

releasing the mind'; he trains himself, 'I will breathe out releasing the mind.'

[13] He trains himself, 'I will breathe in focusing on inconstancy'; he trains himself, 'I will breathe out focusing on inconstancy.' [14] He trains himself, 'I will breathe in focusing on dispassion [literally, fading]'; he trains himself, 'I will breathe out focusing on dispassion.' [15] He trains himself, 'I will breathe in focusing on cessation'; he trains himself, 'I will breathe out focusing on cessation.' [16] He trains himself, 'I will breathe in focusing on relinquishment'; he trains himself, 'I will breathe out focusing on relinquishment.'

This is how mindfulness of in-&-out breathing is developed & pursued so that it bears great fruit & great benefits.

SN 54:1

§ 152. Vassakāra: Once, Master Ānanda, Master Gotama was living at Vesāli in the Hall with the peaked roof in the Great Forest. I went to where he was staying in the Great Forest... and there he spoke in a variety of ways on jhāna. Master Gotama was both endowed with jhāna and made jhāna his habit. In fact, he praised all sorts of jhāna.

Ven. Ānanda: It was not the case that the Blessed One praised all sorts of jhāna, nor did he criticize all sorts of jhāna. And what sort of jhāna did he not praise? There is the case where a certain person dwells with his awareness overcome by sensual passion, obsessed with sensual passion. He does not discern the escape, as it has come to be, from sensual passion once it has arisen. Making that sensual passion the focal point, he absorbs himself with it, besorbs, resorbs, & supersorbs himself with it.

He dwells with his awareness overcome by ill will... sloth & drowsiness... restlessness & anxiety... uncertainty, obsessed with uncertainty. He does not discern the escape, as it has come to be, from uncertainty once it has arisen. Making that uncertainty the focal point, he absorbs himself with it, besorbs, resorbs, & supersorbs himself with it. This is the sort of jhāna that the Blessed One did not praise.

And what sort of jhāna did he praise? There is the case where a monk—quite secluded from sensuality, secluded from unskillful qualities—enters & remains in the first jhāna... the second jhāna... the third jhāna... the fourth jhāna: purity of equanimity & mindfulness, neither pleasure nor pain. This is the sort of jhāna that the Blessed One praised.

Vassakāra: It would seem, Master Ānanda, that Master Gotama criticized the jhāna that deserves criticism, and praised that which deserves praise.

MN 108

§ 153. A monk endowed with these five qualities is incapable of entering & remaining in right concentration. Which five? He cannot withstand (the impact of) sights, he cannot withstand sounds... aromas... tastes... tactile sensations. A monk endowed with these five qualities is not capable of entering & remaining in right concentration.

A monk endowed with these five qualities is capable of entering & remaining in

right concentration. Which five? He can withstand (the impact of) sights... sounds... aromas... tastes... tactile sensations. A monk endowed with these five qualities is capable of entering & remaining in right concentration.

AN 5:113

§ 154. A monk who has not abandoned these six qualities is incapable of entering & remaining in the first jhāna. Which six? Sensual desire, ill will, sloth & drowsiness, restlessness & anxiety, uncertainty, and not seeing well with right discernment, as they have come to be, the drawbacks of sensual pleasures....

A monk who has not abandoned these six qualities is incapable of entering & remaining in the first jhāna. Which six? Thoughts of sensuality, thoughts of ill will, thoughts of violence, perceptions of sensuality, perceptions of ill will, perceptions of violence.

AN 6:73-74

§ 155. A monk endowed with these six qualities is capable of mastering strength in concentration. Which six?

There is the case where a monk is skilled in the attaining of concentration, in the maintenance of concentration, and in the exit from concentration. He is deliberate in doing it, persevering in doing it, and amenable to doing it.

A monk endowed with these six qualities is capable of mastering strength in concentration.

AN 6:72

§ 156. A monk endowed with these six qualities could break through the Himalayas, king of mountains, to say nothing of miserable ignorance. Which six?

There is the case where a monk is skilled in the attaining of concentration, in the maintenance of concentration, in the exit from concentration, in the (mind's) preparedness for concentration, in the range of concentration, & in the application of concentration.

A monk endowed with these six qualities could break through the Himalayas, king of mountains, to say nothing of miserable ignorance.

AN 6:24

§ 157. Imagine a great pool of water to which there comes a great bull elephant, seven or seven and a half cubits tall. The thought occurs to him, 'What if I were to plunge into this pool of water, to amuse myself by squirting water into my ears and along my back, and then to bathe & drink & come back out & go off as I please?' So he plunges into the pool of water, amuses himself by squirting water into his ears and along his back, and then bathes & drinks & comes back out & goes off as he pleases. Why is that? Because his large body finds a footing in the depth.

Now suppose a rabbit or a cat were to come along & think, 'What's the

difference between me & a bull elephant? What if I were to plunge into this pool of water, to amuse myself by squirting water into my ears and along my back, and then to bathe & drink & come back out & go off as I please? So he plunges rashly into the pool of water without reflecting, and of him it can be expected that he will either sink to the bottom or float away on the surface. Why is that? Because his small body doesn't find a footing in the depth.

In the same way, whoever says, 'Without having attained concentration, I will go live in solitude, in isolated wilderness places,' of him it can be expected that he will either sink to the bottom or float away on the surface.

AN 10:99

§ 158. These are the five rewards for one who practices walking meditation. Which five? He can endure traveling by foot; he can endure exertion; he becomes free from disease; whatever he has eaten & drunk, chewed & savored, becomes well-digested; the concentration he wins while doing walking meditation lasts for a long time.

AN 5:29

**§ 159. Distracting Thoughts.** When a monk is intent on the heightened mind, there are five themes he should attend to at the appropriate times. Which five?

There is the case where evil, unskillful thoughts—imbued with desire, aversion, or delusion—arise in a monk while he is referring to & attending to a particular theme. He should attend to another theme, apart from that one, connected with what is skillful. When he is attending to this other theme... those evil, unskillful thoughts... are abandoned & subside. With their abandoning, he steadies his mind right within, settles it, unifies it, & concentrates it. Just as a skilled carpenter or his apprentice would use a small peg to knock out, drive out, & pull out a large one; in the same way... he steadies his mind right within, settles it, unifies it, & concentrates it.

If evil, unskillful thoughts—imbued with desire, aversion, or delusion—still arise in the monk while he is attending to this other theme, connected with what is skillful, he should scrutinize the drawbacks of those thoughts: 'Truly, these thoughts of mine are unskillful... blameworthy... these thoughts of mine result in stress.' As he is scrutinizing their drawbacks... those evil, unskillful thoughts... are abandoned & subside. With their abandoning, he steadies his mind right within, settles it, unifies it, & concentrates it. Just as a young woman—or man—fond of adornment, would be horrified, humiliated, & disgusted if the carcass of a snake or a dog or a human being were hung from her neck; in the same way... the monk steadies his mind right within, settles it, unifies it, & concentrates it.

If evil, unskillful thoughts—imbued with desire, aversion or delusion—still arise in the monk while he is scrutinizing the drawbacks of those thoughts, he should pay no mind & pay no attention to those thoughts. As he is paying no mind & paying no attention to them... those evil, unskillful thoughts are abandoned & subside. With their abandoning, he steadies his mind right within, settles it, unifies it, & concentrates it. Just as a man with good eyes, not wanting to see forms that had come into range, would close his eyes or look away; in the same

way... the monk steadies his mind right within, settles it, unifies it, & concentrates it.

If evil, unskillful thoughts—imbued with desire, aversion or delusion—still arise in the monk while he is paying no mind & paying no attention to those thoughts, he should attend to the relaxing of thought-fabrication with regard to those thoughts. As he is attending to the relaxing of thought-fabrication with regard to those thoughts... those evil, unskillful thoughts are abandoned & subside. With their abandoning, he steadies his mind right within, settles it, unifies it, & concentrates it. Just as the thought would occur to a man walking quickly, ‘Why am I walking quickly? Why don’t I walk slowly?’ So he walks slowly. The thought occurs to him, ‘Why am I walking slowly? Why don’t I stand?’ So he stands. The thought occurs to him, ‘Why am I standing? Why don’t I sit down?’ So he sits down. The thought occurs to him, ‘Why am I sitting? Why don’t I lie down?’ So he lies down. In this way, giving up the grosser posture, he takes up the more refined one. In the same way... the monk steadies his mind right within, settles it, unifies it, & concentrates it.

If evil, unskillful thoughts—imbued with desire, aversion or delusion—still arise in the monk while he is attending to the relaxing of thought-fabrication with regard to those thoughts, then—with his teeth clenched & his tongue pressed against the roof of his mouth—he should beat down, constrain, & crush his mind with his awareness. As—with his teeth clenched & his tongue pressed against the roof of his mouth—he is beating down, constraining, & crushing his mind with his awareness... those evil, unskillful thoughts are abandoned & subside. With their abandoning, he steadies his mind right within, settles it, unifies it, & concentrates it. Just as a strong man, seizing a weaker man by the head or the throat or the shoulders, would beat him down, constrain, & crush him; in the same way... the monk steadies his mind right within, settles it, unifies it, & concentrates it.

Now when a monk... attending to another theme... scrutinizing the drawbacks of those thoughts... paying no mind & paying no attention to those thoughts... attending to the relaxing of thought-fabrication with regard to those thoughts... beating down, constraining, & crushing his mind with his awareness... steadies his mind right within, settles it, unifies it, & concentrates it, he is then called a monk with mastery over the ways of thought sequences. He thinks whatever thought he wants to, and doesn’t think whatever thought he doesn’t. He has severed craving, thrown off the fetters, and—through the right penetration of conceit—has made an end of suffering & stress.

MN 20

§ 160. There are these gross impurities in gold: dirty sand, gravel, & grit. The dirt-washer or his apprentice, having placed (the gold) in a vat, washes it again & again until he has washed them away.

When he is rid of them, there remain the moderate impurities in the gold: coarse sand & fine grit. He washes the gold again & again until he has washed them away.

When he is rid of them, there remain the fine impurities in the gold: fine sand &

black dust. The dirt-washer or his apprentice washes the gold again & again until he has washed them away.

When he is rid of them, there remains just the gold dust. The goldsmith or his apprentice, having placed it in a crucible, blows on it again & again to blow away the dross. The gold, as long as it has not been blown on again & again to the point where the impurities are blown away, as long as it is not refined & free from dross, is not pliant, malleable, or luminous. It is brittle and not ready to be worked. But there comes a time when the goldsmith or his apprentice has blown on the gold again & again until the dross is blown away. The gold... is then refined, free from dross, pliant, malleable, & luminous. It is not brittle, and is ready to be worked. Then whatever sort of ornament he has in mind—whether a belt, an earring, a necklace, or a gold chain—the gold would serve his purpose.

In the same way, there are these gross impurities in a monk intent on heightened mind: misconduct in body, speech, & mind. These the monk—aware & able by nature—abandons, destroys, dispels, wipes out of existence. When he is rid of them, there remain in him the moderate impurities: thoughts of sensuality, ill will, & violence. These he... wipes out of existence. When he is rid of them there remain in him the fine impurities: thoughts of his caste, thoughts of his home district, thoughts related to not wanting to be despised. These he... wipes out of existence.

When he is rid of them, there remain only thoughts of the Dhamma. His concentration is neither calm nor refined, it has not yet attained serenity or unity, and is kept in place by the fabrication of forceful restraint. But there comes a time when his mind grows steady inwardly, settles down, grows unified & concentrated. His concentration is calm & refined, has attained serenity & unity, and is no longer kept in place by the fabrication of forceful restraint. Then whichever of the six higher knowledges he turns his mind to know & realize, he can witness them for himself whenever there is an opening.... [§64; 182]

AN 3:100

§ 161. Ven. Anuruddha: It has happened that, as we were remaining heedful, ardent, & resolute, we perceived light & the vision of forms. But soon after that the light disappeared, together with the vision of forms, and we can't become attuned to that theme.

The Buddha: You should become attuned to that theme. Before my self-awakening, while I was still just an unawakened Bodhisatta, I too perceived light & the vision of forms, and soon after that the light disappeared, together with the vision of forms. The thought occurred to me, 'What is the cause, what is the reason, why the light disappeared, together with the vision of forms?' Then it occurred to me, 'Uncertainty arose in me, and because of the uncertainty my concentration fell away; when my concentration fell away, the light disappeared together with the vision of forms. I will act in such a way that uncertainty will not arise in me again.'

As I was remaining heedful, ardent, & resolute, I perceived light & the vision of forms. But soon after that the light disappeared, together with the vision of forms. The thought occurred to me, 'What is the cause, what is the reason, why the light disappeared, together with the vision of forms?' Then it occurred to me,

'Inattention... sloth & drowsiness... fear... elation... inertia arose in me, and because of the inattention... inertia my concentration fell away; when my concentration fell away, the light disappeared together with the vision of forms. I will act in such a way that uncertainty, inattention, sloth & drowsiness, fear, elation, & inertia will not arise in me again.'

As I was remaining heedful, ardent, & resolute... it occurred to me, 'Excessive persistence [§ 66] arose in me, and because of the excessive persistence my concentration fell away; when my concentration fell away, the light disappeared together with the vision of forms. Just as if a man might hold a quail tightly with both hands, it would die then & there; in the same way, excessive persistence arose in me.... I will act in such a way that uncertainty... & excessive persistence will not arise in me again.'

As I was remaining heedful, ardent, & resolute... it occurred to me, 'Sluggish persistence [§66] arose in me, and because of the sluggish persistence my concentration fell away; when my concentration fell away, the light disappeared together with the vision of forms. Just as if a man might hold a quail loosely, it would fly out of his hand; in the same way, sluggish persistence arose in me.... I will act in such a way that uncertainty... excessive & sluggish persistence will not arise in me again.'

As I was remaining heedful, ardent, & resolute... it occurred to me, 'Longing... the perception of multiplicity... excessive absorption in forms arose in me, and because of the excessive absorption in forms my concentration fell away; when my concentration fell away, the light disappeared together with the vision of forms.... I will act in such a way that uncertainty... longing, the perception of multiplicity, excessive absorption in forms will not arise in me again.'

When I knew, 'Uncertainty is a defilement of the mind,' I abandoned the uncertainty that was a defilement of the mind. [Similarly with inattention, sloth & drowsiness, fear, elation, inertia, excessive persistence, sluggish persistence, longing, the perception of multiplicity, & excessive absorption in forms.]

As I was remaining heedful, ardent, & resolute, I perceived light without seeing forms, or saw forms without perceiving light for a whole day, a whole night, a whole day & night. The thought occurred to me, 'What is the cause, what is the reason...?' Then it occurred to me, 'When I attend to the theme of light without attending to the theme of forms, I perceive light without seeing forms. When I attend to the theme of forms without attending to the theme of light, I see forms without seeing light for a whole day, a whole night, a whole day & night.'

As I was remaining heedful, ardent, & resolute, I perceived limited light & saw limited forms; I perceived unlimited light & saw unlimited forms for a whole day, a whole night, a whole day & night. The thought occurred to me, 'What is the cause, what is the reason...?' Then it occurred to me, 'When my concentration is limited, my sense of (inner) vision is limited. When my concentration is unlimited, my sense of (inner) vision is unlimited. With an unlimited sense of vision I perceive unlimited light & see unlimited forms for a whole day, a whole night, a whole day & night'....

'I have abandoned those defilements of the mind. Let me develop concentration in three ways.' So [1] I developed concentration with directed thought & evaluation. I developed concentration without directed thought but with a

modicum of evaluation. I developed concentration without directed thought or evaluation. [2] I developed concentration with rapture... without rapture.... [3] I developed concentration accompanied by enjoyment... accompanied by equanimity.

When my concentration with directed thought & evaluation was developed, when my concentration without directed thought but with a modicum of evaluation... without directed thought or evaluation... with rapture... without rapture... accompanied by enjoyment... accompanied by equanimity was developed, then the knowledge & vision arose in me: 'Unprovoked is my release. This is my last birth. There is no further becoming.'

That was what the Blessed One said. Glad at heart, Ven. Anuruddha delighted in the Blessed One's words.

MN 128

**§ 162. Skill in concentration.** Suppose there was a mountain cow—foolish, inexperienced, unfamiliar with her pasture, unskilled in roaming on rugged mountains—and she were to think, 'What if I were to go in a direction I have never gone before, to eat grass I have never eaten before, to drink water I have never drunk before!' She would lift her hind hoof without having placed her front hoof firmly and (as a result) would not get to go in a direction she had never gone before, to eat grass she had never eaten before, or to drink water she had never drunk before. And as for the place where she was standing when the thought occurred to her, 'What if I were to go where I have never been before... to drink water I have never drunk before,' she would not return there safely. Why is that? Because she is a foolish, inexperienced mountain cow, unfamiliar with her pasture, unskilled in roaming on rugged mountains.

In the same way, there are cases where a monk—foolish, inexperienced, unfamiliar with his pasture, unskilled in... entering & remaining in the first jhāna: rapture & pleasure born of seclusion, accompanied by directed thought & evaluation—doesn't stick with that theme, doesn't develop it, pursue it, or establish himself firmly in it. The thought occurs to him, 'What if I, with the stilling of directed thoughts & evaluations, were to enter & remain in the second jhāna: rapture & pleasure born of concentration, unification of awareness free from directed thought & evaluation—internal assurance.' He is not able... to enter & remain in the second jhāna.... The thought occurs to him, 'What if I... were to enter & remain in the first jhāna.... He is not able... to enter & remain in the first jhāna. This is called a monk who has slipped & fallen from both sides, like the mountain cow, foolish, inexperienced, unfamiliar with her pasture, unskilled in roaming on rugged mountains.

But suppose there was a mountain cow—wise, experienced, familiar with her pasture, skilled in roaming on rugged mountains—and she were to think, 'What if I were to go in a direction I have never gone before, to eat grass I have never eaten before, to drink water I have never drunk before!' She would lift her hind hoof only after having placed her front hoof firmly and (as a result) would get to go in a direction she had never gone before... to drink water she had never drunk before. And as for the place where she was standing when the thought occurred to her, 'What if I were to go in a direction I have never gone before... to drink water I have never drunk before,' she would return there safely. Why is



that? Because she is a wise, experienced mountain cow, familiar with her pasture, skilled in roaming on rugged mountains.

In the same way, there are some cases where a monk—wise, experienced, familiar with his pasture, skilled in... entering & remaining in the first jhāna... sticks with that theme, develops it, pursues it, & establishes himself firmly in it. The thought occurs to him, 'What if I... were to enter & remain in the second jhāna....' Without jumping at the second jhāna, he—with the stilling of directed thoughts & evaluations—enters & remains in the second jhāna. He sticks with that theme, develops it, pursues it, & establishes himself firmly in it. The thought occurs to him, 'What if I... were to enter & remain in the third jhāna'.... Without jumping at the third jhāna, he... enters & remains in the third jhāna. He sticks with that theme, develops it, pursues it, & establishes himself firmly in it. The thought occurs to him, 'What if I... were to enter & remain in the fourth jhāna'.... Without jumping at the fourth jhāna, he... enters & remains in the fourth jhāna. He sticks with that theme, develops it, pursues it, & establishes himself firmly in it.

The thought occurs to him, 'What if I, with the complete transcending of perceptions of (physical) form, with the disappearance of perceptions of resistance, and not heeding perceptions of diversity, (perceiving,) "Infinite space," were to enter & remain in the dimension of the infinitude of space.' Without jumping at the dimension of the infinitude of space, he... enters & remains in dimension of the infinitude of space. He sticks with that theme, develops it, pursues it, & establishes himself firmly in it.

The thought occurs to him, 'What if I, with the complete transcending of the dimension of the infinitude of space, (perceiving,) "Infinite consciousness," were to enter & remain in the dimension of the infinitude of consciousness.' Without jumping at the dimension of the infinitude of consciousness, he... enters & remains in dimension of the infinitude of consciousness. He sticks with that theme, develops it, pursues it, & establishes himself firmly in it.

The thought occurs to him, 'What if I, with the complete transcending of the dimension of the infinitude of consciousness, (perceiving,) "There is nothing," were to enter & remain in the dimension of nothingness.' Without jumping at the dimension of nothingness, he... enters & remains in dimension of nothingness. He sticks with that theme, develops it, pursues it, & establishes himself firmly in it.

The thought occurs to him, 'What if I, with the complete transcending of the dimension of nothingness, were to enter & remain in the dimension of neither perception nor non-perception.' Without jumping at the dimension of neither perception nor non-perception, he... enters & remains in the dimension of neither perception nor non-perception. He sticks with that theme, develops it, pursues it, & establishes himself firmly in it.

The thought occurs to him, 'What if I, with the complete transcending of the dimension of neither perception nor non-perception, were to enter & remain in the cessation of perception & feeling.' Without jumping at the cessation of perception & feeling, he... enters & remains in the cessation of perception & feeling.

When a monk enters & emerges from that very attainment, his mind is pliant &

malleable. With his pliant, malleable mind, limitless concentration is well developed. With his concentration well developed & limitless, then whichever of the six higher knowledges he turns his mind to know & realize, he can witness them for himself whenever there is an opening.

AN 9:35

§ 163. Guided by the elephant trainer, the elephant to be tamed goes only in one direction: east, west, north, or south.... Guided by the Tathāgata... the person to be tamed goes in eight directions. Possessed of form, he sees forms. This is the first direction. Not percipient of form internally, he sees forms externally. This is the second direction. He is intent only on the beautiful. This is the third direction. With the complete transcending of perceptions of (physical) form, with the disappearance of perceptions of resistance, and not heeding perceptions of diversity, (perceiving,) 'Infinite space,' he enters & remains in the dimension of the infinitude of space. This is the fourth direction. With the complete transcending of the dimension of the infinitude of space, (perceiving,) 'Infinite consciousness,' he enters & remains in the dimension of the infinitude of consciousness. This is the fifth direction. He... enters & remains in the dimension of nothingness. This is the sixth direction. He... enters & remains in the dimension of neither perception nor non-perception. This is the seventh direction. With the complete transcending of the dimension of neither perception nor non-perception, he enters & remains in the cessation of perception & feeling. This is the eighth direction.

MN 137

§ 164. 'There are these seven properties. Which seven? The property of light, the property of beauty, the property of the dimension of the infinitude of space, the property of the dimension of the infinitude of consciousness, the property of the dimension of nothingness, the property of the dimension of neither perception nor non-perception, the property of the cessation of feeling & perception. These are the seven properties.'

When this was said, a certain monk addressed the Blessed One: '...In dependence on what are these properties discerned?'

'The property of light is discerned in dependence on darkness. The property of beauty is discerned in dependence on the unattractive. The property of the dimension of the infinitude of space is discerned in dependence on form. The property of the dimension of the infinitude of consciousness is discerned in dependence on the dimension of the infinitude of space. The property of the dimension of nothingness is discerned in dependence on the dimension of the infinitude of consciousness. The property of the dimension of neither perception nor non-perception is discerned in dependence on the dimension of nothingness. The property of the cessation of feeling & perception is discerned in dependence on cessation.'

'...And how, lord, is the attainment of these properties to be reached?'

'The property of light... beauty... the dimension of the infinitude of space... the dimension of the infinitude of consciousness... the dimension of nothingness: These properties are to be reached as perception attainments. The property of

the dimension of neither perception nor non-perception is to be reached as a remnant-of-fabrications attainment. The property of the cessation of feeling & perception is to be reached as a cessation attainment.'

SN 13:11

## F. CONCENTRATION & DISCERNMENT

We noted in II/A that some of the sets in the Wings to Awakening list jhana as a condition for discernment, whereas others list discernment as a condition for jhana. Place both of these patterns into the context of this/that conditionality, and they convey the point that jhana and discernment in practice are mutually supporting. Passage §171 states this point explicitly, while §165 and §166 show that the difference between the two causal patterns relates to differences in meditators: some develop strong powers of concentration before developing strong discernment, whereas others gain a sound theoretical understanding of the Dhamma before developing strong concentration. In either case, both strong concentration and sound discernment are needed to bring about Awakening. Passage §111 makes the point that when the practice reaches the culmination of its development, concentration and discernment act in tandem. The passages in this section deal with this topic in more detail.

The role of jhana as a condition for transcendent discernment is one of the most controversial issues in the Theravada tradition. Three basic positions have been advanced in modern writings. One, following the commentarial tradition, asserts that jhana is not necessary for any of the four levels of Awakening and that there is a class of individuals—called “dry insight” meditators—who are “discernment-released” based on a level of concentration lower than that of jhana. A second position, citing a passage in the Canon [AN 3:88; MFU, p. 103] stating that concentration is mastered only on the level of non-returning, holds that jhana is necessary for the attainment of non-returning and Arahantship, but not for the lower levels of Awakening. The third position states that the attainment of at least the first level of jhana is essential for all four levels of Awakening.

Evidence from the Canon supports the third position, but not the other two. As §106 points out, the attainment of stream-entry has eight factors, one of which is right concentration, defined as jhana. In fact, according to this particular discourse, jhana is the heart of the streamwinner’s path. Secondly, there is no passage in the Canon describing the development of transcendent discernment without at least some skill in jhana. The statement that concentration is mastered only on the level of non-returning must be interpreted in the light of the distinction between mastery and attainment. A streamwinner may have attained jhana without mastering it; the discernment developed in the process of gaining full mastery over the practice of jhana will then lead him/her to the level of non-returning. As for the term “discernment-released,” passage §168 shows that it denotes people who have become Arahants without experiencing the four formless jhanas. It does not indicate a person who has not experienced jhana.

Part of the controversy over this question may be explained by the fact that the commentaries define jhana in terms that bear little resemblance to the canonical

description. *The Path of Purification*—the cornerstone of the commentarial system—takes as its paradigm for meditation practice a method called *kasina*, in which one stares at an external object until the image of the object is imprinted in one's mind. This image then gives rise to a countersign that is said to indicate the attainment of threshold concentration, a necessary prelude to jhana. The text then tries to fit all other meditation methods into this mold, so that they too give rise to countersigns, but even by its own admission, breath meditation does not fit the mold very well. With the other methods, the stronger one's focus, the more vivid the object and the closer it is to producing a countersign; but with the breath, the stronger one's focus, the more subtle the breath and the harder it is to detect. As a result, the text states that only Buddhas and Buddhas' sons find the breath a congenial focal point for attaining jhana.

None of these assertions have any support in the Canon. Although a practice called *kasina* is mentioned tangentially in some of the discourses, the only point where it is described in any detail [MN 121; MFU, pp. 82-85] makes no mention of staring at an object or gaining a countersign. If breath meditation were congenial only to Buddhas and their sons, there seems little reason for the Buddha to have taught it so frequently and to such a wide variety of people. If the arising of a countersign were essential to the attainment of jhana, one would expect it to be included in the steps of breath meditation and in the graphic analogies used to describe jhana, but it isn't. Some Theravadins insist that questioning the commentaries is a sign of disrespect for the tradition, but it seems to be a sign of greater disrespect for the Buddha—or the compilers of the Canon—to assume that he or they would have left out something absolutely essential to the practice.

So it would seem that what jhana means in the commentaries is something quite different from what it means in the Canon. Because of this difference we can say that the commentaries are right in viewing their type of jhana as unnecessary for Awakening, but Awakening cannot occur without the attainment of jhana in the canonical sense.

We have already given a sketch in the preceding section of how jhana in its canonical sense can act as the basis for transcendent discernment. To recapitulate: On attaining any of the first seven levels of jhana, one may step back slightly from the object of jhana—entering the fifth factor of noble right concentration [§150]—to perceive how the mind relates to the object. In doing this, one sees the process of causation as it plays a role in bringing the mind to jhana, together with the various mental acts of fabrication that go into keeping it there [§182]. Passage §172 lists these acts in considerable detail. The fact that the passage emphasizes the amazing abilities of Sariputta, the Buddha's foremost disciple in terms of discernment, implies that there is no need for every meditator to perceive all these acts in such a detailed fashion. What is essential is that one develop a sense of dispassion for the state of jhana, seeing that even the relatively steady sense of refined pleasure and equanimity it provides is artificial and willed, inconstant and stressful [§182], a state fabricated from many different events, and thus not worth identifying with.

Jhana thus becomes an ideal test case for understanding the workings of kamma and dependent co-arising in the mind. Its stability gives discernment a firm basis for seeing clearly; its refined sense of pleasure and equanimity allow the mind to realize that even the most refined mundane states involve the inconstancy and stress common to all willed phenomena. Passage §167 lists a number of verbal

mental acts surrounding the exercise of supranormal powers that can be regarded in a similar light, as topics to be analyzed so as to give rise to a sense of dispassion. The dispassion that results in either case enables one to experience the fading away and cessation of the last remaining activities in the mind, even the activity of discernment itself. When this process fully matures, it leads on to total relinquishment, resulting in the clear knowing and release of Arahantship.

In contrast to the issue of the role of jhana as a condition for discernment, the role of discernment as a condition for jhana is uncontroversial. Discernment aids jhana on two levels: mundane and transcendent. On the mundane level, it enables one to perceive the various factors that go into one's state of jhana so that one can master them and shed the factors that prevent one from attaining a higher level of jhana. This again involves the reflection that constitutes the fifth factor of noble right concentration, but in this case the results stay on the mundane level. For instance, as one masters the first level of jhana and can reflect on the elements of stress it contains, one may perceive that directed thought and evaluation should be abandoned because they have become unnecessary in maintaining one's concentration, just as the forms used in pouring a cement wall become unnecessary when the cement has hardened. In dropping these factors, one then goes on to the second level of jhana. Passage §175 gives a list of the factors that, in succession, are dropped in this way as one attains higher and higher levels of concentration.

On the transcendent level, the discernment that precipitates Awakening results in a supramundane level of jhana called the fruit of gnosis, which is described in §§176-77—a type of jhana independent of all perceptions (mental labels) and intentional processes, beyond all limitations of cosmos, time, and the present: the Arahant's foretaste, in this lifetime, of the absolutely total Unbinding experienced by the awakened mind at death.

§ 165. These four types of individuals are to be found existing in the world. Which four?

There is the case of the individual who has attained internal tranquility of awareness, but not insight into phenomena through heightened discernment. There is... the individual who has attained insight into phenomena through heightened discernment, but not internal tranquility of awareness. There is... the individual who has attained neither internal tranquility of awareness nor insight into phenomena through heightened discernment. And there is... the individual who has attained both internal tranquility of awareness & insight into phenomena through heightened discernment.

The individual who has attained internal tranquility of awareness, but not insight into phenomena through heightened discernment, should approach an individual who has attained insight into phenomena through heightened discernment... and ask him: 'How should fabrications be regarded? How should they be investigated? How should they be seen with insight?' The other will answer in line with what he has seen & experienced: 'Fabrications should be regarded in this way... investigated in this way... seen in this way with insight.' Then eventually he [the first] will become one who has attained both internal

tranquility of awareness & insight into phenomena through heightened discernment.

As for the individual who has attained insight into phenomena through heightened discernment, but not internal tranquility of awareness, he should approach an individual who has attained internal tranquility of awareness... and ask him, 'How should the mind be steadied? How should it be made to settle down? How should it be unified? How should it be concentrated?' The other will answer in line with what he has seen & experienced: 'The mind should be steadied in this way... made to settle down in this way... unified in this way... concentrated in this way.' Then eventually he [the first] will become one who has attained both internal tranquility of awareness & insight into phenomena through heightened discernment.

As for the individual who has attained neither internal tranquility of awareness nor insight into phenomena through heightened discernment, he should approach an individual who has attained both internal tranquility of awareness & insight into phenomena through heightened discernment... and ask him, 'How should the mind be steadied? How should it be made to settle down? How should it be unified? How should it be concentrated? How should fabrications be regarded? How should they be investigated? How should they be seen with insight?' The other will answer in line with what he has seen & experienced: 'The mind should be steadied in this way... made to settle down in this way... unified in this way... concentrated in this way. Fabrications should be regarded in this way... investigated in this way... seen in this way with insight.' Then eventually he [the first] will become one who has attained both internal tranquility of awareness & insight into phenomena through heightened discernment.

As for the individual who has attained both internal tranquility of awareness & insight into phenomena through heightened discernment, his duty is to make an effort in establishing ('tuning') those very same skillful qualities to a higher degree for the ending of the effluents.

AN4:94

§ 166. Ven. Ānanda: Whenever a monk or nun declares the attainment of Arahantship in my presence, they all do it by means of one or another of four paths. Which four?

There is the case where a monk has developed insight preceded by tranquility. As he develops insight preceded by tranquility, the path is born. He follows that path, develops it, pursues it. As he follows the path, developing it & pursuing it—his fetters are abandoned, his obsessions abolished.

Furthermore, there is the case where a monk has developed tranquility preceded by insight. As he develops tranquility preceded by insight, the path is born. He follows that path.... His fetters are abandoned, his obsessions abolished.

Furthermore, there is the case where a monk has developed tranquility & insight in concert. As he develops tranquility & insight in tandem, the path is born. He follows that path.... His fetters are abandoned, his obsessions abolished.

Furthermore, there is the case where a monk's mind has its restlessness concerning the Dhamma [Comm: the corruptions of insight] well under control.

There comes a time when his mind grows steady inwardly, settles down, and becomes unified & concentrated. In him the path is born. He follows that path.... His fetters are abandoned, his obsessions abolished.

Whenever a monk or nun declares the attainment of Arahantship in my presence, they all do it by means of one or another of these four paths.

AN 4:170

§ 167. Then Ven. Anuruddha went to Ven. Sāriputta and, on arrival, greeted him courteously. After an exchange of friendly greetings & courtesies, he sat down to one side. As he was sitting there, he said to Ven. Sāriputta, 'By means of the divine eye, purified & surpassing the human, I see the thousand-fold cosmos. My persistence is aroused & unsluggish. My mindfulness is established & unshaken. My body is calm & unaroused. My mind is concentrated into singleness. And yet my mind is not released from the effluents through lack of clinging/sustenance.'

Ven. Sāriputta: 'My friend, when the thought occurs to you, "By means of the divine eye, purified & surpassing the human, I see the thousand-fold cosmos," that is related to your conceit. When the thought occurs to you, "My persistence is aroused & unsluggish. My mindfulness is established & unshaken. My body is calm & unperturbed. My mind is concentrated into singleness," that is related to your restlessness. When the thought occurs to you, "And yet my mind is not released from the effluents through lack of clinging/sustenance," that is related to your anxiety. It would be well if—abandoning these three qualities, not attending to these three qualities—you directed your mind to the Deathless property.'

So after that, Ven. Anuruddha—abandoning those three qualities, not attending to those three qualities—directed his mind to the Deathless property. Dwelling alone, secluded, heedful, ardent, & resolute, he in no long time entered & remained in the unexcelled goal of the holy life for which clansmen rightly go forth from home into homelessness, knowing & realizing it for himself in the here & now. He knew, 'Birth is ended, the holy life fulfilled, the task done. There is nothing further for the sake of this world.' And thus Ven. Anuruddha became another one of the Arahants.

AN 3:128

§ 168. And what is an individual released in both ways? There is the case of the individual who remains touching with his body the peaceful liberations, the formlessnesses beyond forms; when he has seen with discernment, his effluents are totally ended. I do not say that such a monk has any duty to do with heedfulness. Why is that? Because he has done his duty with heedfulness; he is no longer capable of being heedless.

And what is an individual released through discernment? There is the case of the individual who does not remain touching with his body the peaceful liberations, the formlessnesses beyond forms; but when he has seen with discernment, his effluents are totally ended. I do not say that such a monk has any duty to do with heedfulness. Why is that? Because he has done his duty with heedfulness; he is no longer capable of being heedless.

MN 70

§ 169. Develop concentration, monks. A concentrated monk discerns things as they have come to be. And what does he discern as it has come to be?

‘This is stress,’ he discerns as it has come to be. ‘This is the origination of stress.... This is the cessation of stress.... This is the path of practice leading to the cessation of stress,’ he discerns as it has come to be....

Therefore your duty is the contemplation, ‘This is stress.... This is the origination of stress.... This is the cessation of stress.... This is the path of practice leading to the cessation of stress.’

SN 56:1

§ 170. Develop concentration, monks. A concentrated monk discerns things as they have come to be. And what does he discern as it has come to be?

The origination & disappearance of form... of feeling... of perception... of fabrications... of consciousness.

And what is the origination of form... of feeling... of perception... of fabrications... of consciousness? There is the case where one relishes, welcomes, & remains fastened. To what? One relishes form, welcomes it, & remains fastened to it. While one is relishing form, welcoming it, & remaining fastened to it, delight arises. Any delight in form is clinging. With that clinging as a condition there is becoming. With becoming as a condition there is birth. With birth as a condition then aging-&-death, sorrow, lamentation, pain, distress, & despair all come into play. Thus is the origination of this entire mass of suffering & stress. [Similarly with feeling, perception, fabrications, & consciousness.]

And what is the disappearance of form... feeling... perception... fabrications... consciousness? There is the case where one does not relish, welcome or remain fastened. To what? One does not relish form, welcome it, or remain fastened to it. While one is not relishing form, welcoming it, or remaining fastened to it, one’s delight in form ceases. From the cessation of that delight, clinging ceases. From the cessation of clinging, becoming ceases. From the cessation of becoming, birth ceases. From the cessation of birth, then aging-&-death, sorrow, lamentation, pain, distress, & despair all cease. Thus is the cessation of this entire mass of suffering & stress [§211]. [Similarly with feeling, perception, fabrications, & consciousness.]

SN 22:5

§ 171. There’s	no jhāna
for one with	no discernment,
	no discernment
for one with	no jhāna.
But one with	both jhāna
	& discernment:
he’s on the verge	



## of Unbinding.

Dhp 372

§ 172. Monks, Sāriputta is wise, of great discernment, deep discernment, wide... joyous... rapid... quick... penetrating discernment.... There is the case where Sāriputta... entered & remained in the first jhāna. Whatever qualities there are in the first jhāna—applied thought, evaluation, rapture, pleasure, singleness of mind, contact, feeling, perception, intention, consciousness [*vl.* intent], desire, decision, persistence, mindfulness, equanimity, & attention—he ferreted them out one by one. Known to him they arose, known to him they remained, known to him they subsided. He discerned, ‘So this is how these qualities, not having been, come into play. Having been, they vanish.’ He remained unattracted & unrepelled with regard to those qualities—independent, detached, released, dissociated, with an awareness rid of barriers. He discerned that ‘There is a further escape,’ and pursuing it, there really was for him. [Similarly with the remaining levels of jhāna up through the dimension of nothingness.]

Furthermore, completely transcending the dimension of nothingness, he entered & remained in the dimension of neither perception nor non-perception. He emerged mindful from that attainment. On emerging... he regarded the past qualities that had ceased & changed: ‘So this is how these qualities, not having been, come into play. Having been, they vanish.’ He remained unattracted & unrepelled with regard to those qualities—independent, detached, released, dissociated, with an awareness rid of barriers. He discerned that ‘There is a further escape,’ and pursuing it there really was for him.

Furthermore, completely transcending the dimension of neither perception nor non-perception, he entered & remained in the cessation of feeling & perception. And when he saw with discernment, his effluents were totally ended. He emerged mindful from that attainment. On emerging... he regarded the past qualities that had ceased & changed: ‘So this is how these qualities, not having been, come into play. Having been, they vanish.’ He remained unattracted & unrepelled with regard to those qualities—independent, detached, released, dissociated, with an awareness rid of barriers. He discerned that ‘There is no further escape,’ and pursuing it there really wasn’t for him.

If someone, rightly describing a person, were to say, ‘He has attained mastery & perfection in noble virtue... noble concentration... noble discernment... noble release,’ he would be rightly describing Sāriputta.... Sāriputta takes the unexcelled wheel of Dhamma set rolling by the Tathāgata and keeps it rolling rightly.

MN 111

§ 173. I tell you, the ending of the effluents depends on the first jhāna... the second jhāna... the third... the fourth... the dimension of the infinitude of space... the dimension of the infinitude of consciousness... the dimension of nothingness... the dimension of neither perception nor non-perception.

‘I tell you, the ending of the effluents depends on the first jhāna.’ Thus it has been said. In reference to what was it said?... Suppose that an archer or archer’s

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

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

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

[Similarly with the other levels of jhāna up through the dimension of nothingness.]

Thus, as far as the perception-attainments go, that is as far as gnosis-penetration goes. As for these two dimensions—the attainment of the dimension of neither perception nor non-perception & the attainment of the cessation of feeling & perception—I tell you that they are to be rightly explained by those monks who are meditators, skilled in attaining, skilled in attaining & emerging, who have attained & emerged in dependence on them.

AN 9:36

§ 174. Then Dasama the householder from the city of Atthaka went to Ven. Ananda and, on arrival, having bowed down, sat to one side. As he was sitting there, he said to Ven. Ānanda, 'Is there, venerable sir, any one condition explained by the Blessed One... whereby a monk—dwelling heedful, ardent, & resolute—releases his mind that is as yet unreleased, or whereby the effluents not yet brought to an end come to an end, or whereby he attains the unexcelled security from bondage that he has not yet attained?'

Ven. Ānanda: Yes, householder, there is.... There is the case where a monk... enters & remains in the first jhāna.... He notices that 'This first jhāna is fabricated & willed.' He discerns, 'Whatever is fabricated & willed is inconstant & subject to cessation.' Staying right there, he reaches the ending of the effluents. Or, if not, then—through this very Dhamma-passion, this Dhamma-delight and through the total wasting away of the five lower fetters—he is due to be reborn [in the Pure Abodes], there to be totally unbound, never again to return from that world. [Similarly with the other levels of jhāna up through the dimension of nothingness and the four awareness-releases based on good will, compassion, empathetic joy, & equanimity.]

§ 175. Ven. Sāriputta: This Unbinding is pleasant, friends. This Unbinding is pleasant.

Udāyin: But what is the pleasure here, my friend, where there is nothing felt?

Ven. Sāriputta: Just that is the pleasure here, my friend: where there is nothing felt. There are these five strings of sensuality. Which five? Forms cognizable via the eye—agreeable, pleasing, charming, endearing, fostering desire, enticing; sounds... smells... tastes... tactile sensations cognizable via the body—agreeable, pleasing, charming, endearing, fostering desire, enticing. Whatever pleasure or joy arises in dependence on these five strings of sensuality, that is sensual pleasure.

Now there is the case where a monk—quite secluded from sensuality, secluded from unskillful qualities—enters & remains in the first jhāna.... If, as he remains there, he is beset with attention to perceptions dealing with sensuality, that is an affliction for him. Just as pain arises as an affliction for a healthy person, even so the attention to perceptions dealing with sensuality that beset the monk is an affliction for him. Now the Blessed One has said that whatever is an affliction is stress. So by this line of reasoning it may be known how Unbinding is pleasant.

Furthermore, there is the case where a monk... enters & remains in the second jhāna.... If, as he remains there, he is beset with attention to perceptions dealing with directed thought, that is an affliction for him....

Furthermore, there is the case where a monk... enters & remains in the third jhāna.... If, as he remains there, he is beset with attention to perceptions dealing with rapture, that is an affliction for him....

Furthermore, there is the case where a monk... enters & remains in the fourth jhāna.... If, as he remains there, he is beset with attention to perceptions dealing with equanimity, that is an affliction for him....

Furthermore, there is the case where a monk... enters & remains in the dimension of the infinitude of space. If, as he remains there, he is beset with attention to perceptions dealing with form, that is an affliction for him....

Furthermore, there is the case where a monk... enters & remains in the dimension of the infinitude of consciousness. If, as he remains there, he is beset with attention to perceptions dealing with the dimension of the infinitude of space, that is an affliction for him....

Furthermore, there is the case where a monk... enters & remains in the dimension of nothingness. If, as he remains there, he is beset with attention to perceptions dealing with the dimension of the infinitude of consciousness, that is an affliction for him....

Furthermore, there is the case where a monk... enters & remains in the dimension of neither perception nor non-perception. If, as he remains there, he is beset with attention to perceptions dealing with the dimension of nothingness, that is an affliction for him... whatever is an affliction is stress. So by this line of reasoning it may be known how Unbinding is pleasant.

Furthermore, there is the case where a monk... enters & remains in the cessation of perception & feeling. And when he has seen with discernment, his effluents

are completely ended. So by this line of reasoning it may be known how Unbinding is pleasant.

AN 9:34

§ 176. Ven. Ānanda: It's amazing, my friend, it's astounding, how the Blessed One has attained & recognized the opportunity for the purification of beings... and the direct realization of Unbinding, where the eye will be, and forms, and yet one will not be sensitive to that dimension; where the ear will be, and sounds... where the nose will be, and smells... where the tongue will be, and tastes... where the body will be, and tactile sensations, and yet one will not be sensitive to that dimension.

Ven. Udāyin: Is one percipient when not sensitive to that dimension or unpercipient?

Ven. Ānanda: ...percipient....

Ven. Udāyin: ...percipient of what?

Ven. Ānanda: There is the case where with the complete transcending of perceptions of form, with the disappearance of perceptions of resistance, and not heeding perceptions of diversity, (perceiving,) 'Infinite space,' one... remains in the dimension of the infinitude of space: this is one way of being percipient when not sensitive to that dimension.

Further, with the complete transcending of the dimension of the infinitude of space, (perceiving,) 'Infinite consciousness,' one... remains in the dimension of the infinitude of consciousness: this is another way of being percipient when not sensitive to that dimension.

Further, with the complete transcending of the dimension of the infinitude of consciousness, (perceiving,) 'There is nothing,' one... remains in the dimension of nothingness: this is another way of being percipient when not sensitive to that dimension.

Once, friend, when I was staying in Sāketa at the Game Refuge in the Black Forest, the nun Jaṭilā Bhāgikā went to me, and on arrival—having bowed down—stood to one side. As she was standing to one side, she said to me, 'The concentration whereby—neither pressed down nor forced back, nor with mental fabrications kept blocked or suppressed—still as a result of release, contented as a result of stillness, and as a result of contentment one is not agitated: this concentration is said by the Blessed One to be the fruit of what?'

I said to her, '...This concentration is said by the Blessed One to be the fruit of gnosis [the knowledge of Awakening].' This is another way of being percipient when not sensitive to that dimension.

AN 9:37

§ 177. The Buddha: Sandha, practice the absorption [jhāna] of a thoroughbred horse, not the absorption of an unbroken colt. And how is an unbroken colt absorbed? An unbroken colt, tied to the feeding trough, is absorbed with the thought, 'Barley grain! Barley grain!' Why is that? Because as he is tied to the feeding trough, the thought does not occur to him, 'I wonder what task the trainer will have me do today? What should I do in response?' Tied to the

feeding trough, he is simply absorbed with the thought, 'Barley grain! Barley grain!'

In the same way, there are cases where an unbroken colt of a man, having gone to the wilderness, to the foot of a tree, or to an empty dwelling, dwells with his awareness overcome by sensual passion, obsessed with sensual passion. He does not discern the escape, as it has come to be, from sensual passion once it has arisen. Making that sensual passion the focal point, he absorbs himself with it, besorbs, resorbs, & supersorbs himself with it.

He dwells with his awareness overcome by ill will... sloth & drowsiness... restlessness & anxiety... uncertainty, obsessed with uncertainty. He does not discern the escape, as it has come to be, from uncertainty once it has arisen. Making that uncertainty the focal point, he absorbs himself with it, besorbs, resorbs, & supersorbs himself with it.

He is absorbed dependent on earth... liquid... fire... wind... the dimension of the infinitude of space... the dimension of the infinitude of consciousness... the dimension of nothingness... the dimension of neither perception nor non-perception... this world... the next world... whatever is seen, heard, sensed, cognized, attained, sought after, pondered by the intellect. That is how an unbroken colt of a man is absorbed.

And how is a thoroughbred absorbed? An excellent thoroughbred horse tied to the feeding trough, is not absorbed with the thought, 'Barley grain! Barley grain!' Why is that? Because as he is tied to the feeding trough, the thought occurs to him, 'I wonder what task the trainer will have me do today? What should I do in response?' Tied to the feeding trough, he is not absorbed with the thought, 'Barley grain! Barley grain!' The excellent thoroughbred horse regards the feel of the spur as a debt, an imprisonment, a loss, a piece of bad luck.

In the same way, an excellent thoroughbred of a man, having gone to the wilderness, to the foot of a tree, or to an empty dwelling, dwells with his awareness not overcome by sensual passion, not obsessed with sensual passion. He discerns the escape, as it has come to be, from sensual passion once it has arisen. He dwells with his awareness not overcome by ill will... sloth & drowsiness... restlessness & anxiety... uncertainty, obsessed with uncertainty. He discerns the escape, as it has come to be, from uncertainty once it has arisen.

He is absorbed dependent neither on earth, liquid, fire, wind, the dimension of the infinitude of space, the dimension of the infinitude of consciousness, the dimension of nothingness, the dimension of neither perception nor non-perception, this world, the next world, nor on whatever is seen, heard, sensed, cognized, attained, sought after, or pondered by the intellect—and yet he is absorbed. And to this excellent thoroughbred of a man, absorbed in this way, the devas, with their Indras, Brahmās, & viceroys, pay homage even from afar:

'Homage to you, O thoroughbred man.  
Homage to you, O superlative man—  
you of whom we don't know even what  
dependent on which  
you're absorbed.'

Ven. Sandha: But in what way is the excellent thoroughbred of a man absorbed when he is absorbed...?

The Buddha: There is the case, Sandha, where for an excellent thorough-bred of a man the perception [mental label] of earth with regard to earth has ceased to exist; the perception of liquid with regard to liquid... the perception of fire with regard to fire... the perception of wind with regard to wind... the perception of the dimension of the infinitude of space with regard to the dimension of the infinitude of space... the perception of the dimension of the infinitude of consciousness with regard to the dimension of the infinitude of consciousness... the perception of the dimension of nothingness with regard to the dimension of nothingness... the perception of the dimension of neither perception nor non-perception with regard to the dimension of neither perception nor non-perception... the perception of this world with regard to this world... the next world with regard to the next world... and whatever is seen, heard, sensed, cognized, attained, sought after, or pondered by the intellect: the perception of that has ceased to exist.

Absorbed in this way, the excellent thoroughbred of a man is absorbed dependent neither on earth, liquid, fire, wind, the dimension of the infinitude of space, the dimension of the infinitude of consciousness, the dimension of nothingness, the dimension of neither perception nor non-perception, this world, the next world, nor on whatever is seen, heard, sensed, cognized, attained, sought after, or pondered by the intellect—and yet he is absorbed. And to this excellent thoroughbred of a man, absorbed in this way, the devas, with their Indras, Brahmās, & viceroys, pay homage even from afar:

‘Homage to you, O thoroughbred man.  
Homage to you, O superlative man—  
you of whom we don’t know even what  
dependent on which  
you’re absorbed.’

AN 11:10

§ 178. Knowledge of the ending of the effluents, as it is has come to be, occurs to one who is concentrated, I tell you, and not to one who is not concentrated. So concentration is the path, monks. Non-concentration is no path at all.

AN 6:64

## **G. EQUANIMITY IN CONCENTRATION & DISCERNMENT**

We have pinpointed the fifth, reflective level of noble right concentration [§150] as the mental state in which transcendent discernment can arise. A look at how equanimity functions in this process will help to flesh out our account of this state.

The word “equanimity” is used in the Canon in two basic senses: 1) a neutral feeling in the absence of pleasure and pain, and 2) an attitude of even-mindedness in the face of every sort of experience, regardless of whether pleasure and pain are present or not. The attitude of even-mindedness is what is meant here.

Passage §179 gives an outline of the place of equanimity in the emotional life of

a person on the path of practice. This outline is interesting for several reasons. To begin with, contrary to many teachings currently popular in the West, it shows that there is a skillful use for the sense of distress that can come to a person who longs for the goal of the practice but has yet to attain it. This sense of distress can help one to get over the distress that comes when one feels deprived of pleasant sensory objects, for one realizes that the goal unattained is a much more serious lack than an unattained sensual pleasure. With one's priorities thus straightened out, one will turn one's energy to the pursuit of the path, rather than to the pursuit of sensual pleasure. As the path thus matures, it results in the sense of joy that comes on gaining an insight into the true nature of sensory objects—a joy that in turn matures into a sense of equanimity resulting from that very same insight. This is the highest stage of what is called equanimity “dependent on multiplicity”—i.e., equanimity in the face of multiple objects.

Passages §180 and §181 go into more detail on how to foster this sort of equanimity. Passage §181 describes three stages in the process: 1) *development*, or a conscious turning of the mind to equanimity in the face of agreeable or disagreeable objects; 2) a state of *being in training*, in which one feels a spontaneous disillusionment with agreeable or disagreeable objects; and 3) *fully developed faculties*, in which one's even-mindedness is so completely mastered that one is in full control of one's thought processes in the face of agreeable or disagreeable objects. Because the first of these three stages is a conscious process, both §180 and §181 illustrate it with a series of graphic metaphors to help “tune” the mind to the right attitude and to help keep that attitude firmly in mind.

However, the cultivation of equanimity does not stop with equanimity dependent on multiplicity. Formless jhana, if one is able to attain it, functions as a basis for equanimity dependent on singleness [§179], i.e., the singleness of jhana. The next stage is to use this equanimity to bring on the state of equipoise called non-fashioning (*atammayata*), although §183 shows that non-fashioning can be attained directly from any of the stages of jhana, and not just the formless ones. Exactly what non-fashioning involves is shown in §182: one perceives the fabricated and willed nature of even one's refined state of jhana, and becomes so dispassionate toward the whole process that one “neither fabricates nor wills for the sake of becoming or un-becoming.” In this state of non-fashioning, the mind is so balanced that it contributes absolutely no present input into the conditioning of experience at all. Because the process of conditioned or fabricated experience, on the unawakened level, requires present input together with input from the past in order to continue functioning, the entire process then breaks down, and all that remains is the Unfabricated.

After this experience, the processes of worldly experience resume due to the kammic input from the past, but one's attitude toward these processes is changed, in line with the mental fetters [II/A] that have been cut by the Awakening. If the Awakening was total, one continues to deal on an awakened level with the world until the time of one's total Unbinding with an attitude of perfect even-mindedness, illustrated by the three “frames of reference” described at the end of §179 [see also II/B]. One feels sympathy for others and seeks their well-being, experiencing a sense of satisfaction when they respond to one's teachings, but otherwise one stays equanimous, untroubled, mindful, and alert. This passage shows that the even-mindedness of a fully awakened person is an attitude not of cold indifference, but

rather of mental imperturbability. Such a person has found true happiness and would like others to share that happiness as well, but that happiness is not dependent on how others respond. This is the ideal state of mind for a person who truly works for the benefit of the world.

§ 179. 'The thirty-six emotions should be known by experience.' Thus it was said. And in reference to what was it said? Six kinds of household joy & six kinds of renunciation joy; six kinds of household distress & six kinds of renunciation distress; six kinds of household equanimity & six kinds of renunciation equanimity.

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

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

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

And what are the six kinds of renunciation distress? The distress coming from the longing that arises in one who is filled with longing for the unexcelled liberations when—experiencing the inconstancy of those very forms, their change, fading, & cessation—he sees with right discernment as it has come to be that all forms, past or present, are inconstant, stressful, subject to change and he is filled with this longing: 'O when will I enter & remain in the dimension that the noble ones now enter & remain in?' This is called renunciation distress. [Similarly with sounds, smells, tastes, tactile sensations, & ideas.]

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

And what are the six kinds of renunciation equanimity? The equanimity that arises when—experiencing the inconstancy of those very forms, their change, fading, & cessation—one sees with right discernment as it has come to be that all forms, past or present, are inconstant, stressful, subject to change: this



equanimity goes beyond form, which is why it is called renunciation equanimity. [Similarly with sounds, smells, tastes, tactile sensations, & ideas.]

'Thirty-six emotions should be known by experience.' Thus it was said. And in reference to this was it said.

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

Here, by depending & relying on the six kinds of renunciation joy, abandon & transcend the six kinds of household joy. Such is their abandoning, such is their transcending. By depending & relying on the six kinds of renunciation distress, abandon & transcend the six kinds of household distress. Such is their abandoning, such is their transcending. By depending & relying on the six kinds of renunciation equanimity, abandon & transcend the six kinds of household equanimity. Such is their abandoning, such their transcending.

By depending & relying on the six kinds of renunciation joy, abandon & transcend the six kinds of renunciation distress. Such is their abandoning, such is their transcending. By depending & relying on the six kinds of renunciation equanimity, abandon & transcend the six kinds of renunciation joy. Such is their abandoning, such their transcending.

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

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

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

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

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

'Depending on this, abandon that.' Thus it was said. And in reference to this was it said.

'There are three frames of reference (establishings of mindfulness) that a noble one cultivates, cultivating which he is a teacher fit to instruct a group.' Thus it was said. And in reference to what was it said?

There is the case where the Teacher—out of sympathy, seeking their well-being—teaches the Dhamma to his disciples: 'This is for your well-being, this is for your happiness.' His disciples do not listen or lend ear or apply their minds to gnosis. Turning aside, they stray from the Teacher's message. In this case the

Tathāgata is not satisfied nor is he sensitive to satisfaction, yet he remains untroubled, mindful, & alert. This is the first frame of reference...

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

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

‘There are three frames of reference that a noble one cultivates, cultivating which he is a teacher fit to instruct a group.’ Thus it was said. And in reference to this was it said.

MN 137

§ 180. Rāhula, develop meditation in tune with earth—for when you are developing meditation in tune with earth, agreeable & disagreeable sensory impressions that have arisen will not stay in charge of your mind. Just as when people throw what is clean or unclean on the earth—feces, urine, saliva, pus, or blood—the earth is not horrified, humiliated, or disgusted by it; in the same way, when you are developing meditation in tune with earth, agreeable & disagreeable sensory impressions that have arisen will not stay in charge of your mind.

Develop meditation in tune with water—for when you are developing meditation in tune with water, agreeable & disagreeable sensory impressions that have arisen will not stay in charge of your mind. Just as when people wash what is clean or unclean in water—feces, urine, saliva, pus, or blood—the water is not horrified, humiliated, or disgusted by it; in the same way, when you are developing meditation in tune with water, agreeable & disagreeable sensory impressions that have arisen will not stay in charge of your mind.

Develop meditation in tune with fire—for when you are developing meditation in tune with fire, agreeable & disagreeable sensory impressions that have arisen will not stay in charge of your mind. Just as when fire burns what is clean or unclean—feces, urine, saliva, pus, or blood—it is not horrified, humiliated, or disgusted by it; in the same way, when you are developing meditation in tune with fire, agreeable & disagreeable sensory impressions that have arisen will not stay in charge of your mind.

Develop meditation in tune with wind—for when you are developing meditation

in tune with wind, agreeable & disagreeable sensory impressions that have arisen will not stay in charge of your mind. Just as when wind blows what is clean or unclean—feces, urine, saliva, pus, or blood—it is not horrified, humiliated, or disgusted by it; in the same way, when you are developing meditation in tune with wind, agreeable & disagreeable sensory impressions that have arisen will not stay in charge of your mind.

Develop meditation in tune with space—for when you are developing meditation in tune with space, agreeable & disagreeable sensory impressions that have arisen will not stay in charge of your mind. Just as space is not established anywhere, in the same way, when you are developing meditation in tune with space, agreeable & disagreeable sensory impressions that have arisen will not stay in charge of your mind.

MN 62

§ 181. And how, Ānanda, in the discipline of a noble one is there the unexcelled development of the faculties? There is the case where, when seeing a form with the eye, there arises in a monk what is agreeable, what is disagreeable, what is agreeable & disagreeable. He discerns that ‘This agreeable thing has arisen in me, this disagreeable thing...this agreeable & disagreeable thing has arisen in me. And that is fabricated, gross, dependently co-arisen. But this is peaceful, this is exquisite, i.e., equanimity.’ With that, the arisen agreeable thing...disagreeable thing...agreeable & disagreeable thing ceases, and equanimity takes its stance. Just as a man with good eyes, having closed them, might open them; or having opened them, might close them, that is how quickly, how rapidly, how easily, no matter what it refers to, the arisen agreeable thing... disagreeable thing... agreeable & disagreeable thing ceases, and equanimity takes its stance. In the discipline of a noble one, this is called the unexcelled development of the faculties with regard to forms cognizable by the eye.

Furthermore, when hearing a sound with the ear, there arises in a monk what is agreeable, what is disagreeable, what is agreeable & disagreeable. He discerns that... and equanimity takes its stance. Just as a strong man might easily snap his fingers, that is how quickly... equanimity takes its stance. In the discipline of a noble one, this is called the unexcelled development of the faculties with regard to sounds cognizable by the ear.

Furthermore, when smelling an aroma with the nose, there arises in a monk what is agreeable, what is disagreeable, what is agreeable & disagreeable. He discerns that...and equanimity takes its stance. Just as drops of water roll off a gently sloping lotus leaf & do not remain there, that is how quickly... equanimity takes its stance. In the discipline of a noble one, this is called the unexcelled development of the faculties with regard to aromas cognizable by the nose.

Furthermore, when tasting a flavor with the tongue, there arises in a monk what is agreeable, what is disagreeable, what is agreeable & disagreeable. He discerns that... and equanimity takes its stance. Just as a strong man might easily spit out a ball of saliva gathered on the tip of his tongue, that is how quickly... equanimity takes its stance. In the discipline of a noble one, this is called the unexcelled development of the faculties with regard to flavors cognizable by the tongue.

Furthermore, when touching a tactile sensation with the body, there arises in a

monk what is agreeable, what is disagreeable, what is agreeable & disagreeable. He discerns that... and equanimity takes its stance. Just as a strong man might easily extend his flexed arm or flex his extended arm, that is how quickly... equanimity takes its stance. In the discipline of a noble one, this is called the unexcelled development of the faculties with regard to tactile sensations cognizable by the body.

Furthermore, when cognizing an idea with the intellect, there arises in a monk what is agreeable, what is disagreeable, what is agreeable & disagreeable. He discerns that 'This agreeable thing has arisen in me, this disagreeable thing...this agreeable & disagreeable thing has arisen in me. And that is fabricated, gross, dependently co-arisen. But this is peaceful, this is exquisite, i.e., equanimity. With that, the arisen agreeable thing... disagreeable thing... agreeable & disagreeable thing ceases, and equanimity takes its stance. Just as a strong man might let two or three drops of water fall onto an iron pan heated all day: slow would be the falling of the drops of water, but they quickly would vanish & disappear. That is how quickly, how rapidly, how easily, no matter what it refers to, the arisen agreeable thing... disagreeable thing... agreeable & disagreeable thing ceases, and equanimity takes its stance. In the discipline of a noble one, this is called the unexcelled development of the faculties with regard to ideas cognizable by the intellect [§60].

And how is one a person in training, someone following the way? There is the case where, when seeing a form with the eye, there arises in a monk what is agreeable, what is disagreeable, what is agreeable & disagreeable. He feels horrified, humiliated, & disgusted with the arisen agreeable thing... disagreeable thing... agreeable & disagreeable thing. [Similarly with the other senses.]....

And how is one a noble one with developed faculties? There is the case where, when seeing a form with the eye, there arises in a monk what is agreeable, what is disagreeable, what is agreeable & disagreeable. If he wants, he remains percipient of loathsomeness in the presence of what is not loathsome. If he wants, he remains percipient of unloathsomeness in the presence of what is loathsome. If he wants, he remains percipient of loathsomeness in the presence of what is not loathsome & what is. If he wants, he remains percipient of unloathsomeness in the presence of what is loathsome & what is not. If he wants—in the presence of what is loathsome & what is not—cutting himself off from both, he remains equanimous, alert, & mindful. [Similarly with the other senses.] [§§45-46; 98]

This is how one is a noble one with developed faculties.

MN 152

§ 182. [On attaining the fourth level of jhāna] there remains only equanimity: pure & bright, pliant, malleable & luminous. Just as if a skilled goldsmith or goldsmith's apprentice were to prepare a furnace, heat up a crucible, and, taking gold with a pair of tongs, place it in the crucible. He would blow on it periodically, sprinkle water on it periodically, examine it periodically, so that the gold would become refined, well-refined, thoroughly refined, flawless, free from dross, pliant, malleable & luminous. Then whatever sort of ornament he had in mind—whether a belt, an earring, a necklace, or a gold chain—it would serve his

purpose. In the same way, there remains only equanimity: pure & bright, pliant, malleable, & luminous. He (the meditator) discerns that ‘If I were to direct equanimity as pure & bright as this toward the dimension of the infinitude of space, I would develop the mind along those lines, and thus this equanimity of mine—thus supported, thus sustained—would last for a long time. [Similarly with the dimensions of the infinitude of consciousness, nothingness, & neither perception nor non-perception.]’

He discerns that ‘If I were to direct equanimity as pure & bright as this toward the dimension of the infinitude of space and to develop the mind along those lines, that would be fabricated. [Similarly with the dimensions of the infinitude of consciousness, nothingness, & neither perception nor non-perception.]’ He neither fabricates nor wills for the sake of becoming or un-becoming. This being the case, he is not sustained by anything in the world (does not cling to anything in the world). Unsustained, he is not agitated. Unagitated, he is totally unbound right within. He discerns that ‘Birth is ended, the holy life fulfilled, the task done. There is nothing further for this world.’

MN 140

§ 183. A person of no integrity...enters & remains in the first jhāna. He notices, ‘I have gained the attainment of the first jhāna, but these other monks have not gained the attainment of the first jhāna.’ He exalts himself for the attainment of the first jhāna and disparages others. This is the quality of a person of no integrity.

A person of integrity notices, ‘The Blessed One has spoken of non-fashioning even with regard to the attainment of the first jhāna, for by whatever means they construe it, it becomes otherwise from that.’ [§§221; 232] So, making non-fashioning his focal point, he neither exalts himself for the attainment of the first jhāna nor disparages others. This is the quality of a person of integrity.

[Similarly with the other levels of jhāna up through the dimension of nothingness.]

A person of no integrity...enters & remains in the dimension of neither perception nor non-perception. He notices, ‘I have gained the attainment of the dimension of neither perception nor non-perception, but these other monks have not gained the attainment of the dimension of neither perception nor non-perception.’ He exalts himself for the attainment of the dimension of neither perception nor non-perception and disparages others. This is the quality of a person of no integrity.

A person of integrity notices, ‘The Blessed One has spoken of non-fashioning even with regard to the attainment of the dimension of neither perception nor non-perception, for by whatever means they construe it, it becomes otherwise from that.’ So, making non-fashioning his focal point, he neither exalts himself for the attainment of the dimension of neither perception nor non-perception nor disparages others. This is the quality of a person of integrity.

A person of integrity, completely transcending the dimension of neither perception nor non-perception, enters & remains in the cessation of feeling & perception. When he sees with discernment, his effluents are ended. This is a

monk who does not construe anything, does not construe anywhere, does not construe in any way.

MN 113

## H. DISCERNMENT: RIGHT VIEW

The texts define right view as knowledge with regard to the four noble truths. The phrase “with regard to,” here (expressed by the locative case in Pali), can also mean “in terms of,” and this alternative meaning is especially relevant in this case. It reflects the point that the knowledge constituting right view is not a theoretical knowledge about the truths but is a way of using the truths to categorize all of conditioned experience. Because these truths view experience in terms of function—how unskillful and skillful mental qualities play a role in the causal chain of creating suffering or bringing it to an end [DN 1; MFU, p. 64]—the right way to view right view itself is not to stop with its definition but to regard it in terms of its function and then put it to its intended use.

The function of right view is to look at events in the mind in a way that gives rise to a sense of dispassion, leading the mind to a state of non-fashioning and then on to Awakening. It does this by focusing on the way in which passion and desire lead to suffering and stress. In this, it develops the mind’s basic reaction to stress—the search for a way to escape from the stress [§189]—in a skillful way so that this reaction actually leads to utter release. When the mind sees, without its normal bewilderment, the actual process by which stress is caused, it will naturally let go of the causes. When it sees passion clearly enough to catch that passion in the act of leading to stress, it will naturally develop a sense of dispassion for and detachment from the passion, so that it can view it simply as a mental event, with no meaning in terms of anything else. This opens the way to the state of non-fashioning where the cause of stress is allowed to cease.

The causal connection between passion and desire on the one hand, and stress on the other, is explained in the standard formula for dependent co-arising under the factor of clinging/sustenance. A passage in the Canon [SN 12:121, MFU, pp. 44-45] analyzes this factor into four forms of passion and desire for the five aggregates: clinging to sensuality, clinging to habits and practices, clinging to views, and clinging to theories about the self. The third form of clinging listed here points to one of the paradoxes about right view: it is a form of view that has to loosen attachment to all views, ultimately including itself. Passage §187 shows how this happens. When faced with a variety of views about the world and the self, right view looks at the views, not in terms of their content, but simply as events in the mind, in and of themselves. It sees them as part of a causal chain: fabricated, inconstant, stressful, and thus not-self, not worthy of attachment. In this way it makes the mind dispassionate to all other views: dispassionate toward the terms they use, dispassionate toward their claims to truth. Right view then turns on itself to see itself as part of a similar causal chain. This loosens any sense of attachment even for right view so that the mind can see the view simply as an event: “there is this.” This entry into the perceptual mode of emptiness leads straight to the “higher escape”—the state of non-fashioning—that then becomes present to awareness.

Because right view is the only form of view that contains the seeds of its own transcendence in this way, it is the only form of knowing that is skillful enough to lead to Awakening. The Canon gives no room for any alternative “skillful means” that would contradict right view. After the experience of Awakening, the texts tell us [SN 22:122], one continues to make use of right view, with no sense of clinging, as a pleasant abiding for the mind and for mindfulness and alertness, much as one would use jhana for the same purpose [III/E]. This process of transcending right view even as one makes use of it shows that non-attachment to views does not mean agnosticism or an openness to all views. Instead, non-attachment is a skillful way of making use of one’s discerning faculties, seeing through to the causal function of all views, so that one may attain Awakening and then maintain a pleasant and mindfully alert abiding after one has become awakened.

The steps in the functioning of right view correspond to the three stages of frames-of-reference meditation [II/B]. The first step, in which one focuses on events in and of themselves—and not in reference to anything they might mean outside of the range of immediate experience—corresponds to the first stage of frames-of-reference meditation, in which one stays focused on the body, etc., in and of itself, putting aside all greed and distress with reference to the world. The second step of right view, in which one focuses on events in terms of their role in the causal chain—fabricated, inconstant, stressful, and not-self—corresponds to the second stage of frames-of-reference meditation, in which one remains focused on the phenomenon of origination and passing away. The third step of right view, in which one sees even right view simply as an event, corresponds to the third stage of frames-of-reference meditation in which one moves to the perceptual mode of “entry into emptiness,” noting simply, “There is this”—without being caught up in the “this”—and from there on to non-fashioning and Awakening. Because the practice of jhana is also implicated in these three steps—steady the mind in the first step, sensitizing it to causality in the second, and providing the basis for the fifth factor of noble concentration in the third—mindfulness, concentration, and discernment are thus inextricably intertwined as they develop along the path to Awakening.

It is important to note that right view functions in two time frames: small and large. Its primary frame is in the small frame, dealing exclusively with the immediate present. As it focuses on the phenomenon of origination and passing away, it reduces its terms of analysis to more and more basic levels until reaching the point where it sees even such simple categories as “being” and “non-being” as extraneous, inappropriate, and irrelevant to the simple flow of events arising and passing away in the present [S186]. As a result, it strips everything down to the most basic categories of experience—the presence and absence of stress—without adding anything further. This phenomenological mode of perception, or “entry into emptiness,” sees things simply in terms of what is present and what is not [MN 121; MFU, pp. 82-85]. Here, realizations are expressed merely as pointers to present phenomena without any content that would point to anything outside of direct experience: “There is this,” [MN 102; MFU, pp. 81-82] “Such is form, such is feeling,” [S149] etc. The Pali name for this/that conditionality, *idappaccayata*, points to the fact that not only the phenomena but also their relationships are a matter of immediate, “right here-and-now” insight.

Once these insights are gained on the level of radically immediate experience, one realizes that they have implications for the larger time frame of the whole

process of transmigration and one's entire experience of the cosmos as well [§211-15]. The process of stress arising and passing away in the present is precisely the same process as that of living beings arising and passing away on the cosmic scale. One sees that one has participated in this process from an inconceivable beginning in time; one knows—now that the process has been disbanded—that one has found the end of the cycle of rebirth. This is because, in entering radically into the present moment by stripping away all clinging, one ultimately steps out of the dimensions of time and the present; having done so, one can see the totality of what it means to be in those dimensions.

This point is illustrated in two passages [§§74, 64] that express the content of right view immediately before and after the experience of the Deathless:

'From an inconceivable beginning comes transmigration. A beginning point is not evident, though beings hindered by ignorance and fettered by craving are transmigrating & wandering on. The total fading & cessation of ignorance, of this mass of darkness, is this peaceful, exquisite state: the resolution of all fabrications; the relinquishment of all acquisitions; the ending of craving; dispassion; cessation; Unbinding.'

'This is stress....This is the origination of stress....This is the cessation of stress....This is the way leading to the cessation of stress....These are effluents....This is the origination of effluents.... This is the cessation of effluents....This is the way leading to the cessation of effluents.' His heart, thus knowing, thus seeing, is released from the effluent of sensuality, released from the effluent of becoming, released from the effluent of ignorance. With release, there is the knowledge, 'Released.' He discerns that 'Birth is ended, the holy life fulfilled, the task done. There is nothing further for this world.'

The first passage depicts the act of discernment that verifies the principles of conviction. The second passage depicts the act of discernment that confirms the fact that the five faculties, when fully developed, do lead to the Deathless [§89]. Notice that both passages follow a similar pattern, even though they deal with vastly different time scales. Transmigration and darkness, in the first passage, correspond to stress in the second. Ignorance and craving are the origination of stress, and the sentence, "The total fading & cessation of ignorance...Unbinding," describes the cessation of stress. The act of discernment that sees all these things is the way leading to the cessation of stress.

This repetition of the same pattern on two different frames of space and time in non-linear systems is called scale invariance: the same process on two different scales [I/B]. It is one of the most distinctive features of the Buddha's teachings, for it shows how an insight into a present moment in the mind can have repercussions on one's entire involvement in the cosmos. The principle behind the scale invariance of right view is this/that conditionality: the fact that one's continued participation in the cosmos is kept going by one's present contribution to the causal stream initiated over the long course of the past. By reaching the state of non-fashioning, one stops contributing to the present, and thus can bring the totality of one's participation to an end, leaving the utter freedom of Unbinding. In this sense, the principle of this/that conditionality explains the possibility of attaining the



Deathless, while the actuality of the Deathless—once it is attained through skillful mastery of kamma—is what proves the principle of this/that conditionality as an adequate description of the causal process that fabricates conditioned experience and provides an opening to the Unfabricated.

§ 184. I do not envision any one other quality by which unarisen unskillful qualities arise, and arisen unskillful qualities go to growth & proliferation, like wrong view. When a person has wrong view, unarisen unskillful qualities arise, and arisen unskillful qualities go to growth & proliferation.

I do not envision any one other quality by which unarisen skillful qualities arise, and arisen skillful qualities go to growth & proliferation, like right view. When a person has right view, unarisen skillful qualities arise, and arisen skillful qualities go to growth & proliferation.

Just as when a nimb-tree seed, a bitter creeper seed, or a bitter melon seed is placed in moist soil, whatever nutriment it takes from the soil & the water, all conduces to its bitterness, acidity, & distastefulness. Why is that? Because of the evil nature of the seed.

In the same way, when a person has wrong view, whatever bodily deeds he undertakes in line with that view, whatever verbal deeds...whatever mental deeds he undertakes in line with that view, whatever intentions, whatever determinations, whatever vows, whatever fabrications, all lead to what is disagreeable, unpleasing, unappealing, unprofitable, & stressful. Why is that? Because of the evil nature of the view...

Just as when a sugar cane seed, a rice grain, or a grape seed is placed in moist soil, whatever nutriment it takes from the soil & the water, all conduces to its sweetness, tastiness, & unalloyed delectability. Why is that? Because of the auspicious nature of the seed.

In the same way, when a person has right view, whatever bodily deeds he undertakes in line with that view, whatever verbal deeds... whatever mental deeds he undertakes in line with that view, whatever intentions, whatever vows, whatever determinations, whatever fabrications, all lead to what is agreeable, pleasing, charming, profitable, & easeful. Why is that? Because of the auspicious nature of the view.

AN 1:181-82, 189-90

§ 185. Right view, when assisted by these five factors, has awareness-release as its fruit & reward, has discernment-release as its fruit & reward. Which five?

There is the case where right view is assisted by virtue, assisted by learning, assisted by discussion, assisted by tranquility, & assisted by insight (vipassanā).

When assisted by these five factors, right view has awareness-release & discernment release as its fruit & reward.

AN 5:25

§ 186. Kaccāyana: ‘Lord, “Right view, right view,” it is said. To what extent is

there right view?’

The Buddha: ‘By & large, Kaccāyana, this world is supported by (takes as its object) a polarity, that of existence & non-existence. But when one sees the origination of the world with right discernment as it has come to be, “non-existence” with reference to the world does not occur to one. When one sees the cessation of the world with right discernment as it has come to be, “existence” with reference to the world does not occur to one.

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

SN 12:15

§ 187. Then Anāthapiṇḍika the householder went to the wanderers of other persuasions. On arrival he greeted them courteously. After an exchange of friendly greetings & courtesies, he sat down to one side. As he was sitting there, the wanderers said to him, ‘Tell us, householder, what views the contemplative Gotama has.’

‘Venerable sirs, I don’t know entirely what views the Blessed One has.’ [§188]

‘Well, well. So you don’t know entirely what views the contemplative Gotama has. Then tell us what views the monks have.’

‘I don’t even know entirely what views the monks have.’

‘So you don’t know entirely what views the contemplative Gotama has or even the monks have. Then tell us what views you have.’

‘It wouldn’t be difficult for me to expound to you what views I have. But please let the venerable ones expound each in line with his position, and then it won’t be difficult for me to expound to you what views I have.’

When this had been said, one of the wanderers said to Anāthapiṇḍika the householder, ‘The cosmos is eternal. Only this is true; anything otherwise is worthless. This is the sort of view I have.’

Another wanderer said to Anāthapiṇḍika, ‘The cosmos is not eternal. Only this is true; anything otherwise is worthless. This is the sort of view I have.’

Another wanderer said, ‘The cosmos is finite...’...‘The cosmos is infinite...’...‘The soul & the body are the same...’...‘The soul is one thing and the body another...’...‘After death a Tathāgata exists...’...‘After death a Tathāgata does not exist...’...‘After death a Tathāgata both does & does not exist...’...‘After death a Tathāgata neither does nor does not exist. Only this is true; anything otherwise is worthless. This is the sort of view I have.’

When this had been said, Anāthapiṇḍika the householder said to the wanderers, ‘As for the venerable one who says, “The cosmos is eternal. Only this is true; anything otherwise is worthless. This is the sort of view I have,” his view arises

from his own inappropriate attention or in dependence on the words of another. Now this view has been brought into being, is fabricated, willed, dependently co-arisen. Whatever has been brought into being, is fabricated, willed, dependently co-arisen, that is inconstant. Whatever is inconstant is stress. This venerable one thus adheres to that very stress, submits himself to that very stress.' [Similarly for the other positions.]

When this had been said, the wanderers said to Anāthapiṇḍika the householder, 'We have each & every one expounded to you in line with our own positions. Now tell us what views you have.'

'Whatever has been brought into being, is fabricated, willed, dependently co-arisen, that is inconstant. Whatever is inconstant is stress. Whatever is stress is not mine, is not what I am, is not my self. This is the sort of view I have.'

'So, householder, whatever has been brought into being, is fabricated, willed, dependently co-arisen, that is inconstant. Whatever is inconstant is stress. You thus adhere to that very stress, submit yourself to that very stress.'

'Venerable sirs, whatever has been brought into being, is fabricated, willed, dependently co-arisen, that is inconstant. Whatever is inconstant is stress. Whatever is stress is not mine, is not what I am, is not my self. Having seen this well with right discernment as it has come to be, I also discern the higher escape from it as it has come to be.'

When this had been said, the wanderers fell silent, abashed, sitting with their shoulders drooping, their heads down, brooding, at a loss for words.

Anāthapiṇḍika the householder, perceiving that the wanderers were silent, abashed...at a loss for words, got up & left.

AN 10:93

### **i. The Four Noble Truths**

In §139, the Buddha refers to himself as a doctor, treating the spiritual illnesses of his students. This metaphor is useful to keep in mind as we discuss the basic categories of right view: the four noble truths. Many people have charged Buddhism with being pessimistic because the four truths start out with stress and suffering, but this charge misses the fact that the first truth is part of a strategy of diagnosis and therapy focusing on the basic problem in life so as to offer a solution to it. This is the sense in which the Buddha was like a doctor, focusing on the disease he wanted to cure. The total cure he promised as a result of his course of therapy shows that, in actuality, he was much less pessimistic than the vast majority of world, for whom wisdom means accepting the bad things in life with the good, assuming that there is no chance in this life for unalloyed happiness. The Buddha was an extremely demanding person, unwilling to bend to this supposed wisdom or to rest with anything less than absolute happiness. We are fortunate that he was so demanding and succeeded in his aim, for otherwise we would have to undertake the uncertain task of trying to discover the way to that happiness ourselves.

Although the four noble truths constitute the most basic categories of the Buddha's teaching, he did not discuss them unless he felt that his listeners were ready for them. To understand and accept them requires a basic shift in the

framework of one's awareness, and only a mind that has been thoroughly prepared is in a position to make such a shift. Often the Buddha would prepare his listeners with what he called a gradual discourse: discussing step by step the joy of generosity; the joy of living a virtuous life; the long-term sensory rewards of generosity and virtue in heaven; the drawbacks and impermanence of sensory pleasures and conditioned phenomena in general; and finally the rewards of renunciation. Then, if he sensed that his listeners were ready to look favorably on renunciation as a means to true happiness, he would discuss the four truths, beginning with suffering and stress. In this, he followed the sequence of his own Awakening: beginning with insight into the punishments of bad kamma, the rewards of good kamma, and the limitations of all kamma, and then proceeding to insight into the origination of stress and its cessation through the cessation of kamma [§9].

Once the problem of stress and suffering is solved, he said, there are no more problems. This is why he limited his teaching to this issue, even though his own Awakening encompassed much more [§188]. The vicious cycle that operates between suffering and ignorance—with ignorance underlying the craving that causes suffering, and suffering causing the bewilderment that leads people to act in ignorant and unskillful ways [§189]—can be broken only when one focuses on understanding suffering and stress and the causal network that surrounds them. Most people are so bewildered by the complexities of suffering and stress that they do not even know what the true problem is. Thus they may deny that they are suffering, or may imagine that something stressful can actually be a solution to their problems. The genius of the Buddha is that he recognized the most elegant and comprehensive way to deal with every variety of dissatisfaction in life. When suffering and stress are seen with clear knowledge, they no longer can cause bewilderment, and the cycle that underlies all the problems of experience can be disbanded for good.

As §195 states, this clear knowledge is based on knowledge of the four noble truths. These truths are best understood not as the content of a belief, but as categories for viewing and classifying the processes of immediate experience. In §51, the Buddha refers to them as categories of "appropriate attention," a skillful alternative to the common way that people categorize their experience in terms of two dichotomies: being/non-being, and self/other. For several reasons, these common dichotomies are actually problem-causing, rather than problem-solving. The being/non-being dichotomy, for instance, comes down to the question of whether or not there exist actual "things" behind the changing phenomena of experience. This type of questioning deals, by definition, with possibilities that cannot be directly experienced. If the things in question could be experienced, then they wouldn't be lying behind experience. Thus the being/non-being dichotomy pulls one's attention into the land of conjecture—"a thicket of views, a wilderness of views, a contortion of views, a writhing of views, a fetter of views" [MN 72]—and away from the area of direct awareness where the real problem and its solution lie [§186].

As for the self/other dichotomy, there is the initial difficulty of determining what the self is. Any true self would have to lie totally under one's own control, and yet nothing that one might try to identify as one's self actually meets this criterion. Although the sense of self may seem intuitive enough, when carefully examined it

shows itself to be based on confused perceptions and ideas. If one's basic categories for understanding experience are a cause for confusion in this way, they can lead only to confused, unskillful action, and thus to more suffering and stress. For example, when people view the source of their problems as poor relationships between themselves and others, or inadequate integration of the self, they are trying to analyze their problems in terms of categories that are ultimately uncertain. Thus there is a built-in uncertainty in the efforts they make to solve their problems in terms of those categories.

A second problem, no matter how one might define a self, is the question of how to prove whether or not it actually exists. This question entangles the mind in the unresolvable problems of the being/non-being dichotomy mentioned above: because the problem is phrased in terms that cannot be directly experienced, it forces the solution into a realm that cannot be experienced, either. This fact probably explains the Buddha's statement in §230 to the effect that if one even asks the question of whether there is someone standing outside the processes of dependent co-arising to whom those processes pertain, it is impossible to lead the life that will bring about an end to suffering. Regardless of whether one would answer the question with a yes or a no, the terms of the question focus on an area outside of direct experience and thus away from the true problem—the direct experience of suffering—and actually make it worse. If one assumes the existence of a self, one must take on the implicit imperative to maximize the self's well-being through recourse to the "other." This recourse may involve either exploiting the "other" or swallowing the "other" into the self by equating one's self with the cosmos as a whole. Either approach involves clinging and craving, which lead to further suffering and stress. On the other hand, if one denies any kind of self, saying that the cosmos is totally "other," then one is assuming that there is nothing with any long-term existence whose happiness deserves anything more than quick, short-term attempts at finding pleasure. The imperative in this case would be to pursue immediate pleasure with as little effort as possible, thus aborting any sustained effort to bring about an end to suffering.

These problems explain why the Buddha regarded questions of existence and non-existence, self and no-self, as unskillful, inappropriate ways of attending to experience.

Stress and its cessation, on the other hand, are categories that avoid these problems. To begin with, they are immediately present and apparent. Even babies recognize stress and pain, well before they have any concept of "self" or "being." If one pays close attention to one's actual experience, there is no question about whether or not stress and its cessation are present. Finally, because these categories don't require fashioning notions of "self" or "other"—or "no-self" or "no-other"—on top of one's immediate awareness [§228-230], they allow one to reach the mode of "entry into emptiness" on the verge of non-fashioning, in which, as we mentioned in III/H, the mind simply notes, "There is this...." Thus they are ideal categories for analyzing experience in a way that (1) reduces the confusion that causes people to act in unskillful ways and (2) brings the mind to a point where it can disengage and transcend all suffering and stress by ending the mental fabrication that provides input into the causal web.

As for the imperatives implicit in the four categories of the noble truths, they are very different from the imperatives implicit in the notion that there is a self or that

there isn't. Stress, the first category, should be comprehended. In practice, this means admitting its presence, recognizing it as a problem, and then observing it with patient mindfulness to understand its true nature. One comes to realize that the problem is not with the stress and discomfort of external conditions, but with the stress and discomfort in the mind. One also sees how stress is part of a causal process, and that it is always accompanied by craving, its point of origination.

The second category—craving, the origination of stress—should be abandoned. Here we must note that the word “craving” covers not all desire, but only the desire leading to further becoming. The desire to escape from that becoming, as we have noted [II/D], is part of the path. Without such a desire, no one would have the motivation to follow the path or reach Unbinding. When Unbinding is reached, though, even this desire is abandoned, just as a desire to walk to a park is abandoned on arriving there [§67].

The third category, the cessation of stress, should be realized. The definition of this truth as the abandoning of craving means that it denotes the successful performance of the duty appropriate to the second noble truth. This introduces a double tier into the practice, in that one must not only abandon craving but also realize what is happening and what is uncovered in the process of that abandoning. This, in turn, accounts for two of the major themes covered so far in this book: the switch from “object” (craving) to “approach” (abandoning) as the focal point in one's meditation as one moves from the first to the second stage in frames-of-reference meditation [II/B]; and the need for sensitivity to one's present input into the causal network in order to nurture the mind's skillful mastery of this/that conditionality [I/A]. The feedback loop created by this combination of abandoning and knowing is what eventually short-circuits the process of this/that conditionality, cutting dependent co-arising at the links of craving and ignorance, and leading on to the state of non-fashioning that forms the threshold to the Deathless.

The fourth category, the way to the cessation of stress, is defined as the noble eightfold path, which we have already discussed in detail [II/H]. This truth must be developed, which involves two processes: nurturing the conditions for clear knowing; and abstaining from acts of body, speech, and mind that involve craving and would obstruct knowledge. These two processes correspond to the two layers we have just noted in the duties associated with the cessation of stress: realizing and abandoning. This correspondence shows the intimate relation between the third and fourth noble truths, and explains the Buddha's insistence that the noble eightfold path is the only way to the goal.

Taken together, the four categories of the noble truths, along with their imperatives, follow a basic problem-solving approach: one solves the problem of stress by following a path of practice that directly attacks the cause of the problem. The noble eightfold path develops the qualities of mind needed to see that all the possible objects of craving—the five aggregates—are stressful, inconstant, and not-self. As a result, one grows dispassionate toward them. With nothing left to focus on, craving disbands. When one experiences the “remainderless fading & cessation, renunciation, relinquishment, release, & letting go of that very craving” [§210], the problem is solved.

Although the texts list four separate duties appropriate to each of the truths, in actual practice these duties are four aspects of a single process. When stress is

comprehended, the second noble truth—craving—has no object to latch onto and so can be abandoned. The full realization of what is happening in the process of that abandoning constitutes the realization of the third noble truth, the cessation of stress. Both the abandoning and the realization are accomplished by developing the path, which destroys any trace of ignorance concerning the four noble truths at the same time that it abandons craving. This is how the practice cuts the chain of dependent co-arising simultaneously at its two most crucial factors [§210-211], thus unraveling the causal chain and opening the way for an experience of the Unfabricated.

Passage §195 lists three steps in this process, which take the form of three levels of knowledge concerning each of the four truths: recognizing the truth for what it is, recognizing the duty appropriate to the truth, and realizing that the duty has been completed. These levels of knowledge correspond to the three stages in right view that we mentioned in the preceding section. The first level corresponds to the stage of seeing events in and of themselves for what they actually are. The relationship between the second level of knowledge—realizing the duty appropriate to the truth—and the second stage of right view—viewing things as part of a causal chain—is somewhat less obvious, but more revealing once it is understood. The word “duty” makes the point that, in order to understand the process of origination and passing away, one must become involved in the process in an active way. This understanding does not come from a passive state of simply watching things arise and disappear. Instead, one must participate in the process, becoming sensitive to pre-existing causal conditions and the impact of one’s present activity on those conditions, if one wants truly to understand them. The only way to know a causal relationship is to tamper with it and see what happens as a result. The more precise and skillful one’s tampering, and the more properly attuned one’s powers of observation, the more precise the knowledge that can be gained.

This active participation corresponds to the second stage of frames of reference meditation [II/B] and the process of gaining mastery in the practice of concentration [III/E]. Ultimately, it comes down to the issues of acquiring skillfulness and understanding the connection between skillfulness and this/that conditionality. The meditator can gain escape from the confines of the causal process, not by simply watching it, but by developing the sensitivity to causal factors that comes from learning how to explore and manipulate them with skill.

The third level of knowledge—that the duty appropriate to the truth has been completed—corresponds to the mode of “entry into emptiness” on the verge of non-fashioning, when one realizes that nothing more needs to be contributed to the present moment. In fact, nothing more *can* be contributed to the present moment. As noted in the preceding section, this is the point where right view transcends itself. In terms of the four noble truths, this is where simple distinctions among the four truths begin to break down. As a modern teacher has put it, the meditator sees that all four truths are ultimately identical. After having used jhana and discernment, which form the heart of the path, to gain understanding of pain and to abandon clinging and craving, one comes to see that even jhana and discernment are composed of the same aggregates as stress and pain [§173], and that one’s attitude toward them involves subtle levels of clinging and craving as well.

Thus the path is simply a refined version of the first three noble truths, in which one has taken suffering, craving, and ignorance, and turned them into tools for

pleasure, detachment, and insight. Without these tools, one could not have begun the process of release. Were it not for one's attachment to jhana and discernment, one could not have liberated oneself from the more obvious levels of stress; one could not have developed the sensitivity enabling one to appreciate the value of cessation and release when they finally come. Now, however, that these tools have performed their functions, they become the last remaining obstacle to full release. The approach to the problem of stress has now become, in and of itself, the only problem left. As the four truths become one in this way, their respective duties reach the point where any further activity would mean that they would cancel one another out. This is where the mind attains the state of non-fashioning, as there is nothing more it can do or know in terms of any of these duties. This lack of input into the present moment forms a breach in this/that conditionality, opening the way beyond the four truths and on to the Unfabricated.

This coalescing of the truths coincides with a movement noted earlier [II/H], in which jhana and discernment become one and the same thing. This union of jhana and discernment solves the riddle of how one can come to know the end of the intention that keeps the round of rebirth in motion. As the path nears its end, the intentional activity underlying jhana becomes the sole remaining element of intention in the mind; while the activity of discernment, as appropriate attention aimed at understanding jhana, becomes the sole function of knowledge. As they reach culmination and coalesce, the attention focused on the intention and the intention behind the act of attention short-circuit one another. All that can follow on this point is the state of non-fashioning, in which all present input into the cycle of rebirth ends, and all experience of the cycle falls away. As we explained in the Introduction, the experience of this falling away at Awakening confirms not only the Buddha's teachings on the present function of kammic input in this/that conditionality, but also on the functioning of kamma in the round of rebirth in the larger dimensions of time.

The wheel, the traditional symbol of the Dhamma, expresses these points in a visual form. The Buddha states [§195] that when he gained full knowledge of all four truths on all three levels—recognizing the truth, recognizing the duty appropriate to it, and realizing that he had fully completed that duty—he knew that he had attained full Awakening. He elaborates on his assertion by setting out a table of two sets of variables—the four noble truths and the three levels of knowledge appropriate to each—listing all twelve permutations of the two sets. This sort of table, in Indian legal and philosophical traditions, is called a wheel. This is why the discourse in which he makes this statement is called “Setting the Wheel of Dhamma in Motion,” and why the wheel used as a symbol of the Dhamma has twelve spokes, uniting at the hub, symbolizing the twelve permutations that merge into a singularity—knowledge and vision of things as they have come to be—at the still point of non-fashioning in the midst of the cycle of kamma.

§ 188. Once the Blessed One was staying at Kosambi in the siṃsapā forest. Then, picking up a few siṃsapā leaves with his hand, he asked the monks, ‘What do you think, monks? Which are more numerous, the few siṃsapā leaves in my hand or those overhead in the siṃsapā forest?’

‘The leaves in the hand of the Blessed One are few in number, lord. Those



overhead in the simsapā forest are more numerous.’

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

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

‘Therefore your duty is the contemplation, “This is stress...This is the origination of stress...This is the cessation of stress...This is the path of practice leading to the cessation of stress.”’

SN 56:31

§ 189. ‘Stress should be known. The cause by which stress comes into play should be known. The diversity in stress should be known. The result of stress should be known. The cessation of stress should be known. The path of practice for the cessation of stress should be known.’ Thus it was said. And in reference to what was it said?

Birth is stress, aging is stress, death is stress; sorrow, lamentation, pain, distress, & despair are stress; association with the unbeloved is stress; separation from the loved is stress; not getting what is wanted is stress. In short, the five clinging-aggregates are stress.

And what is the cause by which stress comes into play? Craving is the cause by which stress comes into play.

And what is the diversity in stress? There is major stress & minor, slowly fading & quickly fading. This is called the diversity in stress.

And what is the result of stress? There are some cases in which a person overcome with pain, his mind exhausted, grieves, mourns, laments, beats his breast, & becomes bewildered. Or one overcome with pain, his mind exhausted, comes to search outside, ‘Who knows a way or two to stop this pain?’ I tell you, monks, that stress results either in bewilderment or in search.

And what is the cessation of stress? From the cessation of craving is the cessation of stress; and just this noble eightfold path is the path of practice leading to the cessation of stress: right view, right resolve, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness, right concentration.

Now when a disciple of the noble ones discerns stress in this way, the cause by which stress comes into play in this way, the diversity of stress in this way, the result of stress in this way, the cessation of stress in this way, & the path of practice leading to the cessation of stress in this way, then he discerns this penetrative holy life as the cessation of stress.

‘Stress should be known. The cause by which stress comes into play...The diversity in stress...The result of stress...The cessation of stress...The path of practice for the cessation of stress should be known.’ Thus it was said, and in reference to this was it said.

AN 6:63

§ 190. These four things are real, not unreal, not other than what they seem. Which four?

‘This is stress,’ is real, not unreal, not other than what it seems. ‘This is the origination of stress.... This is the cessation of stress.... This is the path of practice leading to the cessation of stress,’ is real, not unreal, not other than what it seems.

These are the four things that are real, not unreal, not other than what they seem.

Therefore your duty is the contemplation, ‘This is stress.... This is the origination of stress.... This is the cessation of stress.... This is the path of practice leading to the cessation of stress.’

SN 56:20

§ 191. Suppose that a man were to cut down all the grass, sticks, branches, & leaves in India and to gather them into a heap. Having gathered them into a heap, he would make stakes from them, and having made stakes he would impale all the large animals in the sea on large stakes, all the medium-sized animals in the sea on medium-sized stakes, & all the minute animals in the sea on minute stakes. Before he had come to the end of all the sizable animals in the sea, he would have used up all the grass, sticks, branches, & leaves here in India. It would not be feasible for him to impale on stakes the minute animals in the sea, which are even more numerous (than the sizable ones). Why is that? Because of the minuteness of their bodies. So great is the plane of deprivation (apāya, the lower realms of being).

Freed from this great realm of deprivation is the individual who is consummate in his views. He discerns, as it has come to be, that ‘This is stress.... This is the origination of stress.... This is the cessation of stress.... This is the path of practice leading to the cessation of stress.’

SN 56:36

§ 192. ‘Monks, there is a between-the-worlds space of impenetrable darkness, and in the murk of that darkness not even the sun & moon, so mighty, so powerful, can spread their light.’

When this was said, a certain monk addressed the Blessed One: ‘What a great darkness, lord! What a very great darkness! Is there another darkness greater & more fearsome than that?’

‘Yes, there is....’

‘What darkness...?’

‘Any contemplatives or brahmans who do not discern, as it has come to be, that “This is stress.... This is the origination of stress.... This is the cessation of stress.... This is the path of practice leading to the cessation of stress,” cherish the fabrications leading to birth, cherish the fabrications leading to aging... death... sorrow, lamentation, pain, distress, & despair. Cherishing the fabrications leading to birth... aging... death...sorrow, lamentation, pain, distress, & despair, they fashion fabrications leading to birth... aging... death... sorrow, lamentation, pain, distress, & despair, and so they fall into the darkness of birth... aging... death... sorrow, lamentation, pain, distress & despair. They are not released from birth... aging... death... sorrows, lamentations, pains, distresses, & despairs. They are not released, I tell you, from stress.

However, those contemplatives or brahmans who discern, as it has come to be, that “This is stress.... This is the origination of stress.... This is the cessation of stress.... This is the path of practice leading to the cessation of stress,” do not cherish the fabrications leading to birth... aging... death. They do not cherish the fabrications leading to sorrow, lamentation, pain, distress, & despair. They do not fashion fabrications leading to birth... aging... death... sorrow, lamentation, pain, distress, & despair, and so do not fall into the darkness of birth... aging... death... sorrow, lamentation, pain, distress, & despair. They are released from birth... aging... death... sorrows, lamentations, pains, distresses, & despairs. They are released, I tell you, from stress.

Therefore your duty is the contemplation, ‘This is stress.... This is the origination of stress.... This is the cessation of stress.... This is the path of practice leading to the cessation of stress.’

SN 56:46

§ 193. Suppose that people would say to a man whose life span was 100 years: ‘Look here, fellow. They will stab you at dawn with 100 spears, at noon with 100 spears, & again at evening with 100 spears. You, thus stabbed every day with 300 spears, will live to be 100, and at the end of 100 years you will realize the four noble truths that you have never realized before.’

If the man desired his own true benefit, he would do well to take them up on their offer. Why is that? From an inconceivable beginning comes transmigration. A beginning point is not evident for the (pain of) blows from spears, swords, & axes. Even if this (offer) were to occur, I would not say that the realization of the four noble truths would be accompanied by pain & distress. Instead, I would say that the realization of the four noble truths would be accompanied by pleasure & joy.

SN 56:35

§ 194. Ven. Gavampati: Face to face with the Blessed One did I hear this, face to face did I learn it: whoever sees stress also sees the origination of stress, the cessation of stress, & the path of practice leading to the cessation of stress.

Whoever sees the origination of stress also sees stress, the cessation of stress, & the path of practice leading to the cessation of stress.

Whoever sees the cessation of stress also sees stress, the origination of stress, & the path of practice leading to the cessation of stress.

Whoever sees the path of practice leading to the cessation of stress also sees stress, the origination of stress, & the cessation of stress.

SN 56:20

**§ 195. Awakening.** Vision arose, clear knowing arose, discernment arose, knowledge arose, illumination arose within me with regard to things never heard before: ‘This is the noble truth of stress.... This noble truth of stress is to be comprehended.... This noble truth of stress has been comprehended.... This is the noble truth of the origination of stress.... This noble truth of the origination of stress is to be abandoned.... This noble truth of the origination of stress has been abandoned.... This is the noble truth of the cessation of stress.... This noble truth of the cessation of stress is to be realized.... This noble truth of the cessation of stress has been realized.... This is the noble truth of the path of practice leading to the cessation of stress.... This noble truth of the path of practice leading to the cessation of stress is to be developed.... This noble truth of the path of practice leading to the cessation of stress has been developed.’

And, monks, as long as this knowledge & vision of mine—with its three rounds & twelve permutations concerning these four noble truths as they have come to be—was not pure, I did not claim to have directly awakened to the unexcelled right self-awakening.... But as soon as this knowledge & vision of mine—with its three rounds & twelve permutations concerning these four noble truths as they have come to be—was truly pure, only then did I claim to have directly awakened to the unexcelled right self-awakening.... The knowledge & vision arose in me: ‘Unprovoked is my release. This is the last birth. There is now no further becoming.’

SN 56:11

## ii. The First Truth

The first noble truth is that of *dukkha*, translated here as stress and suffering. The term has a wide range of other meanings as well, including distress, dis-ease, and—what is probably its most elemental meaning—pain. People learn their most basic strategies for dealing with pain in very early childhood, when their powers of observation are undeveloped and they cannot learn from the verbal lessons of others. Being in such a stage, they are in a poor position to understand pain, and it often leaves them bewildered. This means that they develop unskillful ways of handling it. Even when their minds later develop verbal and higher logical skills, many of the unskillful strategies and attitudes toward pain that they developed in early childhood persist on a subconscious level.

One of the most important insights leading up to the Buddha’s Awakening was his realization that the act of comprehending pain lay at the essence of the spiritual quest. In trying to comprehend pain—instead of simply trying to get rid of it in line with one’s habitual tendencies—one learns many valuable lessons. To begin with, one can end any sense of bewilderment in the face of pain. In seeing pain for what

it truly is, one can treat it more effectively and skillfully, thus weakening the process by which pain and ignorance feed on each other. At the same time, as one learns to resist one's habitual reactions to pain, one begins to delve into the non-verbal, subconscious levels of the mind, bringing to light many ill-formed and hidden processes of which one was previously unaware. In this sense, pain is like a watering hole where all the animals in the forest—all the mind's subconscious tendencies—will eventually come to drink. Just as a naturalist who wants to make a survey of the wildlife in a particular area can simply station himself near a watering hole to wait for the animals that will eventually have to come there for water; in the same way, a meditator who wants to understand the mind can simply keep watch right at pain in order to see what subconscious reactions will appear. Thus the act of trying to comprehend pain leads not only to an improved understanding of pain itself, but also to an increased awareness of the most basic processes at work in the mind. As one sees how any lack of skill in these processes, and in particular in one's reactions to pain, leads only to more pain, one's mind opens to the possibility that more skillful reactions will not only alleviate specific pains but also lead away from pain altogether. Passage §238 shows how conviction in this possibility—which is nothing other than the principle of kamma—leads from the experience of stress and pain into a causal chain that cuts the bewilderment leading to further pain and ends in total release.

Although pain is the best vantage point for observing the processes of the mind, it is also the most difficult, simply because it is so unpleasant and hard to bear. This is why discernment needs the faculties of conviction, persistence, mindfulness, and concentration to give it the detached assurance and steady focus needed to stick with pain in and of itself, in the phenomenological mode, and not veer off into the usual narratives, abstract theories, and other unskillful defenses the mind devises against the pain. Only through the development of the five faculties into right concentration does discernment have the basis of pleasure and equanimity needed to probe into pain without feeling threatened by it, thus enabling it to arrive at an unbiased understanding of its true nature.

Passage §198 shows the direction this understanding should take, ultimately analyzing the wide variety of stress and pain down to five categories: the five clinging-aggregates. Many of the remaining passages in this section give more detailed analysis of these categories. Taken together, these passages provide a useful conceptual framework for taking on the duty of trying to comprehend the issues surrounding stress, suffering, and pain. Here we will first discuss the aggregates, and then their connection with clinging and sustenance.

The five aggregates are form, feeling, perception, fabrications, and consciousness. These five categories cover the entire range of experience that can be adequately described [§231]. "Form" covers all physical phenomena, both within one's own body and without. The remaining four categories cover all mental events. "Feeling" covers feelings of pleasure, pain, and neither-pleasure-nor-pain, regardless of whether they are based on physical or mental sensations. "Perception" denotes the mental act of applying labels or names to physical or mental events. "Fabrications" here covers the verbal and mental processes of concocting thoughts, questions, urges, or intentions in the mind. "Consciousness" covers the act of consciousness at any of the six senses: eyes, ears, nose, tongue, body, and intellect. A few texts [§§235-36] discuss a separate type of consciousness that does not

partake of any of the six senses or their objects. This type of consciousness is said to lie beyond the range of describable experience and so is not included under the five aggregates. In fact, it is equivalent to the Unfabricated and forms the goal at the end of the path.

The five aggregates, on their own, do not constitute suffering or stress. They are stressful only when functioning as objects of clinging/sustenance. This hybrid word—clinging/sustenance—is a translation of the Pali term *upadana*. *Upadana* has a hybrid meaning because it is used to cover two sides of a physical process metaphorically applied to the mind: the act of clinging whereby a fire takes sustenance from a piece of fuel, together with the sustenance offered by the fuel. On the level of the mind, *upadana* denotes both the act of clinging and the object clung to, which together give sustenance to the process whereby mental pain arises. In terms of this metaphor, pain is hot and unstable like fire, whereas the mental act of clinging to any of the five aggregates is what keeps the fire burning. These images are part of a larger complex of imagery contained in the Pali discourses, likening the processes of pain and its cessation to the physical processes of fire and its extinguishing. An understanding of this imagery helps to give a graphic, intuitive sense for the ways in which the Pali texts analyze the problem of stress and pain.

Many of the texts explicitly liken pain to a fever or to a burning, unstable fire [S221; Thig 8:1]. Others deal more in indirect imagery, in which the terminology for explaining fire is applied to the mind. The word *upadana* is one instance of this type of indirect imagery. Others include *khandha*, or aggregate, which also means the trunk of a tree; and *nibbana*, the most common name for the Buddhist goal, which also means the extinguishing of a fire. According to the physics of the Buddha's time, fire was "seized" when it was ignited. Burning, it was in a state of unstable agitation, entrapped by the fuel to which it clung for sustenance. On going out, it was "freed." Letting go of its sustenance, it grew cool, calm, and unbound. According to the commentaries, "unbound" is what *nibbana* literally means. Thus the study of pain is like the study of a raging fire: one tries to comprehend it in order to find the source of the burning, bondage, and entrapment so as to put the fire out and gain freedom from it for good.

There are four types of clinging to the aggregates that give sustenance to the processes of suffering and stress: desire and passion for

- the *sensuality* found in the aggregates,
- *views* regarding the aggregates,
- *habits and practices* involving the aggregates, and
- *theories about the self* involving the aggregates.

MN 44 [MFU, pp. 44-45] makes the point that the act of clinging is neither the same as the aggregates nor entirely separate from them. If clinging were identical with the aggregates, there would be no way to experience the aggregates without clinging, and thus there would be no way for an awakened person to return to the conditioned level of experience after Awakening. If clinging and the aggregates were totally separate, clinging could exist independently of the aggregates and would count as a separate part of describable experience. If this were so, the transcending of the aggregates at the moment of Awakening would not constitute the transcending of the fabricated realm, and thus the task of comprehending suffering would not yet be finished. Thus the nature of the actual interdependence between

clinging and the aggregates means that a full comprehension of the aggregates is enough to bring about Awakening, at the same time that it leaves an opening for the continued experience of the fabricated realm after Awakening has occurred.

What this interdependence means in practical terms is that one must examine the aggregates in such a way as to realize fully that they are not worth clinging to. One does this by focusing on two of their common characteristics: their instability and their complexity. In seeing their inherent instability, one realizes that they are inconstant. Because they are inconstant, any attempt to base happiness on them is inherently stressful, just as there is inherent stress in trying to sit comfortably on a wobbling chair. Because the aggregates offer no basis for true happiness, they lie beyond one's control and thus do not deserve to be viewed as "me" or "mine."

Focusing further on the aggregates, one perceives the complexity of their interrelationships. Passage §201 indicates some of this complexity in its discussion of the relationship among feeling, perception, and sensory consciousness. Although these aggregates function in different ways, in actual experience they can occur only as parts of an interrelated cluster of mental events surrounding a common object. In fact, they are so closely related to one another that ordinary awareness assumes them to be a single whole. One of the tasks of discernment in comprehending pain is to see these aggregates as interrelated events. Because their interrelationships follow complex, invariable laws, one's comprehension of their true behavior brings with it the oppressive realization—oppressive as long as one is still regarding the causal network in part or in whole in terms of "self" or "other"—that they ultimately do not lie under one's control. At best, one can explore and manipulate them to the extent of understanding them to gain freedom from them, but in and of themselves they do not offer any stable kind of happiness.

Observing and understanding the complex interrelationships among feeling, perception, and consciousness leads one into the area of dependent co-arising, which forms the essence of the second truth. As one's understanding grows more sensitive, it drives home the point that all clinging to these interrelated phenomena should be abandoned. This understanding—that phenomena taking part in such relationships are unworthy of clinging—forms the essence of the path. The full pursuit of this path, in which one abandons all passion and desire for the five aggregates, brings about knowledge of the cessation of stress. All of this bears out Ven. Gavampati's comment [§194] that knowledge of the first noble truth inherently involves knowledge of the remaining three.

§ 196. And what is the noble truth of stress? The six internal sense media, should be the reply. Which six? The medium of the eye... the ear... the nose... the tongue... the body... the intellect. This is called the noble truth of stress.

SN 56:14

§ 197. The All is aflame. Which All is aflame? The eye is aflame. Forms are aflame. Eye-consciousness is aflame. Eye-contact is aflame. And anything that arises in dependence on eye-contact, experienced as pleasure, pain, or neither-pleasure-nor-pain, that too is aflame. Aflame with what? Aflame with the fire of passion, the fire of aversion, the fire of delusion. Aflame, I tell you, with birth, aging, &

death, with sorrows, lamentations, pains, distresses, & despairs.

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

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

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

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

The intellect is aflame. Ideas are aflame. Intellect-consciousness is aflame.

Intellect-contact is aflame. And anything that arises in dependence on intellect-contact, experienced as pleasure, pain, or neither-pleasure-nor-pain, that too is aflame. Aflame with what? Aflame with the fire of passion, the fire of aversion, the fire of delusion. Aflame, I tell you, with birth, aging, & death, with sorrows, lamentations, pains, distresses, & despairs.

SN 35:28

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

Now what is birth? Whatever birth, taking birth, descent, coming- to-be, coming-forth, appearance of aggregates, & acquisition of (sense) media of the various beings in this or that group of beings, that is called birth.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



association with the unbeloved.

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

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

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

This is called the noble truth of stress.

DN 22

§ 199. The Buddha: These are the five clinging-aggregates: the form clinging-aggregate, the feeling clinging-aggregate, the perception clinging-aggregate, the fabrication clinging-aggregate, the consciousness clinging-aggregate.... These five clinging-aggregates are rooted in desire....

A certain monk: Is it the case that clinging and the five clinging-aggregates are the same thing, or are they separate?

The Buddha: Clinging is neither the same thing as the five clinging-aggregates, nor are they separate. Whatever desire & passion there is with regard to the five clinging-aggregates, that is the clinging there....

The monk: To what extent does the term 'aggregates' apply to the aggregates?

The Buddha: Any form whatsoever—past, present, or future; internal or external; gross or subtle; inferior or superior; near or far—that is the form aggregate. Any feeling whatsoever—past, present, or future... near or far—that is the feeling aggregate. Any perception whatsoever—past, present, or future... near or far—that is the perception aggregate. Any fabrications whatsoever—past, present, or future... near or far—those are the fabrication aggregate. Any consciousness whatsoever—past, present, or future; internal or external; gross or subtle; inferior or superior; near or far—that is the consciousness aggregate.

The monk: What is the cause, what is the condition, for the discernibility [manifesting] of the form aggregate... feeling aggregate... perception aggregate... fabrication aggregate... consciousness aggregate?

The Buddha: The four great existents [the properties of earth, liquid, fire, & wind] are the cause & condition for the discernibility of the form aggregate. Contact is the cause & condition for the discernibility of the feeling... perception... fabrication aggregate. Name-&-form is the cause & condition for the discernibility of the consciousness aggregate.

MN 109

§ 200. And why do you call it 'form' [*rūpa*]? Because it is afflicted [*ruppati*], thus it is called 'form.' Afflicted with what? With cold & heat & hunger & thirst, with the touch of flies, mosquitoes, wind, sun, & reptiles. Because it is afflicted, it is called 'form.'

And why do you call it 'feeling'? Because it feels, thus it is called 'feeling.' What does it feel? It feels pleasure, it feels pain, it feels neither-pleasure-nor-pain. Because it feels, it is called 'feeling.'

And why do you call it perception? Because it perceives, thus it is called 'perception.' What does it perceive? It perceives blue, it perceives yellow, it perceives red, it perceives white. Because it perceives, it is called 'perception.'

And why do you call them 'fabrications'? Because they fabricate fabricated things, thus they are called 'fabrications.' What do they fabricate as a fabricated thing? For the sake of form-ness, they fabricate form as a fabricated thing. For the sake of feeling-ness, they fabricate feeling as a fabricated thing. For the sake of perception-hood.... For the sake of fabrication-hood.... For the sake of consciousness-hood, they fabricate consciousness as a fabricated thing. Because they fabricate fabricated things, they are called 'fabrications.'

And why do you call it 'consciousness'? Because it cognizes, thus it is called 'consciousness.' What does it cognize? It cognizes what is sour, bitter, pungent, sweet, alkaline, non-alkaline, salty, & unsalty. Because it cognizes, it is called 'consciousness.'

SN 22:79

§ 201. Ven. Mahā Koṭṭhita: Feeling, perception, & consciousness: Are these qualities conjoined or disjoined? And is it possible, having divided them, to describe their separateness?

Ven. Sāriputta: Feeling, perception, & consciousness are conjoined, not disjoined, and it is impossible, having divided them, to describe their separateness. What one feels, one perceives; and what one perceives, one cognizes.

MN 43

§ 202. **Form.** Ven. Sāriputta: And what, friends, is the form clinging-aggregate? The four great existents and the form derived from them. And what are the four great existents? They are the earth property, the liquid property, the fire property, & the wind property.

And what is the earth property? The earth property can be either internal or external. What is the internal earth property? Whatever internal, within oneself,

is hard, solid, & sustained [by craving]: head hairs, body hairs, nails, teeth, skin, flesh, tendons, bones, bone marrow, kidneys, heart, liver, pleura, spleen, lungs, large intestines, small intestines, contents of the stomach, feces, or whatever else internal, within oneself, is hard, solid, & sustained: this is called the internal earth property. Now both the internal earth property and the external earth property are simply earth property. And that should be seen with right discernment as it has come to be: 'This is not mine, this is not me, this is not my self.' When one sees it thus with right discernment as it has come to be, one becomes disenchanted with the earth property and makes the earth property fade from the mind....

And what is the liquid property? The liquid property may be either internal or external. What is the internal liquid property? Whatever internal, belonging to oneself, is liquid, watery, & sustained: bile, phlegm, pus, blood, sweat, fat, tears, skin-oil, saliva, mucus, fluid in the joints, urine, or whatever else internal, within oneself, is liquid, watery, & sustained: this is called the internal liquid property. Now both the internal liquid property and the external liquid property are simply liquid property. And that should be seen with right discernment as it has come to be: 'This is not mine, this is not me, this is not my self.' When one sees it thus with right discernment as it has come to be, one becomes disenchanted with the liquid property and makes the liquid property fade from the mind....

And what is the fire property? The fire property may be either internal or external. What is the internal fire property? Whatever internal, belonging to oneself, is fire, fiery, & sustained: that by which (the body) is warmed, aged, & consumed with fever; and that by which what is eaten, drunk, chewed, & savored gets properly digested, or whatever else internal, within oneself, is fire, fiery, & sustained: this is called the internal fire property. Now both the internal fire property and the external fire property are simply fire property. And that should be seen with right discernment as it has come to be: 'This is not mine, this is not me, this is not my self.' When one sees it thus with right discernment as it has come to be, one becomes disenchanted with the fire property and makes the fire property fade from the mind....

And what is the wind property? The wind property may be either internal or external. What is the internal wind property? Whatever internal, belonging to oneself, is wind, windy, & sustained: up-going winds, down-going winds, winds in the stomach, winds in the intestines, winds that course through the body, in-&-out breathing, or whatever else internal, within oneself, is wind, windy, & sustained: this is called the internal wind property. Now both the internal wind property and the external wind property are simply wind property. And that should be seen with right discernment as it has come to be: 'This is not mine, this is not me, this is not my self.' When one sees it thus with right discernment as it has come to be, one becomes disenchanted with the wind property and makes the wind property fade from the mind....

MN 28

§ 203. Ven. Sāriputta: There comes a time, my friends, when the external liquid property is provoked, and at that moment the external earth property vanishes [e.g., in a flood]. So when even in the external earth property—so vast—

inconstancy will be discerned, destructibility will be discerned, a tendency to decay will be discerned, changeability will be discerned, then what of this short-lasting body, sustained by clinging, is 'I' or 'mine' or 'what I am'? It has here only a 'no.'

There comes a time when the external liquid property is provoked and it carries away village, town & city, countryside & rural area. There comes a time when the waters of the ocean recede one hundred leagues, two hundred... seven hundred leagues. There comes a time when the water in the ocean stands only seven palm trees deep, six... one palm tree deep. There comes a time when the water in the ocean stands only seven fathoms deep, six fathoms... one fathom deep. There comes a time when the water in the ocean stands only half a fathom deep, hip deep, knee deep, ankle deep. There comes a time when the water in the ocean is not enough to wet even the joint of a finger. So when even in the external liquid property—so vast—inconstancy will be discerned.... then what of this short-lasting body, sustained by clinging, is 'I' or 'mine' or 'what I am'? It has here only a 'no'....

There comes a time when the external fire property is provoked and consumes village, town & city, countryside & rural area, and then, coming to the edge of a green district, the edge of a road, the edge of a rocky district, to the water's edge, or to a lush, well-watered area, it goes out from lack of sustenance. There comes a time when people try to make [lit. 'search for'] fire even with a wing bone & tendon parings. So when even in the external fire property—so vast—inconstancy will be discerned.... then what of this short-lasting body, sustained by clinging, is 'I' or 'mine' or 'what I am'? It has here only a 'no'....

There comes a time when the external wind property is provoked, and carries off village, town & city, countryside & rural area. There comes a time when, in the last month of the hot season, they make ('search for') wind with a fan or a bellows, and even the grasses hanging in the drip-fringe of the thatch do not stir. So when even in the external wind property—so vast—inconstancy will be discerned, destructibility will be discerned, a tendency to decay will be discerned, changeability will be discerned, then what of this short-lasting body, sustained by clinging, is 'I' or 'mine' or 'what I am'? It has here only a 'no'....

MN 28

**§ 204. Feeling.** Sister Dhammadinnā: There are three kinds of feeling: pleasant feeling, painful feeling, & neither-pleasant-nor-painful feeling.... Whatever is experienced physically or mentally as pleasant & gratifying is pleasant feeling. Whatever is experienced physically or mentally as painful & hurting is painful feeling. Whatever is experienced physically or mentally as neither gratifying nor hurting is neither-pleasant-nor-painful feeling.... Pleasant feeling is pleasant in remaining and painful in changing. Painful feeling is painful in remaining and pleasant in changing. Neither-pleasant-nor-painful feeling is pleasant when conjoined with knowledge and painful when devoid of knowledge.

MN 44

**§ 205. Fabrications.** And what are fabrications? There are these six classes of

intention: intention aimed at sights, sounds, smells, tastes, tactile sensations, & ideas. These are called fabrications.

SN 22:56

§ 206. Three kinds of fabrications: meritorious fabrications [ripening in pleasure], demeritorious fabrications [ripening in pain], & imperturbable fabrications [the formless states of jhāna].

DN 33

**§ 207. Consciousness.** Consciousness is classified simply by the condition in dependence on which it arises.

When consciousness arises in dependence on eye & forms, it is classified simply as eye-consciousness.

When consciousness arises in dependence on ear & sounds, it is classified simply as ear-consciousness.

When consciousness arises in dependence on nose & smells, it is classified simply as nose-consciousness.

When consciousness arises in dependence on tongue & tastes, it is classified simply as tongue-consciousness.

When consciousness arises in dependence on body & tactile sensations, it is classified simply as body-consciousness.

When consciousness arises in dependence on intellect & ideas, it is classified simply as intellect-consciousness.

Just as fire is classified simply by the condition in dependence on which it burns—a fire burning in dependence on logs is classified simply as a log fire... a fire burning in dependence on rubbish is classified simply as a rubbish fire; in the same way, consciousness is classified simply by the condition in dependence on which it arises.

MN 38

### iii. The Second & Third Truths

As noted under III/H/i, the third noble truth is identical with the successful performance of the duty appropriate to the second. Thus these two truths are best discussed together.

Passage §210 gives the short definition of the second noble truth:

Now what is the noble truth of the origination of stress? The craving that makes for further becoming—accompanied by passion & delight, relishing now here & now there—i.e., craving for sensuality, craving for becoming, craving for non-becoming.

Craving for sensuality, here, means the desire for sensual objects. Craving for becoming means the desire for the formation of states or realms of being that are not

currently happening, while craving for non-becoming means the desire for the destruction or halting of any that are. “Passion and delight,” here, is apparently a synonym for the “desire and passion” for the five aggregates that constitutes clinging/sustenance [III/H/ii].

Passage §210 also gives the short definition of the third noble truth:

And what is the noble truth of the cessation of stress? The remainderless fading & cessation, renunciation, relinquishment, release, & letting go of that very craving.

The extended passages that make up the remainder of §210 make the point that craving must be brought to cessation right at the objects where it arises, i.e., by realizing that those objects are unworthy of craving.

The longer definitions of the second and third noble truths center on dependent co-arising, a detailed map of how craving arises and how it can be brought to cessation by undercutting its preconditions. This map is the most complex teaching in the Canon. In a famous passage [§231], Ven. Ananda comments on how clear the doctrine of dependent co-arising seems to him, and the Buddha replies:

Don’t say that, Ananda. Don’t say that. Deep is this dependent co-arising, and deep its appearance. It’s because of not understanding & not penetrating this Dhamma that this generation is like a tangled skein, a knotted ball of string, like matted rushes & reeds, and does not go beyond the cycle of the planes of deprivation, woe, & bad destinations.

Nevertheless, although no explanations can be expected to give a full and final understanding of the process of dependent co-arising, they can provide tools that the meditator can use to probe the process in the course of training the mind and come to an understanding for him or herself. The passages in this section help to provide that set of tools.

A few general points about dependent co-arising are important to understand before going into the details. To begin with, dependent co-arising is often presented in the texts as an expansion of the general principle of this/that conditionality [§211], which we have already discussed in the Introduction. Here we will recapitulate some of the essential points. This/that conditionality is expressed in a simple formula:

- “(1) When this is, that is.
- (2) From the arising of this comes the arising of that.
- (3) When this isn’t, that isn’t.
- (4) From the stopping of this comes the stopping of that.”

This formula is non-linear, an interplay of linear and synchronic principles. The linear principle—taking (2) and (4) as a pair—connects events over time; the synchronic principle—(1) and (3)—connects objects and events in the present moment. The two principles intersect, so that any given event is influenced by two sets of conditions, those acting from the past and those acting from the present. Because this is the pattern underlying dependent co-arising, it is a mistake to view dependent co-arising simply as a chain of causes strung out over time. Events in any one category of the list are affected not only by past events in the categories that act as their conditions, but also by the on-going, interacting presence of whole

streams of events in those categories. All categories can be present at once, and even though two particular conditions may be separated by several steps in the list, they can be immediately present to each other. Thus they can create the possibility for unexpected feedback loops in the causal process. *Feeling*, for instance, keeps reappearing at several stages in the process, and *ignorance* can contribute to any causal link at any time. The importance of these points will become clear when we examine how to disengage the causal network so as to realize the third noble truth.

Because new input into the causal stream is possible at every moment, the actual working out of this/that conditionality and dependent co-arising can be remarkably fluid and complex. This point is borne out by the imagery used in the Canon to illustrate these teachings. Although some non-canonical texts depict dependent co-arising as a circle or a wheel of causes—implying something of a mechanical, deterministic process—the Canon never uses that image at all. Instead it likens dependent co-arising to water flowing over land: lakes overflow, filling rivers, which in turn fill the sea [S238]; while the tides of the sea rise, swelling the rivers, which in turn swell the lakes [SN 12:69]. This imagery captures something of the flow of give and take among the factors of the process. A more modern pattern that might be used to illustrate dependent co-arising is the “strange attractor”: an intricate, interwoven pattern that chaos theory uses to describe complex, fluid systems containing at least three feedback loops. As we will see below, the number of feedback loops in dependent co-arising is far more than three.

The fluid complexity of dependent co-arising means that it is inherently unstable, and thus stressful and not-self. Although some non-Theravadin Buddhist texts insist that happiness can be found by abandoning one’s smaller, separate identity and embracing the interconnected identity of all interdependent things, this teaching cannot be found in the Pali Canon. The instability of conditioned processes means that they can never provide a dependable basis for happiness. The only true basis for happiness is the Unfabricated. The Pali discourses are quite clear on the point that the fabricated and Unfabricated realms are radically separate. In MN 1 the Buddha strongly criticizes a group of monks who tried to develop a theory whereby the fabricated was derived out of the Unfabricated or somehow lay within it. Stress, he says, is inherent in the interdependent nature of conditioned phenomena, while the Unfabricated is totally free from stress. Stress could not possibly be produced by absolute freedom from stress. Because the nature of conditioning is such that causes are in turn influenced by their effects, the Unfabricated could not itself function as a cause for anything. The only way the Unfabricated can be experienced is by skillfully using fabricated, conditioned processes (the Wings to Awakening) to unravel the network of fabricated, conditioned processes (dependent co-arising) from within. To do so, one needs to know the individual factors of dependent co-arising and the patterns in which they depend on one another.

These factors come down to the five aggregates. In fact, the entire pattern of dependent co-arising is a map showing how the different aggregates group, disband, and regroup in one another’s presence in a variety of configurations, giving rise to stress and to the cosmos at large [S212]. As we have mentioned earlier, one of the most basic features of the Buddha’s teachings is his confirmation that the knowable cosmos, composed of old kamma [S15], is made up of the same factors that make up the personality [S213]; and that the interaction of the

aggregates, as immediately present to awareness in the here and now, is the same process that underlies the functioning of the knowable cosmos as a whole [§§212-15]. As a result, the descriptions of dependent co-arising slip easily back and forth between two time scales—events in the present moment and events over the vast cycle of time.

It is important to remember, though, that the Buddha discovered this principle by observing events in the immediate present, which is where the individual meditator will have to discover them as well. Thus the practice takes the same approach as phenomenology: exploring the processes of conditioning from the inside as they are immediately experienced in the present moment. This is why the pattern of dependent co-arising lists factors of consciousness—such as ignorance, attention, and intention—as prior conditions for the experience of the physical world, for if we take as our frame of reference the world as it is directly experienced—rather than a world conceived somehow as separate from our experience of it—we have to see the processes of the mind as prior to the objects they process. References in the texts to the larger frame of space and time provide examples to illustrate particularly subtle points in the immediate present and serve as reminders that the pattern of events observed in the present moment has implications that cover the entire cosmos.

Given the fluid, complex nature of the basic causal principle, it should come as no surprise that the Canon contains several variations on the list of basic factors and configurations in dependent co-arising. Like the seven sets in the Wings to Awakening, these different lists offer the meditator a variety of ways to approach the complexities of the causal stream and to gain a handle on mastering them. The most basic list is found in §228 and §231, which give the factors—starting with the stress of aging and death, and then working backwards—as follows:

*Aging and death require birth (i.e., rebirth).* If there were no birth, there would be nothing to set in motion the processes of aging and death. Here and in the following causal links, “birth,” “aging,” and “death” denote not only the arising, decay, and passing away of the body, but also the repeated arising, decay, and passing away of mental states, moment-by-moment in the present. In fact, during the third watch on the night of his Awakening, the Buddha probably focused on present mental states as his primary examples of birth, aging, and death. From them he gained insight into how these processes functioned in the cosmos as a whole.

*Birth depends on becoming.* If there were no coming-into-being of a sensual realm, a realm of form, or a formless realm, there would be no locus for rebirth. Again, these realms refer not only to levels of being on the cosmic scale, but also to levels of mental states. Some mental states are concerned with sensual images, others with forms (such as form jhana), and still others with formless dimensions, such as the formless jhanas. The relationship between birth and becoming can be compared to the process of falling asleep and dreaming. As drowsiness makes the mind lose contact with waking reality, a dream image of another place and time will appear in it. The appearance of this image is called becoming. The act of entering into this image and taking on a role or identity within it—and thus entering the world of the dream and falling asleep—is birth. The commentaries maintain that precisely the same process is what enables rebirth to follow the death of the body. At the same time, the analogy between falling asleep and taking birth explains why release from the cycle of becoming is called Awakening.



*Becoming requires clinging/sustenance.* The image here is of a fire staying in existence by appropriating sustenance in the act of clinging to its fuel. The process of becoming takes its sustenance from the five aggregates, while the act of taking sustenance is to cling to these aggregates in any of four forms of passion and delight mentioned in III/H/ii: sensual intentions, views, habits and practices, or theories about the self. Without these types of clinging, the realms of sensuality, form, and formlessness would not come into being.

*Clinging/sustenance requires craving.* If one did not thirst (the literal meaning of *tanha*, or craving) for sensuality, for becoming, or for non-becoming, then the process would not appropriate fuel.

*Craving requires feeling.* If there were no experience of pleasant, painful, or neither-pleasant-nor-painful feelings, one would not thirst for continuing experience of the pleasant or for cessation of the unpleasant.

*Feeling requires contact.* Without contact there would be no feelings of pleasure, pain, or neither-pleasure-nor-pain.

*Contact requires name-and-form.* “Form” covers all physical phenomena. “Name” here is defined as feeling, perception, contact, attention, and intention. Without these phenomena, there would be nothing to make contact.

*Name-and-form requires consciousness of the six sense fields.* Without this kind of consciousness, the physical birth of the individual composed of the aggregates would abort, while on the level of momentary mental birth there would be nothing to activate an experience of the aggregates.

*Consciousness of the six sense fields requires name-and-form.* Without name-and-form, there would be no object for this type of consciousness.

In §228, Ven. Sariputta points out that the entire process of dependent co-arising relies on the mutual dependency of name-and-form on the one hand, and sensory consciousness on the other. This mutual dependency is actually composed of many feedback loops, which can get quite complex. If either of the two factors is pulled away from the other, the whole edifice falls down. For this reason, as we shall see when we discuss the cessation of stress, this mutual dependency is one of the primary points for focusing attention in disbanding the causal process.

Other lists of the factors in dependent co-arising expand on this basic list. The most common list adds the factors of the six sense fields between contact and name-and-form, and then states that *sensory consciousness requires the three types of fabrication*—bodily, verbal, and mental—while *these fabrications in turn require ignorance* of the four noble truths [§§211, 218]. There is some disagreement over the meaning of the three types of fabrication in this list. One passage in the Canon [§223], which seems to treat fabrications as they are immediately experienced in the present, defines bodily fabrication as the breath, verbal fabrication as directed thought and evaluation, and mental fabrication as feeling and perception. Other passages [such as §225], which seem to regard fabrications as they function over time, simply class these three types of fabrication as to whether they are meritorious, demeritorious, or imperturbable (i.e., pertaining to the four levels of formless jhana). If we regard these two definitions as typical of the dual time frame of dependent co-arising, there is no conflict between them.

Another point of disagreement is over the question of how the factors of

fabrication and ignorance came to be added to the basic list. Some scholars maintain that this was the result of a temporal development in the Buddha's teachings, either during his lifetime or after his passing away. However, if we examine the content of the added factors, we find that they are simply an elaboration of the mutual dependence between name-and-form and sensory consciousness, and do not add anything substantially new to the list. The three fabrications are simply another way of presenting name-and-form in their active role as shapers of consciousness. Bodily fabrication, the breath, is the active element of "form"; verbal fabrications, directed thought and evaluation, are the active element in the attention and intention sub-factors of "name"; while mental fabrications, feeling and perception, are identical with the feeling and perception under "name." Ignorance, on the other hand, is the type of consciousness that actively promotes inappropriate questioning in the verbal fabrication of evaluation, which in turn can lead to inappropriate attention in the factor of name-and-form.

It may seem redundant to have the factors of name-and-form on the one hand, and fabrications on the other, covering the same territory in two different configurations, but these configurations serve at least two practical purposes. First, the connection between ignorance and inappropriate questioning helps to pinpoint precisely what is wrong in the typical relationship between name-and-form and consciousness. As one modern teacher has put it, the verbal fabrications are the ones to watch out for. Second, the relationship between verbal fabrications on the one hand, and attention and intention on the other, mediated by consciousness, diagrams the double-tiered (and sometimes multi-tiered) relationships among mental events as they breed and feed on one another in the presence of consciousness. In the course of giving rise to suffering and stress, this incestuous interbreeding can fly out of hand, leading to many complex and intense patterns of suffering. However, its double-tiered quality can also be used—as we will see below—to help bring that suffering to an end.

Passage §227 adds yet another factor to the list, pointing out another way of looking at the mutually dependent relationships that feed the process of dependent co-arising: *ignorance requires the effluents (asava) of sensuality, becoming, views, and ignorance, while these effluents in turn require ignorance of the four noble truths.* These added factors point to one of the ways in which the process of dependent co-arising is self-sustaining. Sensuality and views are forms of clinging/sustenance, while becoming is a result of clinging/sustenance. Ignorance as an effluent is nowhere defined in the discourses to differentiate it from simple ignorance, and in fact the distinction may simply be one of role, with both forms of ignorance denoting a state of awareness out of touch with the four noble truths. When ignorance is entwined with the feelings that result from contact, it forms the requisite condition for clinging/sustenance and becoming; together, all of these factors act as impulses that "flow out" of the process and then return to reinforce the ignorance that provides the requisite condition for fabrications, consciousness, and name-and-form, thus fueling another round in the process leading to further becoming and stress.

The self-sustaining nature of dependent co-arising makes it easy to see why many non-canonical texts explain it as a wheel. However, the many openings for feedback loops among the various factors—creating smaller cycles within the larger cycle—make the process exceedingly complex. This explains why stress and

suffering are so bewildering. If they were a simple cycle, there would be little or no variety to the sufferings of living beings, and the process of suffering would be easy for everyone to predict and understand.

Some of the feedback loops that make stress so complex are explicitly mentioned in the texts [§§227-28]. Others are implicit in the fact that particular factors—such as feeling and contact—keep re-appearing at different points of the process of dependent co-arising. Feeling is perhaps the most important of these. The stress that forms the final factor of dependent co-arising can be experienced as a feeling, which can then re-enter the causal stream at the factor of fabrications (as a mental fabrication), name-and-form (as an instance of name), or at feeling itself. If it re-enters at feeling, it would then directly condition further craving, which in turn would create a positive feedback loop, leading to increased stress and pain. On the other hand, if the stress re-enters the stream at name-and-form, it could be subjected either to unskillful intentions and inappropriate attention, or to skillful intentions and appropriate attention. The former pair would simply aggravate the stress and pain, whereas the latter pair would weaken the tendency to craving, and thus act as a negative feedback loop, alleviating the conditions that would lead to further stress and pain or eliminating them altogether.

This shows that these feedback loops, instead of being a mere curiosity in the formal structure of dependent co-arising, actually help to explain the wide variations in the way living beings experience stress. They also help explain the possibility of the cessation of stress. The elements of contact, intention, and attention under the factor of “name” are especially important in opening up this latter possibility. As we noted in I/A, this is the factor of dependent co-arising that intersects with the teachings on kamma and skillfulness. Contact—here, apparently, meaning contact with consciousness—forms the precondition for kamma [§9]. Intention lies at the essence of the kamma that keeps the cycle of rebirth in motion. Through appropriate attention—the right way of looking at things and focusing on appropriate questions about them—kamma can be trained to be skillful and thus lead away from stress rather than toward it. For this reason, any feedback loop that does not pass through the factor of name-and-form will tend simply to continue the problem of stress and pain, whereas any loop that does lead through this factor allows for the possibility for using appropriate attention to weaken the process or disband it entirely.

In feeding the loops of dependent co-arising through the factor of name-and-form, the factor of fabrication plays an especially important role. As we have noted in III/E, the practice of jhana focused on the breath gathers all three forms of fabrication—bodily, verbal, and mental—into a single whole. In doing so, it takes all the aggregates that play a variety of roles in the pattern of dependent co-arising, and gathers them into a configuration where appropriate attention can conveniently focus on all their interactions at once.

To express this in terms of the four noble truths, it takes the aggregates that make up the first noble truth and gives them a role in the fourth [III/H/i]. In this way, the double-tiered relationship mentioned above—between name-and-form on the one hand, and fabrications on the other—can be put to use in disbanding, rather than compounding, the causal network leading to suffering and stress. In terms of meditation practice, this double-tiered relationship corresponds to the five factors of noble right concentration [§150]. The three types of fabrication cover the same

ground as the four levels of jhana, while the sub-factor of attention under “name” forms a separate tier of mental activity that allows one to monitor one’s practice of jhana and to develop it as a skill [II/G].

As the process of developing skill becomes more and more refined, this tier of attention turns into the fifth, reflective level of noble concentration that allows one to analyze the state of jhana while it is present, and thus to develop a sharpened discernment of its fabricated nature. As passage §172 shows, one begins to see that jhana is composed not only of such “fabrication” sub-factors as directed thought, evaluation, feeling, and perception, but also of sensory consciousness and such “name” factors as attention, intention, and contact.

In other words, the boundary line between the different tiers of mental activity begins to break down. This allows for the conflation of discernment and concentration noted in II/H and III/H, in which concentrated discernment begins to take its own workings as its object. As discernment in the role of “object” short-circuits with discernment in the role of “approach” [II/B], then contact between the factors of name-and-form on the one hand, and sensory consciousness on the other, ceases in a state of clear knowing. In the image of Ven. Sariputta [§228], one of the two sheaves of reeds is pulled away, and the entire edifice of suffering based on them comes tumbling down.

Another crucial point to note in understanding how to disband the workings of dependent co-arising is that the relationships between particular factors and their neighbors in the list are not all the same. In some cases, factor *x* is a *sufficient* cause for factor *y*. What this means is that whenever *x* occurs, *y* will always have to follow. An example is the relationship between contact and feeling, or between clinging and the remaining factors leading up to stress. Whenever there is contact in the presence of consciousness, there will have to be feeling. Whenever there is clinging, there will have to be becoming and stress. Thus it is impossible to cut the process at these links. However, there are other cases where *x* is a *necessary* cause, but not a sufficient one, for *y*. In other words, *x* has to be present for *y* to occur, but *y* does not have to follow every time there is *x*. Examples would include the link between consciousness and name-and-form, between feeling and craving, and between craving and clinging. In each of these cases there has to be an added factor—the presence of ignorance, the most subtle and basic of the roots of unskillfulness—for *x* to give rise to *y*.

This fact is what opens the way for appropriate attention to bring about the end of suffering and stress. At the same time it determines precisely what that way must be. An analysis of how this happens will reveal in a nutshell the convergence of many of the themes of this book: the role of the three levels of frames-of-reference practice [II/B], and by extension the three levels in the development of concentration [III/E] and discernment [III/H]; the way in which the principles of this/that conditionality and skillfulness [I/A] apply to the practice; and the way in which the duties appropriate to the four noble truths—comprehending stress, abandoning its origination, realizing its cessation, and developing the path [III/H/i]—in practice are one.

*The nutshell is this:* If each factor in dependent co-arising were a sufficient cause for the following factor, the pattern would be absolutely deterministic and there would be no way out. However, in cases where the link between *x* and *y* is necessary but not sufficient, then in terms of this/that conditionality, the *x* factor is

input from the past—even if only a split-second past—whereas ignorance is the input from the present needed to give rise to  $y$ . Thus the strategy of the practice must be to use appropriate attention to eliminate ignorance in the presence of  $x$ . To do this, one must focus on comprehending the aggregate that functions as  $x$ —or, in the case of the craving/clinging link, that functions as the potential object of  $x$ . At first this means learning to focus on the aggregate in and of itself. Then, to overcome the unskillfulness inherent in ignorance, one must gain practical familiarity with the aggregate in its role as a factor in the skillful practice of jhana [§173]. As this approach attains a state of mastery, one focuses one's powers of discernment on the "how" of the approach to the practice, taking it as the "what" or object of investigation, until one can see the aggregate even in this role in terms of the four noble truths [III/H/i]. The more precise and comprehensive this knowing, the less craving is produced; the less craving produced, the fewer the effluents that cloud one's knowing. With the culmination of totally clear knowing, ignorance is totally wiped out, together with its attendant craving, and thus the present input that maintained the cycle is ended. This achieves a point of "resonance" [I/A], the point of non-fashioning at which the cycle breaks down, and where stress and suffering cease.

Modern practice traditions differ as to which links in dependent co-arising they focus on in order to bring about the cessation of craving and thus realize the third noble truth. For the purposes of this essay, we will discuss three of these links as they relate to the three different lists of factors mentioned above. These different points of focus are best regarded as alternative options for tackling the problem of stress and its cessation. All are equally valid, and so it is up to the individual meditator to choose whichever focus seems most congenial and comprehensible, and to follow it through.

The first list of the factors of dependent co-arising, which takes the process down to the mutual dependence of consciousness and name-and-form, emphasizes precisely that link: how name-and-form depends on consciousness, and how consciousness relates to name-and-form. Passage §233 treats this point in detail, using the term "fabrication" to cover attention, intention, and contact. In practical terms this approach focuses on the question of how consciousness relates to its objects, making use of skillful intention and appropriate attention (in terms of the four noble truths) as the approach to help peel away any sense of passion or desire for name-and-form. Once the more blatant forms of passion and desire have been eliminated, this approach then peels away passion and desire even for the approach of skillful intentions and appropriate attention themselves. Consciousness—thus deprived of its support in name-and-form either in terms of objects or approaches [II/B]—has no basis for proliferation and so is released. Passages related to this perspective on Awakening include §§233, 234, and 239.

As for the second list, which traces the pattern of dependent co-arising down to fabrication and ignorance, we have already noted that this is simply an explanation of a particular type of relationship between consciousness and name-and-form. We have also noted [III/E] that all three types of fabrication, in their present aspect, are brought together in the experience of jhana based on the breath. Thus the question here is how to master jhana to the point where one can step back in the fifth factor of five-factored noble concentration [§150] so as to overcome one's ignorance of the willed and fabricated nature of jhana or of any views and assumptions—based

on inappropriate attention—that might underlie the attainment of jhana [§237]. With the cessation of ignorance, there is nothing willed or fabricated to form a station of consciousness. At this point of non-fashioning—where there is no sense of one’s doing anything, or of anyone else’s doing anything [§229]—nothing is created for the sake of further becoming or non-becoming. As a result, consciousness is released. Passages related to this perspective on Awakening include §§225-26.

In the third list of dependent co-arising, which traces the pattern to the mutual dependence of ignorance and the effluents, the focus is on the acts of clinging/sustenance and the resultant states of becoming that, conditioned by ignorance, breed more ignorance. The difficulty in focusing on becoming is that its apparent opposite, non-becoming—the destruction of what has come to be—can also act as an object of craving leading to further becoming [§§221-22]. Thus the question is how to focus on the drawbacks of sensuality and becoming without falling into the reverse trap of willing non-becoming. As §182 shows, this requires seeing the drawbacks of all willed states, regardless of whether the will is aimed at proliferation or destruction. Once the mind has abandoned all such states, the only alternative left open is the equipoise of non-fashioning, the threshold to the Unfabricated. Passages related to this perspective on Awakening include §§221-22.

Although these three points of focus differ in emphasis, in essence they come down to different aspects of the same approach. In every case, one must use skillful intentions and appropriate attention to undercut craving and ignorance regarding the five aggregates so that no fabrications will be activated for the sake of further becoming. This lack of activation—the moment of non-fashioning—releases consciousness from the aggregates, both in their role as objects of consciousness and in their role as the intention and attention that served as the approaches to release. The differences among the points of focus lie primarily in the questions they ask in framing a view of the problem at hand.

In this we see the true function of the teaching of dependent co-arising in practice: as a guide to appropriate attention. Not only does the teaching provide a direct way of viewing experience that avoids useless questions of being and non-being [§186], self and other [§§228-230], it also gives a framework for inspiring alternative ways of asking appropriate questions about the crucial junctures in the conditioned flow of phenomena in and of themselves. As with all of the Buddha’s teachings, once the processes of discernment inspired by the teaching of dependent co-arising have fully performed their function, the teaching itself is transcended in the release of consciousness.

Once consciousness is released from the objects that bring sensory consciousness into play [§232], all that remains is “consciousness without feature, without end, luminous all around” [§235]. This consciousness—which lies beyond “the extent to which there are means of designation, expression, & description... the extent to which the sphere of discernment extends, the extent to which the cycle revolves for the manifesting (discernibility) of this cosmos” [§231]—is the experience of the goal.

There is some question as to whether the goal can be equated with the third noble truth. Some passages in the Canon [SN 43:1-44; SN 22:86] would seem to indicate yes; others [such as Sn.V.6; MFU, p. 28; AN 10:58; and especially the

ending to MN 27], no. This contradiction can be resolved by noting that the full realization of the third noble truth and the experience of the goal are two different things so intimately related that the one cannot be experienced without the other. Their relationship can be compared to noticing a long-overlooked valuable in the course of cleaning one's yard. The act of cleaning is not the same as the valuable, but only in the course of doing the former thoroughly and attentively can the latter be found. As one modern teacher has said, the fact that the third noble truth involves a duty means that it is part of fabricated reality, whereas the goal at the end of the path is absolutely unfabricated. Free from all acting and doing, it pertains to an entirely different dimension, and thus—although found along with the truth of cessation—it is something utterly beyond and unbound.

From the time of Awakening to that of death, there remains a sense of dissociated contact between the inner and outer sense media that comprise the Awakened One's old kamma [§15] and his/her only remaining experience of the stress inherent in the dimensions of time and the present: contact, in that there is sensitivity to pain and pleasure in these things; dissociated, in that the passion and delight, the fetters, defilements, and attachments in between the inner and outer sense media are totally severed by discernment [MN 146; MFU, p. 113]. Old kamma thus runs through the pattern of dependent co-arising from name-and-form and consciousness up through feeling, but—without the fashioning factors of ignorance and craving—the feeling of pain and pleasure does not feed back into any causal patterns that would lead to further becoming [§219] or any renewed kamma.

The texts liken this state to a fire that has gone out but whose embers are still glowing and warm [Thag 15:2; MFU, p. 34]. Eventually, old kamma runs out at the death of the Awakened One, and there is a total Unbinding like that of a fire so completely released from its fuel that the embers have grown thoroughly cold. Although this analogy may sound negative in terms of modern ideas about the workings of fire, in the Buddha's time it was recognized as an image, not of extinction or annihilation, but of freedom so unlimited and irreversible that it cannot be described.

§ 208. When its root remains  
undamaged & strong,  
a tree, even if cut,  
will grow back.  
So too when craving-obsession  
is not rooted out,  
this suffering returns  
again  
&  
again.

Dhp 338

§ 209. Gandhabhaka: It would be good, lord, if the Blessed One would teach me the origination & ending of stress.

The Buddha: If I were to teach you the origination & ending of stress with reference to the past, saying, 'Thus it was in the past,' you would be doubtful and perplexed. If I were to teach you the origination & ending of stress with reference to the future, saying, 'Thus it will be in the future,' you would be doubtful and perplexed. So instead, I—sitting right here—will teach you sitting right there the origination & ending of stress. Listen & pay close attention. I will speak.

Gandhabhaka: As you say, lord.

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

Gandhabhaka: Yes, there are....

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

Gandhabhaka: Yes, there are....

The Buddha: Now what is the cause, what is the reason, why the murder... of some would cause you sorrow... and the murder... of others would cause you no sorrow...?

Gandhabhaka: Those... whose murder... would cause me sorrow... are those for whom I feel desire & passion. Those... whose murder... would cause me no sorrow... are those for whom I feel no desire or passion.

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

Gandhabhaka: Amazing, lord. Astounding. How well the Blessed One has put it: Whatever stress, in arising, arose for me in the past, all of it had desire as its root, had desire as its cause, for desire is the cause of stress. And whatever stress, in arising, will arise for me in the future, all of it will have desire as the root, will have desire as its cause, for desire is the cause of stress. I have a son, lord, named Cīravāsin, who lives far away from here. When I get up in the morning, I send a man, saying, 'Go, learn how Cīravāsin is doing.' And as long as that man has not returned, I am simply beside myself, (thinking,) 'Don't let Cīravāsin be sick!'

The Buddha: Now, what do you think? If Cīravāsin were to be murdered or imprisoned or fined or censured, would you feel sorrow, lamentation, pain, distress, & despair?

Gandhabhaka: If my son Cīravāsin were to be murdered or imprisoned or fined or censured, my very life would be altered. So how could I not feel sorrow, lamentation, pain, distress, & despair?

The Buddha: ...And what do you think? Before you had seen or heard of Cīravāsin's mother, did you feel desire, passion, or love for her?

Gandhabhaka: No, lord.



The Buddha: And after you had seen or heard of Ciravāsin's mother, did you feel desire, passion, or love for her?

Gandhabhaka: Yes, lord.

The Buddha: Now, what do you think? If Ciravāsin's mother were to be murdered or imprisoned or fined or censured, would you feel sorrow, lamentation, pain, distress, & despair?

Gandhabhaka: If Ciravāsin's mother were to be murdered or imprisoned or fined or censured, my very life would be altered. So how could I not feel sorrow, lamentation, pain, distress, & despair?

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

SN 42:11

**§ 210. Craving & Its Cessation.** Now what is the noble truth of the origination of stress? The craving that makes for further becoming—accompanied by passion & delight, relishing now here & now there—i.e., craving for sensuality, craving for becoming, craving for non-becoming.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Perception of forms.... Perception of sounds.... Perception of smells....

Perception of tastes.... Perception of tactile sensations.... Perception of ideas....

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

Craving for forms.... Craving for sounds.... Craving for smells.... Craving for tastes.... Craving for tactile sensations.... Craving for ideas....

Thought directed at forms.... Thought directed at sounds.... Thought directed at smells.... Thought directed at tastes.... Thought directed at tactile sensations.... Thought directed at ideas....

Evaluation of forms.... Evaluation of sounds.... Evaluation of smells....

Evaluation of tastes.... Evaluation of tactile sensations.... Evaluation of ideas is endearing & alluring in terms of the world. That is where this craving, when arising, arises. That is where, when dwelling, it dwells.

This is called the noble truth of the origination of stress.

And what is the noble truth of the cessation of stress? The remainderless fading & cessation, renunciation, relinquishment, release, & letting go of that very craving.

And where, when being abandoned, is this craving abandoned? And where, when ceasing, does it cease? Whatever is endearing & alluring in terms of the world: that is where, when being abandoned, this craving is abandoned. That is where, when ceasing, it ceases.

And what is endearing & alluring in terms of the world? The eye is endearing & alluring in terms of the world. That is where, when being abandoned, this craving is abandoned. That is where, when ceasing, it ceases.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Craving for forms.... Craving for sounds.... Craving for smells.... Craving for tastes.... Craving for tactile sensations.... Craving for ideas....

Thought directed at forms.... Thought directed at sounds.... Thought directed at smells.... Thought directed at tastes.... Thought directed at tactile sensations.... Thought directed at ideas....

Evaluation of forms.... Evaluation of sounds.... Evaluation of smells.... Evaluation of tastes.... Evaluation of tactile sensations.... Evaluation of ideas is endearing & alluring in terms of the world. That is where, when being abandoned, this craving is abandoned. That is where, when ceasing, it ceases.

This is called the noble truth of the cessation of stress.

DN 22

§ 211. And what is the noble method that is rightly seen & rightly ferreted out by discernment? There is the case where a disciple of the noble ones notices:

When this is, that is.

From the arising of this comes the arising of that.  
 When this isn't, that isn't.  
 From the cessation of this comes the cessation of that.

In other words:

From ignorance as a requisite condition come fabrications.  
 From fabrications as a requisite condition comes consciousness.  
 From consciousness as a requisite condition comes name-&-form.  
 From name-&-form as a requisite condition come the six sense media.  
 From the six sense media as a requisite condition comes contact.  
 From contact as a requisite condition comes feeling.  
 From feeling as a requisite condition comes craving.  
 From craving as a requisite condition comes clinging/sustenance.  
 From clinging/sustenance as a requisite condition comes becoming.  
 From becoming as a requisite condition comes birth.  
 From birth as a requisite condition, then aging-&-death, sorrow, lamentation, pain, distress, & despair come into play. Such is the origination of this entire mass of stress & suffering.

Now from the remainderless fading & cessation of that very ignorance comes the cessation of fabrications. From the cessation of fabrications comes the cessation of consciousness. From the cessation of consciousness comes the cessation of name-&-form. From the cessation of name-&-form comes the cessation of the six sense media. From the cessation of the six sense media comes the cessation of contact. From the cessation of contact comes the cessation of feeling. From the cessation of feeling comes the cessation of craving. From the cessation of craving comes the cessation of clinging/sustenance. From the cessation of clinging/sustenance comes the cessation of becoming. From the cessation of becoming comes the cessation of birth. From the cessation of birth, then aging-&-death, sorrow, lamentation, pain, distress, & despair all cease. Such is the cessation of this entire mass of stress & suffering.

This is the noble method that is rightly seen & rightly ferreted out by discernment.

AN 10:92

§ 212. Monks, I will teach you the origination & disappearance of the world. Listen & pay close attention. I will speak.

What is the origination of the world? In dependence on the eye & forms there arises eye-consciousness. The coming together of these three is contact. From contact as a requisite condition comes feeling. From feeling as a requisite condition comes craving. From craving as a requisite condition comes clinging/sustenance. From clinging/sustenance as a requisite condition comes becoming. From becoming as a requisite condition comes birth. From birth as a requisite condition, then aging-&-death, sorrow, lamentation, pain, distress, & despair come into play. This is the origination of the world. [Similarly with ear, nose, tongue, body, & intellect.]

And what is the disappearance of the world? In dependence on the eye & forms there arises eye-consciousness. The coming together of these three is contact.

From contact as a requisite condition comes feeling. From feeling as a requisite condition comes craving. Now from the remainderless fading & cessation of that very craving comes the cessation of clinging/sustenance. From the cessation of clinging/sustenance comes the cessation of becoming. From the cessation of becoming comes the cessation of birth. From the cessation of birth, then aging-&death, sorrow, lamentation, pain, distress, & despair all cease. Such is the cessation of this entire mass of stress & suffering. This is the disappearance of the world. [Similarly with ear, nose, tongue, body, & intellect.]

SN 35:107

§ 213. A certain monk: 'The world, the world (*loka*),' it is said. To what extent does the word 'world' apply?

The Buddha: It disintegrates (*lujjati*), therefore it is called the 'world.' Now what disintegrates? The eye disintegrates. Forms disintegrate. Eye-consciousness disintegrates. Eye-contact disintegrates. And anything that arises in dependence on eye-contact, experienced as pleasure, pain, or neither-pleasure-nor-pain, that too disintegrates.

The ear disintegrates. Sounds disintegrate....

The nose disintegrates. Aromas disintegrate....

The tongue disintegrates. Flavors disintegrate....

The body disintegrates. Tactile sensations disintegrate....

The intellect disintegrates. Ideas disintegrate. Intellect-consciousness disintegrates. Intellect-contact disintegrates. And anything that arises in dependence on intellect-contact, experienced as pleasure, pain, or neither-pleasure-nor-pain, that too disintegrates.

It disintegrates, therefore it is called the 'world.'

SN 35:82

§ 214. Ānanda: Concerning the brief statement made by the Blessed One, after which he entered his dwelling without expounding the detailed meaning—i.e., 'I do not say that the end of the world is to be known, seen, & reached by traveling. But neither do I say that there is a making an end of stress without having reached the end of the world'—I understand the detailed meaning of this statement to be this:

That by means of which one has a perception of world, a concept of world with regard to the world: That, in the discipline of a noble one, is called the 'world.' Now, by means of what does one have a perception of world, a concept of world with regard to the world? By means of the eye... the ear... the nose... the tongue... the body... the intellect one has a perception of world, a concept of world with regard to the world.

SN 35:116

§ 215. Now what, monks, are the 44 bases for knowledge? Knowledge with regard to aging-&death, knowledge with regard to the origination of aging-&death, knowledge with regard to the cessation of aging-&death, knowledge

with regard to the path of practice leading to the cessation of aging-&-death. [Similarly with birth, becoming, sustenance/clinging, craving, feeling, contact, the sixfold sense media, name-&-form, consciousness, & fabrications.]

And what is aging-&-death? Whatever aging, decrepitude, brokenness, graying, wrinkling, decline of life-force, weakening of the faculties of the various beings in this or that group of beings, that is called aging. Whatever deceasing, passing away, breaking up, disappearance, dying, death, completion of time, break up of the aggregates, casting off of the body, interruption in the life faculty of the various beings in this or that group of beings, that is called death. From the origination of birth comes the origination of aging-&-death. From the cessation of birth comes the cessation of aging-&-death. And just this noble eightfold path is the path of practice leading to the cessation of aging-&-death....

Now, when the disciple of the noble ones discerns aging-&-death in this way, discerns the origination of aging-&-death in this way, discerns the cessation of aging-&-death in this way, discerns the path of practice leading to the cessation of aging-&-death in this way, that is his knowledge of the Dhamma (principle). By means of this principle—seen, understood, not limited to time, attained, fathomed—he draws out inferences with regard to the past & future: ‘Whatever contemplatives & brahmins in the past comprehended aging-&-death... the origination of aging-&-death... the cessation of aging-&-death... the path of practice leading to the cessation of aging-&-death, all comprehended them as I do now; whatever contemplatives & brahmins in the future will comprehend aging-&-death... the origination of aging-&-death... the cessation of aging-&-death... the path of practice leading to the cessation of aging-&-death, all will comprehend them as I do now.’ This is his knowledge of consistency.

Now, when these two knowledges of the disciple of the noble ones—knowledge of principle & knowledge of consistency—are pure & clear, he is called a disciple of the noble ones who is consummate in view, consummate in vision, attained to this true Dhamma. He is said to see this true Dhamma, to be endowed with the knowledge of one in training, endowed with the clear knowing of one in training, attained to the stream of the Dhamma, a person of penetrating noble discernment who stands knocking at the door to the Deathless.

[Similarly with the remaining links down to fabrications.]

SN 12:33

§ 216. Sāriputta: Now, the Blessed One has said, ‘Whoever sees dependent co-arising sees the Dhamma; whoever sees the Dhamma sees dependent co-arising.’

MN 28

§ 217. I will teach you dependent co-arising & dependently co-arisen phenomena. Listen & pay close attention. I will speak....

Now, what is dependent co-arising? From birth as a requisite condition comes aging-&-death. Whether or not there is the arising of Tathāgatas, this property stands—this regularity of the Dhamma, this orderliness of the Dhamma, this this/that conditionality. The Tathāgata directly awakens to that, breaks through

to that. Directly awakening & breaking through to that, he declares it, teaches it, describes it, sets it forth. He reveals it, explains it, makes it plain, & says, 'Look.' From birth as a requisite condition comes aging-&-death.

[Similarly down through the causal sequence to:]

From ignorance as a requisite condition come fabrications. Whether or not there is the arising of Tathāgatas, this property stands—this regularity of the Dhamma, this orderliness of the Dhamma, this this/that conditionality. The Tathāgata directly awakens to that, breaks through to that. Directly awakening & breaking through to that, he declares it, teaches it, describes it, sets it forth. He reveals it, explains it, makes it plain, & says, 'Look.' From ignorance as a requisite condition come fabrications. What's there in this way is a reality, not an unreality, not other than what it seems, conditioned by this/ that. This is called dependent co-arising.

And what are dependently co-arisen phenomena? Aging-&-death is a dependently co-arisen phenomenon: inconstant, fabricated, dependently co-arisen, subject to ending, subject to passing away, subject to fading, subject to cessation. [Similarly down through the causal sequence to:]

Ignorance is a dependently co-arisen phenomenon: inconstant, fabricated, dependently co-arisen, subject to ending, subject to passing away, subject to fading, subject to cessation. These are called dependently co-arisen phenomena.

When a disciple of the noble ones has seen well with right discernment this dependent co-arising & these dependently co-arisen phenomena as they have come to be, it is not possible that he would run after the past, thinking, 'Was I in the past? Was I not in the past? What was I in the past? How was I in the past? Having been what, what was I in the past?' or that he would run after the future, thinking, 'Shall I be in the future? Shall I not be in the future? What shall I be in the future? How shall I be in the future? Having been what, what shall I be in the future?' or that he would be inwardly perplexed about the immediate present, thinking, 'Am I? Am I not? What am I? How am I? Where has this being come from? Where is it bound?' [§51]

Such a thing is not possible. Why is that? Because the disciple of the noble ones has seen well with right discernment this dependent co-arising & these dependently co-arisen phenomena as they have come to be.

SN 12:20

§ 218. Now what is becoming? These three are becoming: sensuality becoming, form becoming, & formless becoming. This is called becoming.

And what is clinging/sustenance? These four are clingings: sensuality clinging, view clinging, habit & practice clinging, and doctrine of self clinging. This is called clinging.

And what is craving? These six are classes of craving: craving for forms, craving for sounds, craving for smells, craving for tastes, craving for tactile sensations, craving for ideas. This is called craving.

And what is feeling? These six are classes of feeling: feeling born from eye-contact, feeling born from ear-contact, feeling born from nose-contact, feeling born from tongue-contact, feeling born from body-contact, feeling born from

intellect-contact. This is called feeling.

And what is contact? These six are classes of contact: eye-contact, ear-contact, nose-contact, tongue-contact, body-contact, intellect-contact. This is called contact.

And what are the six sense media? These six are sense media: the eye-medium, the ear-medium, the nose-medium, the tongue-medium, the body-medium, the intellect-medium. These are called the six sense media.

And what is name-&-form? Feeling, perception, intention, contact, & attention: this is called name. The four great elements, and the form dependent on the four great elements: this is called form. This name & this form are called name-&-form.

And what is consciousness? These six are classes of consciousness: eye-consciousness, ear-consciousness, nose-consciousness, tongue-consciousness, body-consciousness, intellect-consciousness. This is called consciousness.

And what are fabrications? These three are fabrications: bodily fabrications, verbal fabrications, mental fabrications. These are called fabrications.

And what is ignorance? Not knowing in terms of stress, not knowing in terms of the origination of stress, not knowing in terms of the cessation of stress, not knowing in terms of the way of practice leading to the cessation of stress: this is called ignorance.

SN 12:2

§ 219. When a fool is obstructed by ignorance and conjoined with craving, this body thus results. Now there is both this body and external name-&-form. Here, in dependence on this duality, there is contact at the six senses. Touched by these, or one or another of them, the fool is sensitive to pleasure & pain. When a wise person is obstructed by ignorance and conjoined with craving, this body thus results. Now there is both this body and external name-&-form. Here, in dependence on this duality, there is contact at the six senses. Touched by these, or one or another of them, the wise person is sensitive to pleasure & pain. Now what is the difference... here between the wise person & the fool?...

In the wise person that ignorance has been abandoned and that craving has been destroyed. Why is that? The wise person has practiced the holy life for the right ending of stress. Therefore, at the breakup of the body, he is not headed for a (new) body. Not headed for a body, he is entirely freed from birth, aging, death, sorrow, lamentation, pain, distress, & despair. I tell you, he is entirely freed from stress.

SN 12:19

§ 220. Becoming. Ānanda: This word, 'becoming, becoming'—to what extent is there becoming?

The Buddha: If there were no kamma ripening in the property of sensuality, would sensual becoming be discerned?

Ānanda: No, lord.

The Buddha: Thus kamma is the field, consciousness the seed, and craving the moisture [§233]. The consciousness of living beings hindered by ignorance & fettered by craving is established in (tuned to) a lower property. Thus there is the production of renewed becoming in the future. If there were no kamma ripening in the property of form, would form becoming be discerned?

Ānanda: No, lord.

The Buddha: Thus kamma is the field, consciousness the seed, and craving the moisture. The consciousness of living beings hindered by ignorance & fettered by craving is established in (tuned to) a middling property. Thus there is the production of renewed becoming in the future. If there were no kamma ripening in the property of formlessness, would formless becoming be discerned?

Ānanda: No, lord.

The Buddha: Thus kamma is the field, consciousness the seed, and craving the moisture. The consciousness of living beings hindered by ignorance & fettered by craving is established in (tuned to) a refined property. Thus there is the production of renewed becoming in the future. This is how there is becoming.

AN 3:76

[The discourse immediately following this is identical to this except that the phrase, ‘the consciousness of living beings... is established,’ changes to, ‘the intention & determination of living beings... is established.’]

AN 3:77

§ 221. I have heard that on one occasion, when the Blessed One was newly Awakened—living at Uruvelā by the banks of the Nerañjarā River in the shade of the Bodhi tree, the tree of Awakening—he sat in the shade of the Bodhi tree for seven days in one session, sensitive to the bliss of release. At the end of seven days, after emerging from that concentration, he surveyed the world with the eye of an Awakened One. As he did so, he saw living beings burning with the many fevers and aflame with the many fires born of passion, aversion, & delusion. Then, on realizing the significance of that, he on that occasion exclaimed:

This world is burning.  
 Afflicted by contact,  
 it calls disease a ‘self,’  
 for by whatever means it construes (anything),  
 that becomes otherwise from that. [§183]  
 Becoming otherwise,  
 the world is  
     held by becoming  
     afflicted by becoming  
 and yet delights  
     in that very becoming.  
 Where there’s delight,  
     there is fear.  
 What one fears  
     is stressful.



This holy life is lived  
for the abandoning of becoming.

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

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

This stress comes into play  
in dependence on all acquisitions.  
With the ending of all clinging/sustenance,  
there is no stress  
coming into play.

Look at this world:  
Beings, afflicted with thick ignorance,  
are unreleased  
from delight in what has come to be.  
All levels of becoming,  
anywhere,  
in any way,  
are inconstant, stressful, subject to change.  
Seeing this—as has come to be—  
with right discernment,  
one abandons craving for becoming,  
without delighting in non-becoming.  
From the total ending of craving  
comes fading & cessation without remainder:

Unbinding.

For the monk unbound,  
through lack of clinging/sustenance,  
there is no further becoming.  
He has conquered Māra,  
won the battle,  
gone beyond all becomings—

Such.

Ud 3:10

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

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

And how do some slip right past? Some, feeling horrified, humiliated, & disgusted with that very becoming, delight in non-becoming: 'When this self, at the breakup of the body, after death, perishes & is destroyed, and does not exist

after death, that is peaceful, that is exquisite, that is sufficiency!' This is how some slip right past.

And how do those with vision see? There is the case where a monk sees what's come to be as what's come to be. Seeing this, he practices for disenchantment with what's come to be, dispassion for what's come to be, and the cessation of what's come to be. This is how those with vision see....

Those, having seen  
 what's come to be  
     as what's come to be,  
 and what's gone beyond  
     what's come to be,  
 are released in line  
     with what's come to be,  
 through the exhaustion of craving for becoming.  
 If they've comprehended what's come to be—  
     and are free from craving  
     for becoming & not-,  
         with the non-becoming  
         of what's come to be—  
 monks come to no further becoming.

Iti 49

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

Sister Dhammadinnā: In-&-out breathing is bodily, bound up with the body, therefore is it called a bodily fabrication. Having directed one's thought and evaluated (the matter), one breaks into speech. Therefore directed thought & evaluation are called verbal fabrications. Perception & feeling are mental, bound up with the mind. Therefore perception & feeling are called mental fabrications.

MN 44

§ 224. When there is a body, pleasure & pain arise internally with bodily intention as the cause; or when there is speech, pleasure & pain arise internally with verbal intention as the cause; or when there is intellect, pleasure & pain arise internally with intellectual intention as the cause.

From ignorance as a requisite condition, then either of one's own accord one fabricates the bodily fabrication on account of which that pleasure & pain arise internally, or because of others one fabricates the bodily fabrication on account of which that pleasure & pain arise internally. With alertness... or without alertness one fabricates the bodily fabrication on account of which that pleasure & pain arise internally. [Similarly with verbal & intellectual fabrications.]

Now, ignorance is bound up in these things. From the remainderless fading & cessation of that very ignorance, there no longer exists (the sense of) the body... the speech... the intellect on account of which that pleasure & pain internally arise. There no longer exists the field, the site, the dimension, or the issue on

account of which that pleasure & pain internally arise.

SN 12:25

§ 225. If a person immersed in ignorance fabricates a meritorious fabrication, his consciousness goes on to merit. If he fabricates a demeritorious fabrication, his consciousness goes on to demerit. If he fabricates an imperturbable fabrication, his consciousness goes on to the imperturbable. When ignorance is abandoned by a monk, clear knowing arises. From the fading of ignorance and the arising of knowledge, he neither fabricates a meritorious fabrication nor a demeritorious fabrication nor an imperturbable fabrication. Neither fabricating nor willing, he is not sustained by anything in the world. Unsustained, he is not agitated. Unagitated, he is totally unbound right within. He discerns that 'Birth is ended, the holy life fulfilled, the task done. There is nothing further for this world.'

Sensing a feeling of pleasure, he discerns that it is fleeting, not grasped at, not relished. Sensing a feeling of pain.... Sensing a feeling of neither-pleasure-nor-pain, he discerns that it is fleeting, not grasped at, not relished. Sensing a feeling of pleasure, he senses it disjoined from it. Sensing a feeling of pain.... Sensing a feeling of neither-pleasure-nor-pain, he senses it disjoined from it. When sensing a feeling limited to the body, he discerns that 'I am sensing a feeling limited to the body.' When sensing a feeling limited to life, he discerns that 'I am sensing a feeling limited to life.' He discerns that 'With the breakup of the body, after the termination of life, all that is experienced, not being relished, will grow cold right here, while the corpse will remain.'

Just as if a man, having removed a heated jar from a kiln, were to place it on level ground: any heat in the jar would subside right there, while the fired clay would remain. In the same way, when sensing a feeling limited to the body, he discerns that 'I am sensing a feeling limited to the body.' When sensing a feeling limited to life, he discerns that 'I am sensing a feeling limited to life.' He discerns that 'With the breakup of the body, after the termination of life, all that is experienced, not being relished, will grow cold right here, while the corpse will remain.'

What do you think, monks? Would a monk whose effluents were ended fabricate a meritorious or a demeritorious or an imperturbable fabrication?

No, lord.

With the total non-existence of fabrications, from the cessation of fabrications, would consciousness be discernible (manifest)?

No, lord.

[And similarly down to:] With the total non-existence of birth, from the cessation of birth, would aging-&-death be discernible?

No, lord.

Very good, monks. Just so should you construe it. Just so should you be convinced. Just so should you believe. Do not be doubtful, do not be uncertain. This, just this, is the end of stress.

SN 12:51

§ 226. What is willed, what is arranged, and what is obsessed over: this is a support for the stationing of consciousness. There being a support, there is a landing of consciousness. When that consciousness lands and grows, there is the production of renewed becoming in the future. When there is the production of renewed becoming in the future, there is future birth, aging-&-death, sorrow, lamentation, pain, distress, & despair. Such is the origination of this entire mass of stress.

If nothing is willed, if nothing is arranged, but something is obsessed over: This is a support for the stationing of consciousness.... Such (too) is the origination of this entire mass of stress.

But when nothing is willed, arranged, or obsessed over, there is no support for the stationing of consciousness. There being no support, there is no landing of consciousness. When that consciousness does not land & grow, there is no production of renewed becoming in the future. When there is no production of renewed becoming in the future, there is no future birth, aging-&-death, sorrow, lamentation, pain, distress, or despair. Such is the cessation of this entire mass of stress.

SN 12:38

§ 227. Sāriputta: Now what is ignorance, what is the origination of ignorance, what is the cessation of ignorance, and what is the way of practice leading to the cessation of ignorance?

Not knowing in terms of stress, not knowing in terms of the origination of stress, not knowing in terms of the cessation of stress, not knowing in terms of the way of practice leading to the cessation of stress: this is called ignorance. From the origination of effluents comes the origination of ignorance. From the cessation of effluents comes the cessation of ignorance. And just this noble eightfold path is the way of practice leading to the cessation of ignorance....

Now when a disciple of the noble ones discerns ignorance in this way, discerns the origination of ignorance in this way, discerns the cessation of ignorance in this way, & discerns the way of practice leading to the cessation of ignorance in this way, when—having entirely abandoned passion-obsession, having abolished irritation-obsession, having uprooted the view-&-conceit obsession ‘I am,’ having abandoned ignorance, having given rise to clear knowing—he has put an end to stress in the here & now, then it is to this extent that the disciple of the noble ones is a person of right view, one whose view is made straight, who is endowed with verified confidence in the Dhamma, and who has arrived at this true Dhamma....

Now what are effluents, what is the origination of effluents, what is the cessation of effluents, and what is the way of practice leading to the cessation of effluents?

These three are effluents: the effluent of sensuality, the effluent of becoming, the effluent of ignorance. From the origination of ignorance comes the origination of effluents. From the cessation of ignorance comes the cessation of effluents. And just this noble eightfold path is the way of practice leading to the cessation of effluents....

Now when a disciple of the noble ones discerns the effluents in this way, discerns the origination of effluents in this way, discerns the cessation of effluents in this way, & discerns the way of practice leading to the cessation of effluents in this way, when—having entirely abandoned passion-obsession, having abolished irritation-obsession, having uprooted the view-&conceit obsession ‘I am,’ having abandoned ignorance, having given rise to clear knowing—he has put an end to stress in the here & now, then it is to this extent that the disciple of the noble ones is a person of right view, one whose view is made straight, who is endowed with verified confidence in the Dhamma, and who has arrived at this true Dhamma.

MN 9

§ 228. Ven. Mahā Koṭṭhita: Now tell me, Sāriputta my friend: Is aging-&death self-made or other-made or both self-made & other-made, or—without self-making or other-making—spontaneously arisen?

Ven. Sāriputta: It’s not the case, Koṭṭhita my friend, that aging-&death is self-made, that it is other-made, that it is both self-made & other-made, or that—without self-making or other-making—it’s spontaneously arisen. However, from birth as a requisite condition comes aging-&death.

[Similarly with birth, becoming, sustenance/clinging, craving, feeling, contact, the six sense media, down to:]

Ven. Mahā Koṭṭhita: Now tell me: Is name-&form self-made or other-made or both self-made & other-made, or—without self-making or other-making—spontaneously arisen?

Ven. Sāriputta: It’s not the case that name-&form is self-made, that it is other-made, that it is both self-made & other-made, or that—without self-making or other-making—it’s spontaneously arisen. However, from consciousness as a requisite condition comes name-&form.

Ven. Mahā Koṭṭhita: Now tell me: Is consciousness self-made or other-made or both self-made & other-made, or—without self-making or other-making, spontaneously arisen?

Ven. Sāriputta: It’s not the case that consciousness is self-made, that it is other-made, that it is both self-made & other-made, or that—without self-making or other-making—it’s spontaneously arisen. However, from name-&form as a requisite condition comes consciousness.

Ven. Mahā Koṭṭhita: Just now I understood what you said as... from consciousness as a requisite condition comes name-&form... from name-&form as a requisite condition comes consciousness. Now how is the meaning of what you said to be understood?

Ven. Sāriputta: Very well then, my friend, I will give you an analogy; for there are cases where it is through the use of an analogy that intelligent people can understand the meaning of what is being said. It’s as if two sheaves of reeds stood leaning against one another. In the same way, from name-&form as a requisite condition comes consciousness, from consciousness as a requisite condition comes name-&form. From name-&form as a requisite condition

come the six sense media.... Thus is the origination of this entire mass of stress. If one were to pull away one of those sheaves of reeds, the other would fall; if one were to pull away the other, the first one would fall. In the same way, from the cessation of name-&-form comes the cessation of consciousness, from the cessation of consciousness comes the cessation of name-&-form. From the cessation of name-&-form comes the cessation of the six sense media.... Thus is the cessation of this entire mass of stress.

SN 12:67

§ 229. People are intent on the idea of  
       'made by me'  
 and attached to the idea of  
       'made by another.'  
 Some don't realize this,  
 nor do they see it as a thorn.  
 But to one who sees,  
 having extracted this thorn,  
 (the thought) 'I am doing,' doesn't occur;  
 'Another is doing,' doesn't occur.  
 This human race is possessed by conceit,  
                                   bound by conceit,  
                                   tied down by conceit.  
 Speaking hurtfully because of their views  
 they don't go beyond the wandering-on.

Ud 6:6

§ 230. The Buddha: 'From ignorance as a requisite condition come fabrications.... From birth as a requisite condition, then old age & death, sorrow, lamentation, pain, distress, & despair come into play. Such is the origination of this entire mass of stress & suffering.'

When this was said, a certain monk said to the Blessed One: 'Which aging-&-death, lord? And whose is this aging-&-death?'

'Not a valid question,' the Blessed One said. If one were to ask, "Which aging-&-death? And whose is this aging-&-death?" and if one were to ask, "Is aging-&-death one thing, and is this the aging-&-death of someone/something else?" both of them would have the same meaning, even though their words would differ. When there is the view that the soul is the same as the body, there isn't the leading of the holy life. And when there is the view that the soul is one thing and the body another, there isn't the leading of the holy life. Avoiding these two extremes, the Tathāgata points out the Dhamma in between: From birth as a requisite condition comes aging-&-death.'

'Which birth, lord? And whose is this birth?'

'Not a valid question,' the Blessed One said.

[Similarly with all the requisite conditions down to fabrications.]

'...Avoiding these two extremes, the Tathāgata points out the Dhamma in between: From ignorance as requisite condition come fabrications. Now from the remainderless fading & cessation of that very ignorance, every one of these writhings & wriggings & wiggings—"Which aging-&death? And whose is this aging-&death?" or "Is aging-&death one thing, and is this the aging-&death of someone/something else?" or "The soul is the same as the body," or "The soul is one thing and the body another"—are abandoned, their root destroyed, like an uprooted palm tree, deprived of the conditions of existence, not destined for future arising.'

[Similarly with all the requisite conditions down to fabrications.]

SN 12:35

§ 231. Ven. Ānanda: It's amazing, lord, it's astounding, how deep this dependent co-arising is, & how deep its appearance, and yet to me it seems as clear as clear can be.

The Buddha: Don't say that, Ānanda. Don't say that. Deep is this dependent co-arising, and deep its appearance. It's because of not understanding & not penetrating this Dhamma that this generation is like a tangled skein, a knotted ball of string, like matted rushes & reeds, and does not go beyond the cycle of the planes of deprivation, woe, & bad destinations....

'From birth as a requisite condition comes aging-&death.' Thus it has been said. And this is the way to understand how from birth as a requisite condition comes aging-&death. If there were no birth at all, in any way, of anything anywhere... in the utter absence of birth from the cessation of birth, would aging-&death be discerned?'

Ven. Ānanda: No, lord.

The Buddha: Thus this is a cause, this is a reason, this is an origination, this is a requisite condition for aging-&death, i.e., birth. [Similarly for the rest of the requisite conditions down to contact.]

'From name-&form as a requisite condition comes contact. Thus it has been said. And this is the way to understand how, from name-&form as a requisite condition comes contact. If the qualities, traits, themes, & indicators by which there is a description of name-group [mental activity] were all absent, would designation-contact with regard to the form-group [the physical properties] be discerned?'

Ven. Ānanda: No, lord.

The Buddha: If the permutations, signs, themes, & indicators by which there is a description of form-group were all absent, would resistance-contact with regard to the name-group be discerned?'

Ven. Ānanda: No, lord.

The Buddha: If the permutations, signs, themes, & indicators by which there is a description of name-group & form-group were all absent, would designation-contact or resistance-contact be discerned?'

Ven. Ānanda: No, lord.

The Buddha: Thus this is a cause, this is a reason, this is an origination, this is a requisite condition for contact, i.e., name-&-form.

'From consciousness as a requisite condition comes name-&-form.' Thus it has been said. And this is the way to understand how from consciousness as a requisite condition comes name-&-form. If consciousness were not to descend into the mother's womb, would name-&-form take shape in the womb?

Ven. Ānanda: No, lord.

The Buddha: If, after descending into the womb, consciousness were to depart, would name-&-form be produced for this world?

Ven. Ānanda: No, lord.

The Buddha: If the consciousness of the young boy or girl were to be cut off, would name-&-form ripen, grow, & reach maturity?

Ven. Ānanda: No, lord.

The Buddha: Thus this is a cause, this is a reason, this is an origination, this is a requisite condition for name-&-form, i.e., consciousness.

'From name-&-form as a requisite condition comes consciousness.' Thus it has been said. And this is the way to understand how from name-&-form as a requisite condition comes consciousness. If consciousness were not to gain a foothold in name-&-form, would a coming-into-play of the origination of birth, aging, death, & stress in the future be discerned? [§233]

Ven. Ānanda: No, lord.

The Buddha: Thus this is a cause, this is a reason, this is an origination, this is a requisite condition for consciousness, i.e., name-&-form.

This is the extent to which there is birth, aging, death, passing away, & re-arising. This is the extent to which there are means of designation, expression, & description. This is the extent to which the sphere of discernment extends, the extent to which the cycle revolves for the manifesting [discernibility] of this world—i.e., name-&-form together with consciousness.

DN 15

§ 232. It's in dependence on a pair that consciousness comes into play. And how does consciousness come into play in dependence on a pair? In dependence on the eye & forms there arises eye-consciousness. The eye is inconstant, changeable, of a nature to become otherwise. Forms are inconstant, changeable, of a nature to become otherwise. Thus this pair is both fleeting & unsettled— inconstant, changeable, of a nature to become otherwise. Eye-consciousness is inconstant, changeable, of a nature to become otherwise. Whatever is the cause, the requisite condition, for the arising of eye-consciousness, that is inconstant, changeable, of a nature to become otherwise. Having arisen in dependence on an inconstant factor, how could eye-consciousness be constant? [Similarly with the ear, nose, tongue, body, & intellect.]

SN 35:93



§ 233. One attached is unreleased; one unattached is released. Should consciousness, when taking a stance, stand attached to form, supported by form (as its object), established on form, watered with delight [§220], it would exhibit growth, increase, & proliferation. Should consciousness, when taking a stance, stand attached to feeling... to perception... to fabrications... it would exhibit growth, increase, & proliferation. Were someone to say, 'I will describe a coming, a going, a passing away, an arising, a growth, an increase or a proliferation of consciousness apart from form, from feeling, from perception, from fabrications,' that would be impossible.

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

SN 22:53

§ 234. 'There are these four nutriments for the establishing of beings who have taken birth or for the support of those in search of a place to be born. Which four? Physical food, gross or refined; contact as the second, consciousness the third, and intellectual intention the fourth. These are the four nutriments for the establishing of beings or for the support of those in search of a place to be born.

'Where there is passion, delight, & craving for the nutriment of physical food, consciousness lands there and grows. Where consciousness lands and grows, name-&-form alights. Where name-&-form alights, there is the growth of fabrications. Where there is the growth of fabrications, there is the production of renewed becoming in the future. Where there is the production of renewed becoming in the future, there is future birth, aging, & death, together, I tell you, with sorrow, affliction, & despair.

'Just as—when there is dye, lac, yellow orpiment, indigo, or crimson—a dyer or painter would paint the picture of a woman or a man, complete in all its parts, on a well-polished panel or wall, or on a piece of cloth; in the same way, where there is passion, delight, & craving for the nutriment of physical food, consciousness lands there & grows... together, I tell you, with sorrow, affliction, & despair.

[Similarly with the other three kinds of nutriment.]

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

'Just as if there were a roofed house or a roofed hall having windows on the north, the south, or the east. When the sun rises, and a ray has entered by way of the window, where does it land?'

'On the western wall, lord.'

'And if there is no western wall...?'

'On the ground, lord.'

'And if there is no ground...?'

'On the water, lord.'

'And if there is no water...?'

'It does not land, lord.'

'In the same way, where there is no passion for the nutriment of physical food...consciousness does not land or grow.... That, I tell you, has no sorrow, affliction, or despair.'

[Similarly with the other three kinds of nutriment.]

SN 12:64

§ 235. Consciousness without feature,  
without end,  
luminous all around:  
Here water, earth, fire, & wind have no footing.  
Here long & short  
coarse & fine  
fair & foul  
name & form  
are, without remnant,  
brought to an end.  
From the cessation  
of (the activity of) consciousness,  
each is here brought to an end.

DN 11

§ 236. Where water, earth, fire, & wind  
have no footing:  
There the stars do not shine,  
the sun is not visible,  
the moon does not appear,  
darkness is not found.  
  
And when a sage, an honorable one,  
through sagacity  
has known (this) for himself,  
then from form & formless,  
from pleasure & pain,  
he is freed.

Ud 1:10

§ 237. Then Ven. Ānanda, together with a group of monks, went to where the Blessed One was staying in Pālileyya, at the root of the Auspicious Sal Tree, and on arrival, after bowing down to him, sat down to one side. As they were sitting there, the Blessed One instructed, urged, roused, & encouraged them with a talk on Dhamma.

Then this train of thought appeared in the awareness of one of the monks: ‘Now I wonder—knowing in what way, seeing in what way, does one without delay put an end to the effluents?’

The Blessed One, perceiving with his awareness the train of thought in the monk’s awareness, said to the monks, ‘I have analyzed & taught you the Dhamma, monks. I have analyzed & taught you the four frames of reference, the four right exertions, the four bases of power, the five faculties, the five strengths, the seven factors for Awakening, & the noble eightfold path.... And yet still there appears this train of thought in the awareness of one of the monks: “Now I wonder—knowing in what way, seeing in what way, does one without delay put an end to the effluents?”’

‘Well then—knowing in what way, seeing in what way, does one without delay put an end to the effluents? There is the case where an uninstructed, run-of-the-mill person... assumes form to be the self. That assumption is a fabrication. Now what is the cause, what is the origination, what is the birth, what is the coming-into-existence of that fabrication? To an uninstructed, run-of-the-mill person, touched by that which is felt born of contact with ignorance, craving arises. That fabrication is born of that. And that fabrication is inconstant, fabricated, dependently co-arisen. That craving.... That feeling.... That contact.... That ignorance is inconstant, fabricated, dependently co-arisen. It’s by knowing & seeing in this way that one without delay puts an end to the effluents.

‘Or he doesn’t assume form to be the self, but he assumes the self as possessing form... form as in the self... self as in form... or feeling to be the self... the self as possessing feeling... feeling as in the self... self as in feeling... or perception to be the self... the self as possessing perception... perception as in the self... self as in perception... or fabrications to be the self... the self as possessing fabrications... fabrications as in the self... self as in fabrications... or consciousness to be the self... the self as possessing consciousness... consciousness as in the self... self as in consciousness.

‘Now that assumption is a fabrication. What is the cause... of that fabrication? To an uninstructed, run-of-the-mill person, touched by that which is felt born of contact with ignorance, craving arises. That fabrication is born of that. And that fabrication is inconstant, fabricated, dependently co-arisen. That craving.... That feeling.... That contact.... That ignorance is inconstant, fabricated, dependently co-arisen. It’s by knowing & seeing in this way that one without delay puts an end to the effluents.

‘Or... he may have a view such as this: “This self is the same as the cosmos. This I will be after death, constant, lasting, eternal, not subject to change.” This eternalist view is a fabrication.... Or... he may have a view such as this: “I would not be, neither would there be what is mine. I will not be, neither will there be what is mine.” This annihilationist view is a fabrication.... Or... he may be doubtful & uncertain, having come to no conclusion with regard to the true

Dhamma. That doubt, uncertainty, & coming-to-no-conclusion is a fabrication.

'What is the cause... of that fabrication? To an uninstructed, run-of-the-mill person, touched by that which is felt born of contact with ignorance, craving arises. That fabrication is born of that. And that fabrication is inconstant, fabricated, dependently co-arisen. That craving.... That feeling.... That contact.... That ignorance is inconstant, fabricated, dependently co-arisen. It's by knowing & seeing in this way that one without delay puts an end to the effluents.'

SN 22:81

§ 238. The ending of the effluents is for one who knows & sees, I tell you, not for one who does not know & does not see. For one who knows what & sees what?... 'Such is form, such its origination, such its disappearance. Such is feeling.... Such is perception.... Such are fabrications.... Such is consciousness, such its origination, such its disappearance.' The ending of the effluents is for one who knows in this way & sees in this way. [§§30; 149; 170; 173; 199-207]

The knowledge of ending in the presence of ending has its prerequisite, I tell you. It is not without a prerequisite. And what is its prerequisite? Release... Release has its prerequisite, I tell you. It is not without a prerequisite. And what is its prerequisite? Dispassion.... Disenchantment.... Knowledge & vision of things as they have come to be.... Concentration.... Pleasure.... Serenity.... Rapture.... Joy.... Conviction.... Stress.... Birth.... Becoming.... Clinging.... Craving.... Feeling.... Contact.... The six sense media.... Name-&-form.... Consciousness.... Fabrications.... Fabrications have their prerequisite, I tell you. They are not without a prerequisite. And what is their prerequisite? Ignorance....

Just as when the devas pour rain in heavy drops & crash thunder on the upper mountains: the water, flowing down along the slopes, fills the mountain clefts & rifts & gullies. When the mountain clefts & rifts & gullies are full, they fill the little ponds. When the little ponds are full, they fill the big lakes... the little rivers... the big rivers. When the big rivers are full, they fill the great ocean. In the same way:

fabrications have ignorance as their prerequisite,  
 consciousness has fabrications as its prerequisite,  
 name-&-form has consciousness as its prerequisite,  
 the six sense media have name-&-form as their prerequisite,  
 contact has the six sense media as its prerequisite,  
 feeling has contact as its prerequisite,  
 craving has feeling as its prerequisite,  
 clinging has craving as its prerequisite,  
 becoming has clinging as its prerequisite,  
 birth has becoming as its prerequisite,  
 stress & suffering have birth as their prerequisite,  
 conviction has stress & suffering as its prerequisite,  
 joy has conviction as its prerequisite,  
 rapture has joy as its prerequisite,  
 serenity has rapture as its prerequisite,  
 pleasure has serenity as its prerequisite,

concentration has pleasure as its prerequisite,  
 knowledge & vision of things as they have come to be has concentration  
 as its prerequisite,  
 disenchantment has knowledge & vision of things as they have come to  
 be as its prerequisite,  
 dispassion has disenchantment as its prerequisite,  
 release has dispassion as its prerequisite,  
 knowledge of ending has release as its prerequisite.

SN 12:23

#### iv. The Fourth Truth

§ 239. Before my self-awakening, when I was still just an unawakened Bodhisatta, the realization came to me: 'How this world has fallen on difficulty! It is born, it ages, it dies, it falls away & rearises, but it does not discern the escape from this stress, from this aging-&death. O when will it discern the escape from this stress, from this aging-&death?'

Then the thought occurred to me, 'Aging-&death exists when what exists? From what as a requisite condition is there aging-&death?' From my appropriate attention there came the breakthrough of discernment: 'Aging-&death exists when birth exists. From birth as a requisite condition comes aging-&death.' Then the thought occurred to me, 'Birth exists when what exists? From what as a requisite condition comes birth?' From my appropriate attention there came the breakthrough of discernment: 'Birth exists when becoming exists. From becoming as a requisite condition comes birth.... 'Name-&form exists when what exists? From what as a requisite condition is there name-&form?' From my appropriate attention there came the breakthrough of discernment: 'Name-&form exists when consciousness exists. From consciousness as a requisite condition comes name-&form.' Then the thought occurred to me, 'Consciousness exists when what exists? From what as a requisite condition comes consciousness?' From my appropriate attention there came the breakthrough of discernment: 'Consciousness exists when name-&form exists. From name-&form as a requisite condition comes consciousness.'

Then the thought occurred to me, 'This consciousness turns back at name-&form, and goes no farther. It is to this extent that there is birth, aging, death, falling away, & re-arising, i.e., from name-&form as a requisite condition comes consciousness, from consciousness as a requisite condition comes name-&form. From name-&form as a requisite condition come the six sense media.... Thus is the origination of this entire mass of stress. Origination, origination.' Vision arose, clear knowing arose, discernment arose, knowledge arose, illumination arose within me with regard to things never heard before.

Then the thought occurred to me, 'Aging-&death doesn't exist when what doesn't exist? From the cessation of what comes the cessation of aging-&death?' From my appropriate attention there came the breakthrough of discernment: 'Aging-&death doesn't exist when birth doesn't exist. From the cessation of birth comes the cessation of aging-&death.'... 'Name-&form doesn't exist when

what doesn't exist? From the cessation of what comes the cessation of name-&-form?' From my appropriate attention there came the breakthrough of discernment: 'Name-&-form doesn't exist when consciousness doesn't exist. From the cessation of consciousness comes the cessation of name-&-form.' Then the thought occurred to me, 'Consciousness doesn't exist when what doesn't exist? From the cessation of what comes the cessation of consciousness?' From my appropriate attention there came the breakthrough of discernment: 'Consciousness doesn't exist when name-&-form doesn't exist. From the cessation of name-&-form comes the cessation of consciousness.'

The thought occurred to me, 'I have attained this path to Awakening, i.e., from the cessation of name-&-form comes the cessation of consciousness, from the cessation of consciousness comes the cessation of name-&-form. From the cessation of name-&-form comes the cessation of the six sense media.... Thus is the cessation of this entire mass of stress. Cessation, cessation.' Vision arose, clear knowing arose, discernment arose, knowledge arose, illumination arose within me with regard to things never heard before.

It's just as if a man, traveling along a wilderness track, were to see an ancient path, an ancient road, traveled by people of former times. He would follow it. Following it, he would see an ancient city, an ancient capital inhabited by people of former times, complete with parks, groves, & ponds, walled, delightful. He would go to address the king or the king's minister, saying, 'Sire, you should know that while traveling along a wilderness track I saw an ancient path.... I followed it.... I saw an ancient city, an ancient capital... complete with parks, groves, & ponds, walled, delightful. Sire, rebuild that city!' The king or king's minister would rebuild the city, so that at a later date the city would become powerful, rich, & well-populated, fully grown & prosperous.

In the same way I saw an ancient path, an ancient road, traveled by the Rightly Self-awakened Ones of former times. And what is that ancient path...? Just this noble eightfold path: right view, right resolve, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness, right concentration.... I followed that path. Following it, I came to direct knowledge of aging-&-death, direct knowledge of the origination of aging-&-death, direct knowledge of the cessation of aging-&-death, direct knowledge of the path leading to the cessation of aging-&-death. I followed that path. Following it, I came to direct knowledge of birth... becoming... clinging... craving... feeling... contact... the six sense media... name-&-form... consciousness, direct knowledge of the origination of consciousness, direct knowledge of the cessation of consciousness, direct knowledge of the path leading to the cessation of consciousness. I followed that path.

Following it, I came to direct knowledge of fabrications, direct knowledge of the origination of fabrications, direct knowledge of the cessation of fabrications, direct knowledge of the path leading to the cessation of fabrications. Knowing that directly, I have revealed it to monks, nuns, male lay followers, & female lay followers, so that this holy life has become powerful, rich, detailed, well-populated, wide-spread, proclaimed among celestial & human beings.

§ 240. Now at that time Subhadda the wanderer was staying in Kusinārā. He heard, ‘Tonight, in the last watch of the night, the total Unbinding of Gotama the contemplative will take place.’ Then this thought occurred to him: ‘I have heard the venerable elder wanderers, teachers of teachers, saying that only once in a long, long time do Tathāgatas—worthy ones, rightly self-awakened—appear in the world. Tonight, in the last watch of the night, the total Unbinding of Gotama the contemplative will take place. Now there is a doubt that has arisen in me, but I have faith that he could teach me the Dhamma in such a way that I might abandon that doubt.’

So he went to the Mallan Sal Tree grove, to Ven. Ānanda, and on arrival said to him, ‘I have heard the venerable elder wanderers, teachers of teachers, saying that only once in a long, long time do Tathāgatas—worthy ones, rightly self-awakened—appear in the world. Tonight, in the last watch of the night, the total Unbinding of Gotama the contemplative will take place. Now there is a doubt that has arisen in me, but I have faith that he could teach me the Dhamma in such a way that I might abandon that doubt. It would be good, Master Ānanda, if I could get to see him.’

When this was said, Ven. Ānanda said to him, ‘Enough, friend Subhadda. Do not bother the Blessed One. The Blessed One is tired.’

For a second time... For a third time, Subhadda the wanderer said to Ven. Ānanda, ‘... It would be good, Master Ānanda, if I could get to see him.’

For a third time, Ven. Ānanda said to him, ‘Enough, friend Subhadda. Do not bother the Blessed One. The Blessed One is tired.’

Now, the Blessed One heard the exchange between Ven. Ānanda & Subhadda the wanderer, and so he said to Ven. Ānanda, ‘Enough, Ānanda. Do not stand in his way. Let him see the Tathāgata. Whatever he asks me will all be for the sake of knowledge, and not to be bothersome. And whatever I answer when asked, he will quickly understand.’

So Ven. Ānanda said to Subhadda the wanderer, ‘Go ahead, friend Subhadda. The Blessed One gives you his leave.’

Then Subhadda went to the Blessed One and, on arrival, exchanged courteous greetings with him. After an exchange of friendly greetings & courtesies, he sat to one side. As he was sitting there, he said to the Blessed One, ‘Venerable sir, these contemplatives & brahmans, each with his group, each with his community, each the teacher of his group, an honored leader, well-regarded by people at large—i.e., Pūraṇa Kassapa, Makkhali Gosāla, Ajita Kesakambalin, Pakudha Kaccāyana, Sañjaya Belaṭṭhaputta, & Nigaṇṭha Nāṭaputta: Do they all have direct knowledge as they themselves claim, or do they all not have direct knowledge, or do some of them have direct knowledge and some of them not?’

‘Enough, Subhadda. Put this question aside. I will teach you the Dhamma. Listen and pay close attention. I will speak.’

‘As you say, lord,’ Subhadda responded, and the Blessed One said, ‘In any doctrine & discipline where the noble eightfold path is not ascertained, no contemplative of the first... second... third... fourth order [stream-winner, once-returner, non-returner, or Arahant] is ascertained. But in any doctrine & discipline where the noble eightfold path is ascertained, contemplatives of the

first... second... third... fourth order are ascertained. The noble eightfold path is ascertained in this doctrine & discipline, and right here are contemplatives of the first... second... third... fourth order. Other teachings are empty of knowledgeable contemplatives. And if the monks dwell rightly, this world will not be empty of Arahants.

At age twenty-nine I went forth,  
seeking what might be skillful,  
and since my going forth  
more than fifty years have past.

Outside of the realm  
of methodical Dhamma,  
there is no contemplative.

And no contemplative of the second... third... fourth order. Other teachings are empty of knowledgeable contemplatives. And if the monks dwell rightly, this world will not be empty of Arahants.'

Then Subhadda the wanderer said, 'Magnificent, lord, magnificent! In many ways has the Blessed One made the Dhamma clear—just as if one were to place upright what has been overturned, to reveal what has been hidden, to point out the way to one who is lost, or to set out a lamp in the darkness so that those with eyes might see forms. I go to the Blessed One for refuge, and to the Dhamma and to the Community of monks. Let me obtain the going forth in the Blessed One's presence, let me obtain admission.'

'Anyone, Subhadda, who has previously belonged to another sect and who desires the going forth & admission in this doctrine & discipline, must first undergo probation for four months. If, at the end of four months, the monks are pleased (with his behavior), they give him the going forth & admit him to the monk's state. But I know distinctions among individuals in this matter.'

'Lord, if that is so, I am willing to undergo probation for four years. If, at the end of four years, the monks are pleased, let them give me the going forth & admit me to the monk's state.'

Then the Blessed One said to Ven. Ānanda, 'Very well then, Ānanda, give Subhadda the going forth.'

'As you say, lord,' Ven. Ānanda responded.

Then Subhadda said to Ven. Ānanda, 'It is a gain for you, friend Ānanda, a great gain, that you have been anointed here in the Teacher's presence with the pupil's anointing.'

Then Subhadda the wanderer received the going forth, he received the admission in the Blessed One's presence. And not long after his admission—dwelling alone, secluded, heedful, ardent, & resolute—he in no long time entered & remained in the unexcelled goal of the holy life, for which clansmen rightly go forth from home into homelessness, knowing & realizing it for himself in the here & now. He knew, 'Birth is ended, the holy life fulfilled, the task done. There is nothing further for the sake of this world.' And thus Ven. Subhadda became another one of the Arahants, the last of the Blessed One's face-to-face disciples.



# Glossary

## *Pali-English*

**Abhidhamma:** (1) In the discourses of the Pali Canon, this term simply means “higher Dhamma,” a systematic attempt to define the Buddha’s teachings and understand their interrelationships. (2) A later collection of analytical treatises based on lists of categories drawn from the teachings in the discourses, added to the Canon several centuries after the Buddha’s life.

**Apāya:** Realm of destitution. One of the four lower realms of existence, in which beings suffer because of their bad kamma: hell, the realm of hungry shades, the realm of angry demons, and level of common animals. In the Buddhist cosmology, a person reborn in any of these realms may stay there for long or short periods of time, but never for an eternity. After the bad kamma has worked out, the person will return to the higher realms.

**Arahant:** A “worthy one” or “pure one;” a person whose mind is free of defilement and thus is not destined for further rebirth. A title for the Buddha and the highest level of his noble disciples.

**Āsava:** Effluent; fermentation. Four qualities—sensuality, views, becoming, and ignorance—that “flow out” of the mind and create the flood of the round of death and rebirth.

**Brahmā:** A deva inhabitant of the higher heavenly realms of form or formlessness.

**Brahman:** A member of the priestly caste, which claimed to be the highest caste in India, based on birth. In a specifically Buddhist usage, “brahman” can also mean an Arahant, conveying the point that excellence is based not on birth or race, but on the qualities attained in the mind.

**Bodhisatta:** “A being (striving) for Awakening;” a term used to describe the Buddha before he actually become Buddha, from his first aspiration to Buddhahood until the time of his full Awakening. Sanskrit form: *Bodhisattva*.

**Deva:** Literally, “shining one.” An inhabitant of the heavenly realms.

**Dhamma:** (1) Event; a phenomenon in and of itself; (2) mental quality; (3) doctrine, teaching; (4) nibbāna. Sanskrit form: *Dharma*.

**Hīnayāna:** “Inferior Vehicle,” a pejorative term, coined by a group who called themselves followers of the Mahāyāna, the “Great Vehicle,” to denote the path of practice of those who aimed at Arahantship, rather than full Buddhahood. Hīnayānists refused to recognize the later discourses, composed by the Mahāyānists, that claimed to contain teachings that the Buddha felt were too deep for his first generation of disciples, and which he thus secretly entrusted to underground serpents. The Theravāda school of today is a descendent of the Hīnayāna.

**Idappaccayatā:** This/that conditionality. This name for the causal principle the Buddha discovered on the night of his Awakening emphasizes the point that, for the purposes of ending suffering and stress, the processes of causality can be understood entirely in terms of conditions in the realm of direct experience, with no need to refer to forces operating outside of that realm.

**Jhāna:** Mental absorption. A state of strong concentration focused on a single sensation or mental notion.

**Kamma:** Intentional act. Sanskrit form: *karma*.

**Maṇḍala:** Microcosmic diagram, used as a power circle and object of contemplation in the rituals of Tantric Buddhism.

**Māra:** The personification of evil and temptation.

**Nibbāna:** Literally, the “unbinding” of the mind from passion, aversion, and delusion, and from the entire round of death and rebirth. As this term also denotes the extinguishing of a fire, it carries connotations of stilling, cooling, and peace. “Total nibbāna” in some contexts denotes the experience of Awakening; in others, the final passing away of an Arahant. Sanskrit form: *nirvāṇa*.

**Pali:** The canon of texts preserved by the Theravāda school and, by extension, the language in which those texts are composed.

**Pāṭimokkha:** The basic code of monastic discipline, composed of 227 rules for monks and 311 for nuns.

**Samāṇa:** Contemplative. Literally, a person who abandons the conventional obligations of social life in order to find a way of life more “in tune” (*sama*) with the ways of nature.

**Samsāra:** Transmigration; wandering through death and rebirth.

**Saṅgha:** On the conventional (*sammatti*) level, this term denotes the communities of Buddhist monks and nuns; on the ideal (*ariya*) level, it denotes those followers of the Buddha, lay or ordained, who have attained at least stream-entry.

**Stūpa:** Originally, a tumulus or burial mound enshrining relics of a holy person—such as the Buddha—or objects associated with his life. Over the centuries this has developed into the tall, spired monuments familiar in temples in Thailand, Sri Lanka, and Burma; and into the pagodas of China, Korea, and Japan.

**Tādin:** “Such,” an adjective to describe one who has attained the goal. It indicates that the person’s state is indefinable but not subject to change or influences of any sort.

**Tathāgata:** Literally, “one who has become authentic (*tatha-āgata*)” an epithet used in ancient India for a person who has attained the highest religious goal. In Buddhism, it usually denotes the Buddha, although occasionally it also denotes any of his Arahant disciples.

**Theravāda:** The “Teachings of the Elders”—the only one of the early schools of Buddhism to have survived into the present; currently the dominant form of Buddhism in Thailand, Sri Lanka, and Burma.

**Vinaya:** The monastic discipline, whose rules and traditions comprise six volumes in printed text.

### *English-Pali*

Although I have tried to be as consistent as possible in rendering Pali terms into English, there are a few cases where a single English term will not do justice to all the meanings of a Pali term. The rule of one English equivalent per one Pali word may make for consistency, but any truly bilingual person knows that such a rule can create ludicrous distortions of meaning in translation. Thus, while I have not consciously used one English term to translate two different Pali terms, there are cases where I have found it necessary to render a single Pali term with two or more English terms, depending on context. *Citta* in some cases is rendered as mind, in others as intent. Similarly, *loka* is rendered either as cosmos or world, *manas* as intellect or heart, *āyatana* as medium, dimension, or sphere, *upādāna* as clinging or sustenance, and *dhamma* as phenomenon, quality, or principle.

Also, with some of the Pali terms that are central to the teaching, I have chosen equivalents that do not follow general usage. In the following list I have indicated these equivalents with asterisks; explanations for these choices are provided at the end of the list.

acquisition— <i>upadhi</i>	letting go — <i>vossagga</i>
aggregate — <i>khandha</i>	medium — <i>āyatana</i>
alertness — <i>sampajañña</i>	mind — <i>citta</i>
appropriate attention — <i>yoniso manasikāra</i>	non-fashioning — <i>atammayatā</i>
Awakening — <i>bodhi</i>	not-self — <i>anattā</i>
awareness — <i>cetas</i>	obsession — <i>anusaya</i>
becoming — <i>bhava</i>	origination — <i>samudaya</i>
clear knowing — <i>vijjā</i>	perception — <i>saññā</i>
clinging — <i>upādāna</i>	persistence — <i>virīya</i>
craving — <i>taṇhā</i>	pertinent — <i>opanayika</i>
compunction — <i>ottappa</i>	phenomenon — <i>dhamma</i>
contemplative — <i>samaṇa</i>	prerequisite — <i>upanisā</i>
conviction — <i>saddhā</i>	property — <i>dhātu</i>
cosmos — <i>loka</i>	quality — <i>dhamma</i>
dependent co-arising — <i>paṭicca samuppāda</i>	release — <i>vimutti</i>
	relinquishment —

desire — <i>chanda</i>	<i>paṭinissagga</i>
dimension — <i>āyatana</i>	requisite condition —
directed thought — <i>vitakka</i>	<i>paccaya</i>
discern — <i>pajānāti</i>	resolve — <i>saṅkappa</i>
discernment — <i>paññā</i>	self-awakening — <i>sambodhi</i>
discrimination — <i>vimamsā</i>	sensuality — <i>kāma</i>
disenchantment — <i>nibbidā</i>	shame — <i>hiri</i>
dispassion — <i>virāga</i>	skillful — <i>kusala</i>
effluent — <i>āsava</i>	sphere — <i>āyatana</i>
evaluation — <i>vicāra</i>	stream-entry — <i>sotapatti</i>
fabricated — <i>saṅkhata</i>	stress* — <i>dukkha</i>
fabrication — <i>saṅkhāra</i>	Such — <i>tādin</i>
fetter — <i>saṅyojana</i>	sustenance — <i>upādāna</i>
frame of reference* —	theme — <i>nimitta</i>
<i>satipaṭṭhāna</i>	this/that conditionality —
gnosis — <i>añña</i>	<i>idappaccayatā</i>
good will — <i>mettā</i>	tranquility — <i>samatha</i>
heart — <i>manas</i>	transcendent — <i>lokuttara</i>
inconstant* — <i>anicca</i>	transmigration — <i>saṁsāra</i>
insight — <i>vipassanā</i>	Unbinding* — <i>nibbāna</i>
intellect — <i>manas</i>	Unfabricated — <i>asaṅkhata</i>
intent — <i>citta</i>	violence — <i>vihimsā</i>
intention — <i>cetanā</i>	world — <i>loka</i>

**Fabrication:** *Saṅkhāra* literally means “putting together,” and carries connotations of jerry-rigged artificiality. It is applied to physical and to mental processes, as well as to the products of those processes. Various English words have been suggested as renderings for *saṅkhāra*—such as “formation,” “determination,” “force,” and “construction”—but “fabrication,” in both of its senses, as the process of fabrication and the fabricated things that result, seems the best equivalent for capturing the connotations as well as the denotations of the term.

**Frame of reference:** The literal rendering of *satipaṭṭhāna* is “foundation of mindfulness,” “establishing of mindfulness,” or “application of mindfulness,” all of which require a great deal of explanation to make them intelligible in English. However, the actual function of *satipaṭṭhāna* in practice is precisely that of the

English idiom, frame of reference. Although adopting this rendering requires some inconsistency in translating *sati*—using “reference” here, and “mindfulness” otherwise—this seems a small price to pay for instant intelligibility in an otherwise obscure term.

***Inconstant:*** The usual rendering for *anicca* is “impermanent.” However, the antonym of the term, *nicca*, carries connotations of constancy and dependability; and as *anicca* is used to emphasize the point that conditioned phenomena cannot be depended on to provide true happiness, this seem a useful rendering for conveying this point.

***Stress:*** The Pali term *dukkha*, which is traditionally translated in the commentaries as, “that which is hard to bear,” is notorious for having no truly adequate equivalent in English, but stress—in its basic sense as a strain on body or mind—seems as close as English can get. In the Canon, *dukkha* applies both to physical and to mental phenomena, ranging from the intense stress of acute anguish or pain to the innate burdensomeness of even the subtlest mental or physical fabrications.

***Unbinding:*** Because *nibbāna* is used to denote not only the Buddhist goal but also the extinguishing of a fire, it is usually rendered as “extinguishing” or, even worse, “extinction.” However, a study of ancient Indian views of the workings of fire (see *The Mind Like Fire Unbound*) will reveal that people of the Buddha’s time felt that a fire, in going out, did not go out of existence but was simply freed from its agitation and attachment to its fuel. Thus, when applied to the Buddhist goal, the primary connotation of *nibbāna* is one of release and liberation. According to the commentaries, the literal meaning of the word *nibbāna* is “unbinding,” and as this is a rare case where the literal and contextual meanings of a term coincide, this seems to be the ideal English equivalent.