DN 2 — DN 2 The Fruits of the Contemplative Life | Sāmaññaphala Sutta

English translation by Ṭhānissaro Bhikkhu.

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Text

The Fruits of the Contemplative Life

Sāmaññaphala Sutta (DN 2)

Introduction

This discourse is one of the masterpieces of the Pali Canon. At heart, it is a comprehensive portrait of the Buddhist path of training, illustrating each stage of the training with vivid similes. This portrait is placed in juxtaposition to the Buddhist view of the teachings of rival philosophical teachers of the time, showing how the Buddha—in contradistinction to the inflexible, party-line approach of his contemporaries—presented his teaching in a way that was pertinent and sensitive to the needs of his listeners. This larger portrait of the

intellectual landscape of early Buddhist India is then presented in a moving narrative frame: the sad story of King Ajātasattu.

Ajātasattu was the son of King Bimbisāra of Magadha, one of the Buddha's earliest followers. Urged on by Devadatta—the Buddha's cousin, who wished to use Ajātasattu's support in his bid to take over the Buddha's position as head of the Saṅgha—Ajātasattu arranged for his father's death so that he could secure his own position on the throne. As a result of this evil deed, he was destined not only to be killed by his own son—Udayabhadda (mentioned in the discourse)—but also to take immediate rebirth in one of the lowest regions of hell.

In this discourse, Ajātasattu visits the Buddha in hopes that the latter will bring some peace to his mind. The question he puts to the Buddha shows the limited level of his own understanding, so the Buddha patiently describes the steps of the training, beginning at a very basic level and gradually moving up, as a way of raising the king's spiritual horizons. At the end of the talk, Ajātasattu takes refuge in the Triple Gem. Although his earlier deeds were so heavy that this expression of faith could have only limited consequences in the immediate present, the Commentary assures us that the king's story would ultimately have a happy ending. After the Buddha's death, he sponsored the First Council, at which a congress of arahant disciples produced the first standardized account of the Buddha's teachings. As a result of the merit coming from this deed, Ajātasattu is destined—after his release from hell—to attain awakening as a Private Buddha.

* * *

I have heard that on one occasion the Blessed One was staying at Rājagaha, in Jīvaka Komārabhacca's mango grove, with a large Saṅgha of monks—1,250 monks in all. Now at that time—it being the uposatha day, the full-moon night of the water-lily season, the fourth month of the rains—King Ajātasattu of Magadha, the son of Queen Vedehi, was sitting on the roof terrace of his palace surrounded by his ministers. Then he felt inspired to exclaim: "How wonderful is this moonlit night! How beautiful… How lovely… How inspiring… How auspicious is this moonlit night! What contemplative or brahman should we visit tonight who, on being visited, would make our mind clear & serene?"

When this was said, one of the ministers said to the king: "Your majesty, there is Pūraṇa Kassapa, the leader of a community, the leader of a group, the teacher of a group, honored and famous, esteemed as holy by the mass of people. He is aged, long gone forth, advanced in years, in the last phase of life. Your majesty should visit him. Perhaps, if visited by you, he would make your mind clear & serene."

When this was said, the king remained silent.

Then another minister said to the king: "Your majesty, there is Makkhali Gosāla… " … "Your majesty, there is Ajita Kesakambalin… " … "Your majesty, there is Pakudha Kaccāyana… " … "Your majesty, there is Sañjaya Velaṭṭhaputta… " … "Your majesty, there is Nigaṇṭha Nāṭaputta, the leader of a community, the leader of a group, the teacher of a

group, honored and famous, esteemed as holy by the mass of people. He is aged, long gone forth, advanced in years, in the last phase of life. Your majesty should visit him. Perhaps, if visited by you, he would make your mind clear & serene."

When this was said, the king remained silent.

All this time Jīvaka Komārabhacca was sitting silently not far from the king. So the king said to him, "Friend Jīvaka, why are you silent?"

"Your majesty, there is the Blessed One, worthy and rightly self-awakened, staying in my mango grove with a large Saṅgha of monks—1,250 monks in all. Concerning this Blessed One, this admirable report has been spread: 'Indeed, the Blessed One is worthy & rightly self-awakened, consummate in clear-knowing & conduct, well-gone, an expert with regard to the cosmos, unexcelled trainer of people fit to be tamed, teacher of devas & human beings, awakened, blessed.' Your majesty should visit him. Perhaps, if visited by you, he would make your mind clear & serene."

"Then in that case, friend Jīvaka, have the riding elephants prepared."

Responding, "As you say, your majesty," having had five hundred female elephants prepared as well as the king's personal tusker, Jīvaka announced to the king: "Your majesty, your riding elephants are prepared. Do what you think it is now time to do."

Then the king, having had five hundred of his women mounted on the five hundred female elephants—one on each—and having mounted his own personal tusker, set out from the capital in full royal state, with attendants carrying torches, headed for Jīvaka Komārabhacca's mango grove. But when the king was not far from the mango grove, he was gripped with fear, trepidation, his hair standing on end. Fearful, agitated, his hair standing on end, he said to Jīvaka Komārabhacca: "Friend Jīvaka, you aren't deceiving me, are you? You aren't betraying me, are you? You aren't turning me over to my enemies, are you? How can there be such a large Saṅgha of monks—1,250 in all—with no sound of sneezing, no sound of coughing, no voices at all?"

"Don't be afraid, great king. Don't be afraid. I'm not deceiving you or betraying you or turning you over to your enemies. Go forward, great king, go forward! Those are lamps burning in the pavilion hall."

Then the king, going as far on his tusker as the ground would permit, dismounted and approached the door of the pavilion hall on foot. On arrival, he asked Jīvaka: "Where, friend Jīvaka, is the Blessed One?"

"That is the Blessed One, great king, sitting against the middle pillar, facing east, surrounded by the Saṅgha of monks."

Then the king approached the Blessed One and, on reaching him, stood to one side. As he was standing there—surveying the Saṅgha of monks sitting in absolute silence, utterly

clear & serene like a lake—he felt inspired to exclaim: "May my son, Prince Udayabhadda, enjoy the same stillness that this Saṅgha of monks now enjoys!"

(The Blessed One said:) "Have you come, great king, together with your affections?"

"Lord, my son, Prince Udayabhadda, is very dear to me. May he enjoy the same stillness that this Saṅgha of monks now enjoys!"

Then, bowing down to the Blessed One and saluting the Saṅgha of monks with his hands palm-to-palm over his heart, he sat to one side. As he was sitting there, he said to the Blessed One: "I would like to ask the Blessed One about a certain issue, if he would give me the opportunity to explain my question."

"Ask, great king, whatever you like."

The King's Question

"Lord, there are these common craftsmen: elephant-trainers, horse-trainers, charioteers, archers, standard bearers, camp marshals, supply corps officers, high royal officers, commandos, military heroes, armor-clad warriors, leather-clad warriors, domestic slaves, confectioners, barbers, bath attendants, cooks, garland-makers, laundrymen, weavers, basket-makers, potters, calculators, accountants, and any other craftsmen of a similar sort. They live off the fruits of their crafts, visible in the here & now. They give happiness & pleasure to themselves, to their parents, wives, & children, to their friends & colleagues. They put in place an excellent presentation of offerings to contemplatives & brahmans, leading to heaven, resulting in happiness, conducive to a heavenly rebirth. Is it possible, lord, to point out a similar fruit of the contemplative life, visible in the here & now?"

"Do you remember, great king, ever having asked this question of other contemplatives & brahmans?"

"Yes, I do."

"If it isn't troublesome for you, how did they answer?"

"No, it's not troublesome for me wherever the Blessed One—or someone like the Blessed One—is sitting."

"Then speak, great king."

Non-action

"Once, lord, I approached Pūraṇa Kassapa and, on arrival, exchanged courteous greetings with him. After an exchange of friendly greetings and courtesies, I sat to one side. As I was sitting there I asked him: 'Venerable Kassapa, there are these common craftsmen.... They live off the fruits of their crafts, visible in the here & now.... Is it possible, venerable sir, to

point out a similar fruit of the contemplative life, visible in the here & now?'

"When this was said, Pūraṇa Kassapa said to me, 'Great king, in acting or getting others to act, in mutilating or getting others to mutilate, in torturing or getting others to torture, in inflicting sorrow or in getting others to inflict sorrow, in tormenting or getting others to torment, in intimidating or getting others to intimidate, in taking life, taking what is not given, breaking into houses, plundering wealth, committing burglary, ambushing highways, committing adultery, speaking falsehood—one does no evil. If with a razor-edged disk one were to turn all the living beings on this earth to a single heap of flesh, a single pile of flesh, there would be no evil from that cause, no coming of evil. Even if one were to go along the right bank of the Ganges, killing and getting others to kill, mutilating and getting others to mutilate, torturing and getting others to torture, there would be no evil from that cause, no coming of evil. Even if one were to go along the left bank of the Ganges, giving and getting others to give, making sacrifices and getting others to make sacrifices, there would be no merit from that cause, no coming of merit. Through generosity, self-control, restraint, and truthful speech there is no merit from that cause, no coming of merit.'

"Thus, when asked about a fruit of the contemplative life, visible here & now, Pūraṇa Kassapa answered with non-action. Just as if a person, when asked about a mango, were to answer with a breadfruit; or, when asked about a breadfruit, were to answer with a mango: In the same way, when asked about a fruit of the contemplative life, visible here & now, Pūraṇa Kassapa answered with non-action. The thought occurred to me: 'How can anyone like me think of disparaging a contemplative or brahman living in his realm?' Yet I neither delighted in Pūraṇa Kassapa's words nor did I protest against them. Neither delighting nor protesting, I was dissatisfied. Without expressing dissatisfaction, without accepting his teaching, without adopting it, I got up from my seat and left.

Purification through Wandering-on

"Another time I approached Makkhali Gosāla and, on arrival, exchanged courteous greetings with him. After an exchange of friendly greetings and courtesies, I sat to one side. As I was sitting there I asked him: 'Venerable Gosāla, there are these common craftsmen.... They live off the fruits of their crafts, visible in the here & now.... Is it possible, venerable sir, to point out a similar fruit of the contemplative life, visible in the here & now?'

"When this was said, Makkhali Gosāla said to me, 'Great king, there is no cause, no requisite condition, for the defilement of beings. Beings are defiled without cause, without requisite condition. There is no cause, no requisite condition, for the purification of beings. Beings are purified without cause, without requisite condition. There is nothing self-caused, nothing other-caused, nothing human-caused. There is no strength, no effort, no human energy, no human endeavor. All living beings, all life, all beings, all souls are powerless, devoid of strength, devoid of effort. Subject to the changes of fate, serendipity, and nature, they are sensitive to pleasure and pain in the six great classes of birth.

“‘There are 1,406,600 principle modes of origin. There are 500 kinds of kamma, five kinds, and three kinds; full kamma and half kamma. There are 62 pathways, 62 sub-eons, six great classes of birth, eight classes of men, 4,900 modes of livelihood, 4,900 kinds of wanderers, 4,900 Nāga-abodes, 2,000 faculties, 3,000 hells, 36 dust-realms, seven spheres of percipient beings, seven spheres of non-percipient beings, seven kinds of jointed plants, seven kinds of deities, seven kinds of human beings, seven kinds of demons, seven great lakes, seven major knots, seven minor knots, 700 major precipices, 700 minor precipices, 700 major dreams, 700 minor dreams, 84,000 great aeons. Having transmigrated and wandered on through these, the wise & the foolish alike will put an end to pain.

“‘Though one might think, “Through this morality, this practice, this austerity, or this holy life I will ripen unripened kamma and eliminate ripened kamma whenever touched by it”—that is impossible. Pleasure and pain are measured out, the wandering-on is fixed in its limits. There is no shortening or lengthening, no accelerating or decelerating. Just as a ball of string, when thrown, comes to its end simply by unwinding, in the same way, having transmigrated and wandered on, the wise & the foolish alike will put an end to pain.’

“Thus, when asked about a fruit of the contemplative life, visible here & now, Makkhali Gosāla answered with purification through wandering-on. Just as if a person, when asked about a mango, were to answer with a breadfruit; or, when asked about a breadfruit, were to answer with a mango. In the same way, when asked about a fruit of the contemplative life, visible here & now, Makkhali Gosāla answered with purification through wandering-on. The thought occurred to me: ‘How can anyone like me think of disparaging a contemplative or brahman living in his realm?’ Yet I neither delighted in Makkhali Gosāla’s words nor did I protest against them. Neither delighting nor protesting, I was dissatisfied. Without expressing dissatisfaction, without accepting his teaching, without adopting it, I got up from my seat and left.

Annihilation

“Another time I approached Ajita Kesakambalin and, on arrival, exchanged courteous greetings with him. After an exchange of friendly greetings and courtesies, I sat to one side. As I was sitting there I asked him: ‘Venerable Ajita, there are these common craftsmen…. They live off the fruits of their crafts, visible in the here & now…. Is it possible, venerable sir, to point out a similar fruit of the contemplative life, visible in the here & now?’

“When this was said, Ajita Kesakambalin said to me, ‘Great king, there is nothing given, nothing offered, nothing sacrificed. There is no fruit or result of good or bad actions. There is no this world, no next world, no mother, no father, no spontaneously reborn beings; no contemplatives or brahmans who, faring rightly and practicing rightly, proclaim this world and the next after having directly known and realized it for themselves. A person is a composite of four primary elements. At death, the earth (in the body) returns to and merges with the (external) earth-substance. The fire returns to and merges with the external fire-substance. The liquid returns to and merges with the external liquid-substance. The wind returns to and merges with the external wind-substance. The

sense-faculties scatter into space. Four men, with the bier as the fifth, carry the corpse. Its eulogies are sounded only as far as the charnel ground. The bones turn pigeon-colored. The offerings end in ashes. Generosity is taught by idiots. The words of those who speak of existence after death are false, empty chatter. With the break-up of the body, the wise and the foolish alike are annihilated, destroyed. They do not exist after death.'

"Thus, when asked about a fruit of the contemplative life, visible here & now, Ajita Kesakambalin answered with annihilation. Just as if a person, when asked about a mango, were to answer with a breadfruit; or, when asked about a breadfruit, were to answer with a mango. In the same way, when asked about a fruit of the contemplative life, visible here & now, Ajita Kesakambalin answered with annihilation. The thought occurred to me: 'How can anyone like me think of disparaging a contemplative or brahman living in his realm?' Yet I neither delighted in Ajita Kesakambalin's words nor did I protest against them. Neither delighting nor protesting, I was dissatisfied. Without expressing dissatisfaction, without accepting his teaching, without adopting it, I got up from my seat and left.

Non-relatedness

"Another time I approached Pakudha Kaccāyana and, on arrival, exchanged courteous greetings with him. After an exchange of friendly greetings and courtesies, I sat to one side. As I was sitting there I asked him: 'Venerable Kaccāna, there are these common craftsmen.... They live off the fruits of their crafts, visible in the here & now.... Is it possible, venerable sir, to point out a similar fruit of the contemplative life, visible in the here & now?'

"When this was said, Pakudha Kaccāyana said to me, 'Great king, there are these seven substances—unmade, irreducible, uncreated, without a creator, barren, stable as a mountain-peak, standing firm like a pillar—that do not alter, do not change, do not interfere with one another, are incapable of causing one another pleasure, pain, or both pleasure and pain. Which seven? The earth-substance, the liquid-substance, the fire-substance, the wind-substance, pleasure, pain, and the soul as the seventh. These are the seven substances—unmade, irreducible, uncreated, without a creator, barren, stable as a mountain-peak, standing firm like a pillar—that do not alter, do not change, do not interfere with one another, and are incapable of causing one another pleasure, pain, or both pleasure and pain.

"'And among them there is no killer nor one who causes killing, no hearer nor one who causes hearing, no cognizer nor one who causes cognition. When one cuts off (another person's) head, there is no one taking anyone's life. It is simply between the seven substances that the sword passes.'

"Thus, when asked about a fruit of the contemplative life, visible here & now, Pakudha Kaccāyana answered with non-relatedness. Just as if a person, when asked about a mango, were to answer with a breadfruit; or, when asked about a breadfruit, were to answer with a mango. In the same way, when asked about a fruit of the contemplative life, visible here & now, Pakudha Kaccāyana answered with non-relatedness. The thought occurred to me:

‘How can anyone like me think of disparaging a contemplative or brahman living in his realm?’ Yet I neither delighted in Pakudha Kaccāyana’s words nor did I protest against them. Neither delighting nor protesting, I was dissatisfied. Without expressing dissatisfaction, without accepting his teaching, without adopting it, I got up from my seat and left.

Fourfold Restraint

“Another time I approached Nigaṇṭha Nāṭaputta and, on arrival, exchanged courteous greetings with him. After an exchange of friendly greetings and courtesies, I sat to one side. As I was sitting there I asked him: ‘Venerable Aggivessana, there are these common craftsmen.... They live off the fruits of their crafts, visible in the here & now.... Is it possible, venerable sir, to point out a similar fruit of the contemplative life, visible in the here & now?’

“When this was said, Nigaṇṭha Nāṭaputta said to me, ‘Great king, there is the case where the Nigaṇṭha—the knotless one—is restrained with the fourfold restraint. And how is the Nigaṇṭha restrained with the fourfold restraint? There is the case where the Nigaṇṭha is obstructed by all waters, conjoined with all waters, cleansed with all waters, suffused with all waters. This is how the Nigaṇṭha is restrained with the fourfold restraint. When the Nigaṇṭha—a knotless one—is restrained with such a fourfold restraint, he is said to be a Knotless One [Nigaṇṭha], a son of Nāṭa [Nāṭaputta], with his self perfected, his self controlled, his self established.’

“Thus, when asked about a fruit of the contemplative life, visible here & now, Nigaṇṭha Nāṭaputta answered with fourfold restraint. Just as if a person, when asked about a mango, were to answer with a breadfruit; or, when asked about a breadfruit, were to answer with a mango: In the same way, when asked about a fruit of the contemplative life, visible here & now, Nigaṇṭha Nāṭaputta answered with fourfold restraint. The thought occurred to me: ‘How can anyone like me think of disparaging a contemplative or brahman living in his realm?’ Yet I neither delighted in Nigaṇṭha Nāṭaputta’s words nor did I protest against them. Neither delighting nor protesting, I was dissatisfied. Without expressing dissatisfaction, without accepting his teaching, without adopting it, I got up from my seat and left.

Evasion

“Another time I approached Sañjaya Velaṭṭhaputta and, on arrival, exchanged courteous greetings with him. After an exchange of friendly greetings and courtesies, I sat to one side. As I was sitting there I asked him: ‘Venerable Sañjaya, there are these common craftsmen.... They live off the fruits of their crafts, visible in the here & now.... Is it possible, venerable sir, to point out a similar fruit of the contemplative life, visible in the here & now?’

“When this was said, Sañjaya Velaṭṭhaputta said to me, ‘If you ask me if there exists another world (after death), if I thought that there exists another world, would I declare

that to you? I don't think so. I don't think in that way. I don't think otherwise. I don't think not. I don't think not not. If you asked me if there isn't another world… both is and isn't… neither is nor isn't… if there are beings who transmigrate… if there aren't… both are and aren't… neither are nor aren't… if the Tathāgata exists after death… doesn't… both… neither exists nor exists after death, would I declare that to you? I don't think so. I don't think in that way. I don't think otherwise. I don't think not. I don't think not not.'

"Thus, when asked about a fruit of the contemplative life, visible here & now, Sañjaya Velaṭṭhaputta answered with evasion. Just as if a person, when asked about a mango, were to answer with a breadfruit; or, when asked about a breadfruit, were to answer with a mango: In the same way, when asked about a fruit of the contemplative life, visible here & now, Sañjaya Velaṭṭhaputta answered with evasion. The thought occurred to me: 'This—among these contemplatives & brahmans—is the most foolish and confused of all. How can he, when asked about a fruit of the contemplative life, visible here & now, answer with evasion?' Still the thought occurred to me: 'How can anyone like me think of disparaging a contemplative or brahman living in his realm?' Yet I neither delighted in Sañjaya Velaṭṭhaputta's words nor did I protest against them. Neither delighting nor protesting, I was dissatisfied. Without expressing dissatisfaction, without accepting his teaching, without adopting it, I got up from my seat and left.

The First Visible Fruit of the Contemplative Life

"So, lord, I ask the Blessed One as well: There are these common craftsmen: elephant-trainers, horse-trainers, charioteers, archers, standard bearers, camp marshals, supply corps officers, high royal officers, commandos, military heroes, armor-clad warriors, leather-clad warriors, domestic slaves, confectioners, barbers, bath attendants, cooks, garland-makers, laundrymen, weavers, basket-makers, potters, calculators, accountants, and any other craftsmen of a similar sort. They live off the fruits of their crafts, visible in the here & now. They give happiness and pleasure to themselves, to their parents, wives, and children, to their friends and colleagues. They put in place an excellent presentation of offerings to contemplatives & brahmans, leading to heaven, resulting in happiness, conducive to a heavenly rebirth. Is it possible, lord, to point out a similar fruit of the contemplative life, visible in the here & now?"

"Yes, it is, great king. But first, with regard to that, I will ask you a counter-question. Answer as you see fit. Suppose there were a man of yours: your slave, your workman, rising in the morning before you, going to bed in the evening only after you, doing whatever you order, always acting to please you, speaking politely to you, always watching for the look on your face. The thought would occur to him: 'Isn't it amazing? Isn't it astounding?—the destination, the results, of meritorious deeds. For this King Ajātasattu is a human being, and I, too, am a human being, yet King Ajātasattu enjoys himself supplied and replete with the five strings of sensuality—like a deva, as it were—while I am his slave, his workman… always watching for the look on his face. I, too, should do meritorious deeds. What if I were to shave off my hair and beard, put on the ochre robes, and go forth from the household life into homelessness?'

“So after some time he shaves off his hair & beard, puts on the ochre robes, and goes forth from the household life into homelessness. Having thus gone forth he lives restrained in body, speech, and mind, content with the simplest food and shelter, delighting in solitude. Then suppose one of your men were to inform you: ‘You should know, your majesty, that that man of yours—your slave, your workman… always watching for the look on your face… has gone forth from the household life into homelessness… content with the simplest food and shelter, delighting in solitude.’ Would you, thus informed, say, ‘Bring that man back to me. Make him again be my slave, my workman… always watching for the look on my face!’?”

“Not at all, lord. Rather, I am the one who should bow down to him, rise up out of respect for him, invite him to a seat, invite him to accept gifts of robes, almsfood, lodgings, and medicinal requisites for the sick. And I would provide him with righteous safety, defense, and protection.”

“So what do you think, great king? With that being the case, is there a visible fruit of the contemplative life, or is there not?”

“Yes, lord. With that being the case, there certainly is a visible fruit of the contemplative life.”

“This, great king, is the first fruit of the contemplative life, visible in the here & now, that I point out to you.”

The Second Visible Fruit of the Contemplative Life

“But is it possible, lord, to point out yet another fruit of the contemplative life, visible in the here & now?”

“Yes, it is, great king. But first, with regard to that, I will ask you a counter-question. Answer however you please. Suppose there were a man of yours: a farmer, a householder, a taxpayer swelling the royal treasury. The thought would occur to him: ‘Isn’t it amazing? Isn’t it astounding?—the destination, the results, of meritorious deeds! For this King Ajātasattu is a human being, and I, too, am a human being, yet King Ajātasattu enjoys himself supplied and replete with the five strings of sensuality—like a deva, as it were—while I am a farmer, a householder, a taxpayer swelling the royal treasury. I, too, should do meritorious deeds. What if I were to shave off my hair and beard, put on the ochre robes, and go forth from the household life into homelessness?’

“So after some time he abandons his mass of wealth, large or small; leaves his circle of relatives, large or small; shaves off his hair and beard, puts on the ochre robes, and goes forth from the household life into homelessness. Having thus gone forth he lives restrained in body, speech, and mind, content with the simplest food and shelter, delighting in solitude. Then suppose one of your men were to inform you: ‘You should know, your majesty, that that man of yours—the farmer, the householder, the taxpayer swelling the royal treasury… has gone forth from the household life into homelessness…

content with the simplest food & shelter, delighting in solitude.' Would you, thus informed, say, 'Bring that man back to me. Make him again be a farmer, a householder, a taxpayer swelling the royal treasury!'?"

"Not at all, lord. Rather, I am the one who should bow down to him, rise up out of respect for him, invite him to a seat, invite him to accept gifts of robes, almsfood, lodgings, & medicinal requisites for the sick. And I would provide him with righteous safety, defense, and protection."

"So what do you think, great king? With that being the case, is there a visible fruit of the contemplative life, or is there not?"

"Yes, lord. With that being the case, there certainly is a visible fruit of the contemplative life."

"This, great king, is the second fruit of the contemplative life, visible in the here & now, that I point out to you."

Higher Fruits of the Contemplative Life

"But is it possible, lord, to point out yet another fruit of the contemplative life, visible in the here & now?"

"Yes, it is, great king. Listen and pay close attention. I will speak.

"There is the case, great king, where a Tathāgata appears in the world, worthy & rightly self-awakened. He teaches the Dhamma admirable in its beginning, admirable in its middle, admirable in its end. He proclaims the holy life both in its particulars and in its essence, entirely perfect, surpassingly pure.

"A householder or householder's son, hearing the Dhamma, gains conviction in the Tathāgata and reflects: 'Household life is confining, a dusty path. Life gone forth is the open air. It isn't easy, living at home, to practice the holy life totally perfect, totally pure, a polished shell. What if I, having shaved off my hair & beard and putting on the ochre robe, were to go forth from the household life into homelessness?'

"So after some time he abandons his mass of wealth, large or small; leaves his circle of relatives, large or small; shaves off his hair and beard, puts on the ochre robes, and goes forth from the household life into homelessness.

"When he has thus gone forth, he lives restrained by the rules of the monastic code, seeing danger in the slightest faults. Consummate in his virtue, he guards the doors of his senses, is possessed of mindfulness and alertness, and is content.

The Lesser Section on Virtue

“And how is a monk consummate in virtue? Abandoning the taking of life, he abstains from the taking of life. He dwells with his rod laid down, his knife laid down, scrupulous, merciful, compassionate for the welfare of all living beings. This is part of his virtue.

“Abandoning the taking of what is not given, he abstains from taking what is not given. He takes only what is given, accepts only what is given, lives not by stealth but by means of a self that has become pure. This, too, is part of his virtue.

“Abandoning uncelibacy, he lives a celibate life, aloof, refraining from the sexual act that is the villager’s way. This, too, is part of his virtue.

“Abandoning false speech, he abstains from false speech. He speaks the truth, holds to the truth, is firm, reliable, no deceiver of the world. This, too, is part of his virtue.

“Abandoning divisive speech he abstains from divisive speech. What he has heard here he does not tell there to break those people apart from these people here. What he has heard there he does not tell here to break these people apart from those people there. Thus reconciling those who have broken apart or cementing those who are united, he loves concord, delights in concord, enjoys concord, speaks things that create concord. This, too, is part of his virtue.

“Abandoning abusive speech, he abstains from abusive speech. He speaks words that are soothing to the ear, that are affectionate, that go to the heart, that are polite, appealing and pleasing to people at large. This, too, is part of his virtue.

“Abandoning idle chatter, he abstains from idle chatter. He speaks in season, speaks what is factual, what is in accordance with the goal, the Dhamma, & the Vinaya. He speaks words worth treasuring, seasonable, reasonable, circumscribed, connected with the goal. This, too, is part of his virtue.

“He abstains from damaging seed & plant life.

“He eats only once a day, refraining from the evening meal and from food at the wrong time of day.

“He abstains from dancing, singing, instrumental music, and from watching shows.

“He abstains from wearing garlands and from beautifying himself with scents & cosmetics.

“He abstains from high and luxurious beds & seats.

“He abstains from accepting gold & money.

“He abstains from accepting uncooked grain… raw meat… women & girls… male & female slaves… goats & sheep… fowl & pigs… elephants, cattle, steeds, & mares… fields & property.

“He abstains from running messages… from buying & selling… from dealing with false scales, false metals, & false measures… from bribery, deception, & fraud.

“He abstains from mutilating, executing, imprisoning, highway robbery, plunder, & violence.

“This, too, is part of his virtue.

The Intermediate Section on Virtue

“Whereas some contemplatives & brahmans, living off food given in faith, remain addicted to damaging seed and plant life such as these—plants propagated from roots, stems, joints, buddings, and seeds—he abstains from damaging seed and plant life such as these. This, too, is part of his virtue.

“Whereas some contemplatives & brahmans, living off food given in faith, remain addicted to consuming stored-up goods such as these—stored-up food, stored-up drinks, stored-up clothing, stored-up vehicles, stored-up bedding, stored-up scents, and stored-up meat—he abstains from consuming stored-up goods such as these. This, too, is part of his virtue.

“Whereas some contemplatives & brahmans, living off food given in faith, remain addicted to watching shows such as these—dancing, singing, instrumental music, plays, ballad recitations, hand-clapping, cymbals and drums, magic-lantern scenes, acrobatic and conjuring tricks, elephant fights, horse fights, buffalo fights, bull fights, goat fights, ram fights, cock fights, quail fights; fighting with staves, boxing, wrestling, war-games, roll calls, battle arrays, and regimental reviews—he abstains from watching shows such as these. This, too, is part of his virtue.

“Whereas some contemplatives & brahmans, living off food given in faith, remain addicted to heedless and idle games such as these—eight-row chess, ten-row chess, chess in the air, hopscotch, spillikins, dice, stick games, hand-pictures, ball-games, blowing through toy pipes, playing with toy plows, turning somersaults, playing with toy windmills, toy measures, toy chariots, toy bows, guessing letters drawn in the air, guessing thoughts, mimicking deformities—he abstains from heedless and idle games such as these. This, too, is part of his virtue.

“Whereas some contemplatives & brahmans, living off food given in faith, remain addicted to high and luxurious furnishings such as these—over-sized couches, couches adorned with carved animals, long-haired coverlets, multi-colored patchwork coverlets, white woolen coverlets, woolen coverlets embroidered with flowers or animal figures, stuffed quilts, coverlets with fringe, silk coverlets embroidered with gems; large woolen carpets; elephant, horse, and chariot rugs, antelope-hide rugs, deer-hide rugs; couches with canopies, couches with red cushions for the head and feet—he abstains from using high and luxurious furnishings such as these. This, too, is part of his virtue.

“Whereas some contemplatives & brahmans, living off food given in faith, remain addicted to scents, cosmetics, and means of beautification such as these—rubbing powders into the body, massaging with oils, bathing in perfumed water, kneading the limbs, using mirrors, ointments, garlands, scents, creams, face-powders, mascara, bracelets, head-bands, decorated walking sticks, ornamented water-bottles, swords, fancy sunshades, decorated sandals, turbans, gems, yak-tail whisks, long-fringed white robes—he abstains from using scents, cosmetics, and means of beautification such as these. This, too, is part of his virtue.

“Whereas some contemplatives & brahmans, living off food given in faith, remain addicted to talking about lowly topics such as these—talking about kings, robbers, ministers of state; armies, alarms, and battles; food and drink; clothing, furniture, garlands, and scents; relatives; vehicles; villages, towns, cities, the countryside; women and heroes; the gossip of the street and the well; tales of the dead; tales of diversity [philosophical discussions of the past and future], the creation of the world and of the sea, and talk of whether things exist or not—he abstains from talking about lowly topics such as these. This, too, is part of his virtue.

“Whereas some contemplatives & brahmans, living off food given in faith, remain addicted to debates such as these—‘You understand this doctrine and discipline? I’m the one who understands this doctrine and discipline. How could you understand this doctrine and discipline? You’re practicing wrongly. I’m practicing rightly. I’m being consistent. You’re not. What should be said first you said last. What should be said last you said first. What you took so long to think out has been refuted. Your doctrine has been overthrown. You’re defeated. Go and try to salvage your doctrine; extricate yourself if you can!’—he abstains from debates such as these. This, too, is part of his virtue.

“Whereas some contemplatives & brahmans, living off food given in faith, remain addicted to running messages & errands for people such as these—kings, ministers of state, noble warriors, brahmans, householders, or youths (who say), ‘Go here, go there, take this there, fetch that here’—he abstains from running messages & errands for people such as these. This, too, is part of his virtue.

“Whereas some contemplatives & brahmans, living off food given in faith, engage in scheming, persuading, hinting, belittling, & pursuing gain with gain, he abstains from forms of scheming & persuading [improper ways of trying to gain material support from donors] such as these. This, too, is part of his virtue.

The Great Section on Virtue

“Whereas some contemplatives & brahmans, living off food given in faith, maintain themselves by wrong livelihood, by such “animal” arts as:

reading marks on the limbs [e.g., palmistry];

reading omens & signs;

interpreting celestial events [falling stars, comets];

interpreting dreams;

reading features of the body [e.g., phrenology];

reading marks on cloth gnawed by mice;

offering fire oblations, oblations from a ladle, oblations of husks, rice powder, rice grains, ghee, & oil;

offering oblations from the mouth;

offering blood-sacrifices;

making predictions based on the fingertips;

geomancy;

making predictions for state officials;

laying demons in a cemetery;

placing spells on spirits;

earth-skills [divining water and gems?];

snake-skills, poison-skills, scorpion-skills, rat-skills, bird-skills, crow-skills;

predicting life spans;

giving protective charms;

casting horoscopes—

he abstains from wrong livelihood, from “animal” arts such as these.

“Whereas some contemplatives & brahmans, living off food given in faith, maintain themselves by wrong livelihood, by such “animal” arts as: determining lucky & unlucky gems, staffs, garments, swords, arrows, bows, & other weapons; women, men, boys, girls, male slaves, female slaves; elephants, horses, buffaloes, bulls, cows, goats, rams, fowl, quails, lizards, rabbits, tortoises, & other animals—he abstains from wrong livelihood, from “animal” arts such as these.

“Whereas some contemplatives & brahmans, living off food given in faith, maintain themselves by wrong livelihood, by such “animal” arts as (forecasting):

the rulers will march forth;

the rulers will not march forth;

our rulers will attack, and their rulers will retreat;

their rulers will attack, and our rulers will retreat;

there will be triumph for our rulers and defeat for their rulers;

there will be triumph for their rulers and defeat for our rulers;

thus there will be triumph for this one, defeat for that one—

he abstains from wrong livelihood, from “animal” arts such as these.

“Whereas some contemplatives & brahmans, living off food given in faith, maintain themselves by wrong livelihood, by such “animal” arts as (forecasting):

there will be a lunar eclipse;

there will be a solar eclipse;

there will be an occultation of [a conjunction of the moon or a planet with] an asterism;

the sun & moon will be favorable;

the sun & moon will be unfavorable;

the asterisms will be favorable;

the asterisms will be unfavorable;

there will be a meteor shower;

there will be a flickering light on the horizon [an aurora?];

there will be an earthquake;

there will be thunder coming from dry clouds;

there will be a rising, a setting, a darkening, a brightening of the sun, moon, & asterisms;

such will be the result of the lunar eclipse… the rising, setting, darkening, brightening of the sun, moon, & asterisms—

he abstains from wrong livelihood, from “animal” arts such as these.

“Whereas some contemplatives & brahmans, living off food given in faith, maintain themselves by wrong livelihood, by such “animal” arts as (forecasting):

there will be abundant rain; there will be a drought;

there will be plenty; there will be famine;

there will be rest and security; there will be danger;

there will be disease; there will be freedom from disease;

or they earn their living by accounting, counting, calculation, composing poetry, or teaching hedonistic arts & doctrines [lokāyata]—

he abstains from wrong livelihood, from “animal” arts such as these.

“Whereas some contemplatives & brahmans, living off food given in faith, maintain themselves by wrong livelihood, by such “animal” arts as:

calculating auspicious dates for marriages—both those in which the bride is brought home and those in which she is sent out; calculating auspicious dates for betrothals and divorces; for collecting debts or making investments and loans; reciting charms to make people attractive or unattractive; curing women who have undergone miscarriages or abortions;

reciting spells to bind a man’s tongue, to paralyze his jaws, to make him lose control over his hands, or to bring on deafness;

getting oracular answers to questions addressed to a spirit in a mirror, in a young girl, or to a spirit medium;

worshipping the sun, worshipping the Great Brahmā, bringing forth flames from the mouth, invoking the goddess of luck—

he abstains from wrong livelihood, from “animal” arts such as these.

“Whereas some contemplatives & brahmans, living off food given in faith, maintain themselves by wrong livelihood, by such “animal” arts as:

promising gifts to deities in return for favors; fulfilling such promises;

demonology;

reciting spells in earth houses [see earth skills, above];

inducing virility and impotence;

preparing sites for construction;

consecrating sites for construction;

giving ceremonial mouthwashes and ceremonial baths;

offering sacrificial fires;

administering emetics, purges, purges from above, purges from below, head-purges; ear-oil, eye-drops, treatments through the nose, ointments, and counter-ointments; practicing eye-surgery [or: extractive surgery], general surgery, pediatrics; administering root-medicines and binding medicinal herbs—

he abstains from wrong livelihood, from “animal” arts such as these. This, too, is part of his virtue.

Sense Restraint

“And how does a monk guard the doors of his senses? On seeing a form with the eye, he does not grasp at any theme or details by which—if he were to dwell without restraint over the faculty of the eye—evil, unskillful qualities such as greed or distress might assail him. On hearing a sound with the ear.... On smelling an aroma with the nose.... On tasting a flavor with the tongue.... On touching a tactile sensation with the body.... On cognizing an idea with the intellect, he does not grasp at any theme or details by which—if he were to dwell without restraint over the faculty of the intellect—evil, unskillful qualities such as greed or distress might assail him. Endowed with this noble restraint over the sense faculties, he is inwardly sensitive to the pleasure of being blameless. This is how a monk guards the doors of his senses.

Mindfulness & Alertness

“And how is a monk possessed of mindfulness & alertness? When going forward & returning, he makes himself alert. When looking toward & looking away.... when bending & extending his limbs.... when carrying his outer cloak, his upper robe, & his bowl.... when eating, drinking, chewing, & tasting.... when urinating & defecating.... when walking, standing, sitting, falling asleep, waking up, talking, & remaining silent, he makes himself alert. This is how a monk is possessed of mindfulness & alertness.

Contentedness

“And how is a monk content? Just as a bird, wherever it goes, flies with its wings as its only burden; so too is he content with a set of robes to provide for his body and alms food to provide for his hunger. Wherever he goes, he takes only his barest necessities along. This is how a monk is content.

Abandoning the Hindrances

“Endowed with this noble aggregate of virtue, this noble restraint over the sense faculties, this noble mindfulness and alertness, and this noble contentment, he seeks out a secluded dwelling: a wilderness, the shade of a tree, a mountain, a glen, a hillside cave, a charnel ground, a forest grove, the open air, a heap of straw. After his meal, returning from his alms round, he sits down, crosses his legs, holds his body erect, and brings mindfulness to the fore.

“Abandoning covetousness with regard to the world, he dwells with an awareness devoid of covetousness. He cleanses his mind of covetousness. Abandoning ill will & anger, he dwells with an awareness devoid of ill will, sympathetic with the welfare of all living beings. He cleanses his mind of ill will & anger. Abandoning sloth & drowsiness, he dwells with an awareness devoid of sloth & drowsiness, mindful, alert, percipient of light. He cleanses his mind of sloth & drowsiness. Abandoning restlessness & anxiety, he dwells undisturbed, his mind inwardly stilled. He cleanses his mind of restlessness & anxiety. Abandoning uncertainty, he dwells having crossed over uncertainty, with no perplexity with regard to skillful qualities. He cleanses his mind of uncertainty.

“Suppose that a man, taking a loan, invests it in his business affairs. His business affairs succeed. He repays his old debts and there is 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 there is extra left over for maintaining my wife.’ Because of that he would experience joy and happiness.

“Now suppose that a man falls sick—in pain and seriously ill. He does not enjoy his meals, and there is no strength in his body. As time passes, he eventually recovers from that sickness. He enjoys his meals and there is strength in his body. The thought would occur to him, ‘Before, I was sick.... Now I am recovered from that sickness. I enjoy my meals and there is strength in my body.’ Because of that he would experience joy and happiness.

“Now suppose that a man is bound in prison. As time passes, he eventually is released from that bondage, safe and 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 and sound, with no loss of my property.’ Because of that he would experience joy and happiness.

“Now suppose that a man is a slave, subject to others, not subject to himself, unable to go where he likes. As time passes, he eventually 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 experience joy and happiness.

“Now suppose that a man, carrying money and goods, is traveling by a road through desolate country. As time passes, he eventually emerges from that desolate country, safe and sound, with no loss of property. The thought would occur to him, ‘Before, carrying money and goods, I was traveling by a road through desolate country. Now I have

emerged from that desolate country, safe and sound, with no loss of my property.' Because of that he would experience joy and happiness.

"In the same way, when these five hindrances are not abandoned in himself, the monk regards it as a debt, a sickness, a prison, slavery, a road through desolate country. But when these five hindrances are abandoned in himself, he regards it as unindebtedness, good health, release from prison, freedom, a place of security. When he sees that they have been abandoned within him, gladness is born. In one who is gladdened, rapture is born. Enraptured at heart, his body grows calm. His body calm, he is sensitive to pleasure. Feeling pleasure, his mind becomes concentrated.

The Four Jhānas

"Quite secluded from sensuality, secluded from unskillful qualities, he enters and remains in the first jhāna: rapture & pleasure born of seclusion, accompanied by directed thought and evaluation. He permeates and pervades, suffuses and fills this very body with the rapture & pleasure born of seclusion. Just as if a dexterous bathman or bathman's apprentice would pour bath powder into a brass basin and knead it together, sprinkling it again and again with water, so that his ball of bath powder—saturated, moisture-laden, permeated within and 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 unpervaded by rapture & pleasure born of seclusion. This is a fruit of the contemplative life, visible here & now, more excellent than the previous ones and more sublime.

"Then, with the stilling of directed thoughts & evaluations, he enters and remains in the second jhāna: rapture & pleasure born of concentration, unification of awareness free from directed thought & evaluation—internal assurance. He permeates and pervades, suffuses and fills this very body with the rapture & pleasure born of concentration. Just like a lake with spring-water welling up from within, having no inflow from the east, west, north, or south, and with the skies supplying abundant showers time and again,1 so that the cool fount of water welling up from within the lake would permeate and pervade, suffuse and 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, too, is a fruit of the contemplative life, visible here & now, more excellent than the previous ones and more sublime.

"And then, with the fading of rapture, he remains equanimous, mindful, & alert, and senses pleasure with the body. He enters and remains in the third jhāna, of which the noble ones declare, 'Equanimous & mindful, he has a pleasant abiding.' He permeates and pervades, suffuses and fills this very body with the pleasure divested of rapture. Just as in a lotus pond, some of the lotuses, born and growing in the water, stay immersed in the water and flourish without standing up out of the water, so that they are permeated and pervaded, suffused and filled with cool water from their roots to their tips, and nothing of those 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, too, is a fruit of the contemplative life, visible here & now, more excellent than the previous ones and more sublime.

“And then, with the abandoning of pleasure & pain—as with the earlier disappearance of elation & distress—he enters and remains in the fourth jhāna: purity of equanimity & mindfulness, neither pleasure nor pain. He sits, permeating the body with a pure, bright awareness. Just as if a man were sitting covered 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 the body with a pure, bright awareness. There is nothing of his entire body unpervaded by pure, bright awareness. This, too, great king, is a fruit of the contemplative life, visible here & now, more excellent than the previous ones and more sublime.

Insight Knowledge

“With his mind thus concentrated, purified, and bright, unblemished, free from defects, pliant, malleable, steady, and attained to imperturbability, he directs and inclines it to knowledge and vision. He discerns: ‘This body of mine is endowed with form, composed of the four primary elements, born from mother and father, nourished with rice and porridge, subject to inconstancy, rubbing, pressing, dissolution, and dispersion. And this consciousness of mine is supported here and bound up here.’ Just as if there were a beautiful beryl gem of the purest water—eight faceted, well polished, clear, limpid, consummate in all its aspects, and going through the middle of it was a blue, yellow, red, white, or brown thread—and a man with good eyesight, taking it in his hand, were to reflect on it thus: ‘This is a beautiful beryl gem of the purest water, eight faceted, well polished, clear, limpid, consummate in all its aspects. And this, going through the middle of it, is a blue, yellow, red, white, or brown thread.’ In the same way—with his mind thus concentrated, purified, and bright, unblemished, free from defects, pliant, malleable, steady, and attained to imperturbability—the monk directs and inclines it to knowledge and vision. He discerns: ‘This body of mine is endowed with form, composed of the four primary elements, born from mother and father, nourished with rice and porridge, subject to inconstancy, rubbing, pressing, dissolution, and dispersion. And this consciousness of mine is supported here and bound up here.’ This, too, great king, is a fruit of the contemplative life, visible here & now, more excellent than the previous ones and more sublime.

The Mind-made Body

“With his mind thus concentrated, purified, and bright, unblemished, free from defects, pliant, malleable, steady, and attained to imperturbability, he directs and inclines it to creating a mind-made body. From this body he creates another body, endowed with form, made of the mind, complete in all its parts, not inferior in its faculties. Just as if a man were to draw a reed from its sheath. The thought would occur to him: ‘This is the sheath, this is the reed. The sheath is one thing, the reed another, but the reed has been drawn out from the sheath.’ Or as if a man were to draw a sword from its scabbard. The thought would

occur to him: ‘This is the sword, this is the scabbard. The sword is one thing, the scabbard another, but the sword has been drawn out from the scabbard.’ Or as if a man were to pull a snake out from its slough. The thought would occur to him: ‘This is the snake, this is the slough. The snake is one thing, the slough another, but the snake has been pulled out from the slough.’ In the same way—with his mind thus concentrated, purified, and bright, unblemished, free from defects, pliant, malleable, steady, and attained to imperturbability, the monk directs and inclines it to creating a mind-made body. From this body he creates another body, endowed with form, made of the mind, complete in all its parts, not inferior in its faculties. This, too, great king, is a fruit of the contemplative life, visible here & now, more excellent than the previous ones and more sublime.

Supranormal Powers

“With his mind thus concentrated, purified, and bright, unblemished, free from defects, pliant, malleable, steady, and attained to imperturbability, he directs and inclines it to the modes of supranormal powers. He wields manifold supranormal powers. Having been one he becomes many; having been many he becomes one. He appears. He vanishes. He goes unimpeded through walls, ramparts, and mountains as if through space. He dives in and out of the earth as if it were water. He walks on water without sinking as if it were dry land. Sitting cross-legged he flies through the air like a winged bird. With his hand he touches and strokes even the sun and moon, so mighty and powerful. He exercises influence with his body even as far as the Brahmā worlds. Just as a dexterous potter or his assistant could craft from well-prepared clay whatever kind of pottery vessel he likes, or as a dexterous ivory-carver or his assistant could craft from well-prepared ivory any kind of ivory-work he likes, or as a dexterous goldsmith or his assistant could craft from well-prepared gold any kind of gold article he likes; in the same way—with his mind thus concentrated, purified, and bright, unblemished, free from defects, pliant, malleable, steady, and attained to imperturbability—the monk directs and inclines it to the modes of supranormal powers.... He exercises influence with his body even as far as the Brahmā worlds. This, too, great king, is a fruit of the contemplative life, visible here & now, more excellent than the previous ones and more sublime.

Clairaudience

“With his mind thus concentrated, purified, and bright, unblemished, free from defects, pliant, malleable, steady, and attained to imperturbability, he directs and inclines it to the divine ear-element. He hears—by means of the divine ear-element, purified and surpassing the human—both kinds of sounds: divine and human, whether near or far. Just as if a man traveling along a highway were to hear the sounds of kettledrums, small drums, conchs, cymbals, and tom-toms. He would know, ‘That is the sound of kettledrums, that is the sound of small drums, that is the sound of conchs, that is the sound of cymbals, and that is the sound of tom-toms.’ In the same way—with his mind thus concentrated, purified, and bright, unblemished, free from defects, pliant, malleable, steady, and attained to imperturbability—the monk directs and inclines it to the divine ear-element. He hears—by means of the divine ear-element, purified and surpassing the human—both kinds of sounds: divine and human, whether near or far. This, too, great king, is a fruit of

the contemplative life, visible here & now, more excellent than the previous ones and more sublime.

Mind Reading

“With his mind thus concentrated, purified, and bright, unblemished, free from defects, pliant, malleable, steady, and attained to imperturbability, he directs and inclines it to knowledge of the awareness of other beings. He discerns the awareness of other beings, other individuals, having encompassed it with his own awareness. He discerns a mind with passion as ‘a mind with passion,’ and a mind without passion as ‘a mind without passion.’ He discerns a mind with aversion as ‘a mind with aversion,’ and a mind without aversion as ‘a mind without aversion.’ He discerns a mind with delusion as ‘a mind with delusion,’ and a mind without delusion as ‘a mind without delusion.’ He discerns a restricted mind as ‘a restricted mind,’ and a scattered mind as ‘a scattered mind.’ He discerns an enlarged mind2 as ‘an enlarged mind,’ and an unenlarged mind as ‘an unenlarged mind.’ He discerns a surpassed mind [one that is not at the most excellent level] as ‘a surpassed mind,’ and an unsurpassed mind as ‘an unsurpassed mind.’ He discerns a concentrated mind as ‘a concentrated mind,’ and an unconcentrated mind as ‘an unconcentrated mind.’ He discerns a released mind3 as ‘a released mind,’ and an unreleased mind as ‘an unreleased mind.’ Just as if a young woman—or man—fond of ornaments, examining the reflection of her own face in a bright mirror or a bowl of clear water would know ‘blemished’ if it were blemished, or ‘unblemished’ if it were not. In the same way—with his mind thus concentrated, purified, and bright, unblemished, free from defects, pliant, malleable, steady, and attained to imperturbability—the monk directs and inclines it to knowledge of the awareness of other beings. He discerns the awareness of other beings, other individuals, having encompassed it with his own awareness. He discerns a mind with passion as ‘a mind with passion,’ and a mind without passion as ‘a mind without passion’ … a released mind as ‘a released mind,’ and an unreleased mind as ‘an unreleased mind.’ This, too, great king, is a fruit of the contemplative life, visible here & now, more excellent than the previous ones and more sublime.

Recollection of Past Lives

“With his mind thus concentrated, purified, and bright, unblemished, free from defects, pliant, malleable, steady, and attained to imperturbability, he directs and inclines it to knowledge of the recollection of past lives [lit: previous homes]. He recollects his manifold past lives, i.e., one birth, two births, three births, four, five, ten, twenty, thirty, forty, fifty, one hundred, one thousand, one hundred thousand, many eons of cosmic contraction, many eons of cosmic expansion, many eons of cosmic contraction & expansion, (recollecting,) ‘There I had such a name, belonged to such a clan, had such an appearance. Such was my food, such my experience of pleasure & pain, such the end of my life. Passing away from that state, I re-arose there. There too I had such a name, belonged to such a clan, had such an appearance. Such was my food, such my experience of pleasure & pain, such the end of my life. Passing away from that state, I re-arose here.’ Thus he recollects his manifold past lives in their modes & details. Just as if a man were to go from his home village to another village, and then from that village to yet another village, and then from

that village back to his home village. The thought would occur to him, 'I went from my home village to that village over there. There I stood in such a way, sat in such a way, talked in such a way, and remained silent in such a way. From that village I went to that village over there, and there I stood in such a way, sat in such a way, talked in such a way, and remained silent in such a way. From that village I came back home.' In the same way—with his mind thus concentrated, purified, and bright, unblemished, free from defects, pliant, malleable, steady, and attained to imperturbability—the monk directs and inclines it to knowledge of the recollection of past lives. He recollects his manifold past lives... in their modes & details. This, too, great king, is a fruit of the contemplative life, visible here & now, more excellent than the previous ones and more sublime.

The Passing Away & Re-appearance of Beings

"With his mind thus concentrated, purified, and bright, unblemished, free from defects, pliant, malleable, steady, and attained to imperturbability, he directs and inclines it to knowledge of the passing away and re-appearance of beings. He sees—by means of the divine eye, purified and surpassing the human—beings passing away and re-appearing, and he discerns how they are inferior and superior, beautiful and ugly, fortunate and unfortunate in accordance with their kamma: 'These beings—who were endowed with bad conduct of body, speech, and mind, who reviled the noble ones, held wrong views and undertook actions under the influence of wrong views—with the break-up of the body, after death, have re-appeared in a plane of deprivation, a bad destination, a lower realm, hell. But these beings—who were endowed with good conduct of body, speech, and mind, who did not revile the noble ones, who held right views and undertook actions under the influence of right views—with the break-up of the body, after death, have re-appeared in a good destination, a heavenly world.' Thus—by means of the divine eye, purified and surpassing the human—he sees beings passing away and re-appearing, and he discerns how they are inferior and superior, beautiful and ugly, fortunate and unfortunate in accordance with their kamma. Just as if there were a tall building in the central square (of a town), and a man with good eyesight standing on top of it were to see people entering a house, leaving it, walking along the street, and sitting in the central square. The thought would occur to him, 'These people are entering a house, leaving it, walking along the streets, and sitting in the central square.' In the same way—with his mind thus concentrated, purified, and bright, unblemished, free from defects, pliant, malleable, steady, and attained to imperturbability—the monk directs and inclines it to knowledge of the passing away and re-appearance of beings. He sees—by means of the divine eye, purified and surpassing the human—beings passing away and re-appearing, and he discerns how they are inferior and superior, beautiful and ugly, fortunate and unfortunate in accordance with their kamma.... This, too, great king, is a fruit of the contemplative life, visible here & now, more excellent than the previous ones and more sublime.

The Ending of Effluents

"With his mind thus concentrated, purified, and bright, unblemished, free from defects, pliant, malleable, steady, and attained to imperturbability, the monk directs and inclines it to the knowledge of the ending of effluents.4 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 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, the effluent of becoming, 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.' Just as if there were a pool of water in a mountain glen—clear, limpid, & unsullied—where a man with good eyesight standing on the bank could see shells, gravel, and pebbles, and also shoals of fish swimming about and resting, and it would occur to him, 'This pool of water is clear, limpid, and unsullied. Here are these shells, gravel, and pebbles, and also these shoals of fish swimming about and resting.' In the same way—with his mind thus concentrated, purified, and bright, unblemished, free from defects, pliant, malleable, steady, and attained to imperturbability—the monk directs and inclines it to the knowledge of the ending of effluents. 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 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, the effluent of becoming, 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.' This, too, great king, is a fruit of the contemplative life, visible here & now, more excellent than the previous ones and more sublime. And as for another visible fruit of the contemplative life, higher and more sublime than this, there is none."

When this was said, King Ajātasattu said to the Blessed One: "Magnificent, lord! Magnificent! Just as if he were to place upright what was overturned, to reveal what was hidden, to show the way to one who was lost, or to carry a lamp into the dark so that those with eyes could see forms, in the same way has the Blessed One—through many lines of reasoning—made the Dhamma clear. I go to the Blessed One for refuge, to the Dhamma, and to the Saṅgha of monks. May the Blessed One remember me as a lay follower who has gone to him for refuge, from this day forward, for life.

"A transgression has overcome me, lord, in that I was so foolish, so muddle-headed, and so unskilled as to kill my father—a righteous man, a righteous king—for the sake of sovereign rulership. May the Blessed One please accept this confession of my transgression as such, so that I may restrain myself in the future."

"Yes, great king, a transgression overcame you in that you were so foolish, so muddle-headed, and so unskilled as to kill your father—a righteous man, a righteous king—for the sake of sovereign rulership. But because you see your transgression as such and make amends in accordance with the Dhamma, we accept your confession. For it is a cause of growth in the discipline of the noble ones when, seeing a transgression as such, one makes amends in accordance with the Dhamma and exercises restraint in the future."

When this was said, King Ajātasattu said to the Blessed One: "Well, then, lord, I am now taking leave. Many are my duties, many my responsibilities."

"Then do, great king, what you think it is now time to do."

So King Ajātasattu, delighting and rejoicing in the Blessed One's words, rose from his seat, bowed down to him, and—after circumambulating him—left. Not long after King Ajātasattu had left, the Blessed One addressed the monks: "The king is wounded, monks. The king is incapacitated. Had he not killed his father—that righteous man, that righteous king—the dustless, stainless Dhamma eye would have arisen to him as he sat in this very seat."

That is what the Blessed One said. Gratified, the monks delighted in the Blessed One's words.

Notes

1. Reading, Devo ca kālena kālaṁ sammādhāraṁ anuppaveccheyya, with the Thai edition.

2. Mahaggataṁ. This term is used, together with "immeasurable / unlimited," in the standard description of the awareness generated in the practice of the brahmavihāras (SN 42:8). According to Ven. Anuruddha in MN 127, however, an enlarged mind is not immeasurable. Its range of awareness is larger than the body but still measurable, ranging in distance from the shade of a tree to the earth bounded by the ocean.

3. On the various levels of release, see DN 15, MN 43, and AN 9:43–45.

4. Āsavas: three qualities—sensuality, becoming, and ignorance—that "flow out" of the mind and defile it. Sometimes a fourth quality—views—is added to the list, to connect these qualities with the four floods (ogha), which are identical to the four yokes. See AN 4:10.

Publisher references (not part of the sutta)

See also: DN 16; SN 46:51; SN 56:11; AN 6:86–87